

FORDBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD ON 24TH AUGUST 2020

PRESENT: Councillor M. Blackburn (in the Chair)
P. Allen
S. Blackburn
D. Cole
J. Kimberley
F.A Nash
F.V. Nash
L.A. Sorrell

8437. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for non-attendance as all members of the Council were present at the meeting.

8438. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST FROM MEMBERS AND OTHER DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

There were no declarations of interest made by members relating to items on the agenda.

8439. COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR SUGGESTIONS MADE BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no comments, questions or suggestions made by members of the public.

8440. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held 6th July 2020 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the proceedings.

8441. CONSIDERATION OF FILLING FOUR CASUAL VACANCIES BY CO-OPTION: BENNETT'S WELL WARD AND HATCHFORD WARD (3)

RESOLVED that consideration of this matter be deferred to the initial meeting of 2021

8442. ACCOUNTS PAID, PETTY CASH PAYMENTS, MONTHLY EMPLOYEE COSTS AND BANK TRANSFERS

RESOLVED that the report listing accounts paid, petty cash payments, bank transfers and monthly employee costs as submitted be approved

8443. APPOINTMENT OF A REPLACEMENT MEMBER ON THE COUNCIL'S STAFFING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that Councillor Kimberley be appointed as a member of the Staffing Committee

8444. APPOINTMENT OF TWO NEW REPRESENTATIVES TO WALC SOLIHULL AREA COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Council

8445. REPORT BY THE CLERK TO THE COUNCIL REGARDING URGENT PAYMENTS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Clerk submitted a report detailing urgent payments in accordance with the Council's financial regulations. The payments were mainly made to acquire equipment to make the Centre ready for re-opening in compliance with Covid-19 restrictions.

RESOLVED that the report be received and the payments noted and the Clerk's action approved.

8446. CONSIDERATION OF A REPORT FROM THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL AUDITOR
 The Clerk confirmed that the Council's internal auditor had completed the internal audit for the financial year ended 31st March 2020 as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations and he submitted her report.
 RESOLVED that the internal auditor's report be received and accepted
8447. CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDED ACTION
 The Clerk submitted a draft assessment of the risks facing the Council and action to reduce, manage or eliminate the various risks. He identified some issues which had come to the forefront during the previous year and proposed action in response.
 RESOLVED i) that the risk assessment be received and its contents approved.
 ii) that the action proposed by the Clerk be approved.
 iii) that the Clerk obtain further information regarding further training on VAT and report back to the Council
8448. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REVISED CONDITIONS OF HIRE FOR THE FORDBRIDGE CENTRE
 The Clerk submitted draft revised conditions of hire for the Fordbridge Centre based on a model document produced by ACRE. He advised that the revised conditions were modern, professional, relevant and gave the Council greater security when letting out the premises.
 RESOLVED that the draft revised conditions of hire for the Fordbridge Centre as submitted by the Clerk be approved and adopted.
8449. CONSIDERATION OF A DRAFT HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY
 The Clerk advised members that the Council was not obliged to adopt a written policy due to having fewer than five employees but members had indicated that they wished to have a formal policy. The Clerk submitted a draft policy based on a template provided by the HSE
 RESOLVED that the draft health and safety policy as submitted and set out in Appendix A be approved
8450. CONSIDERATION OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT FOR THE FORDBRIDGE CENTRE
 The Clerk submitted for members' information a copy of the health and safety risk assessment carried out on the Council's behalf by its consultant. The Clerk advised that the urgent issues had been rectified and confirmed that all other matters would be addressed in due course either utilising delegated arrangements or following approval by the Council. The Clerk confirmed that he will report to the Council when all action arising from the risk assessment has been completed.
 RESOLVED that the contents of the health and safety risk assessment for the Fordbridge Centre be received and noted.
8451. REVIEW OF THE CALENDAR OF MEETING AND EVENTS
 Members were asked to consider reducing the number of meetings required in view of the situation relating to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Government's requirements and restrictions. Members were reminded that extraordinary meetings can still be held in an emergency or if an urgent matter arises.
 RESOLVED i) that the next cycle of meetings be postponed and the calendar resume for the FGP meeting on 16th November 2020

ii) that the Christmas Carol concert provisionally scheduled for 30th November 2020 be cancelled

8452. FORMAL APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL TO VERIFY BANK RECONCILIATIONS QUARTERLY AND AT THE END OF EACH FINANCIAL YEAR IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 2.2 OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

RESOLVED i) that the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee be appointed to verify bank reconciliations quarterly in accordance with section 2.2 of the financial regulations
ii) that the Chairman of the Council undertake quarterly sample scrutiny of payments made from the bank account as proposed in the Council's general risk assessment.

8453. DETERMINATION OF THE MAXIMUM RISK EXPOSURE FOR THE PURPOSE OF INCLUSION IN A FIDELITY GUARANTEE FOR APPROPRIATE MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES (SECTION 15.5 OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS)

The Clerk advised that the existing fidelity guarantee with the Council's insurers was £250,000 and he recommended that no change be made to that amount.

RESOLVED that the maximum risk exposure to be included in a fidelity guarantee be unchanged as £250,000

8454. AUTHORISATION OF REGULAR PAYMENTS FOR THE 2020/2021 FINANCIAL YEAR (SECTION 5.6 OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS)

RESOLVED that the regular payments for the 2020/2021 financial year as set out in Appendix B be authorised

8455. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Clerk reported that updated model financial regulations had been published by NALC and recommended two amendments arising from the revision

RESOLVED that the proposed amendments to the Council's financial regulations as set out in Appendix C be approved

8456. CONSIDERATION OF A RESPONSE TO MATTERS RAISED DURING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no comments, questions or suggestions made by members of the public.

The meeting closed at 8.35 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

FORDBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
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APPENDIX A

The Council's health and safety policy is to: -

- Prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health.
- Manage health and safety risks in our workplace
- Provide clear instructions and information, and adequate training, to ensure employees are competent to do their work.
- Consult with our employees on matters affecting their health and safety
- Ensure safe handling and use of substances
- Maintain safe and healthy working conditions
- Ensure our employees are safe when working alone
- ***Ensure the health and safety of users and visitors to our property***
- Implement emergency procedures, including evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident.
- Provide and maintain safe equipment and provide protective equipment where necessary
- Review and revise this policy regularly

Responsibilities for Health and Safety

Fordbridge Town Council has overall and final responsibility for health and safety.

Clerk to the Council (Neil Millard) has day to day responsibility for ensuring this policy is put into practice.

All employees should: -

- co-operate with instructions on health and safety matters
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety
- report all health and safety concerns to the appropriate person

Arrangements for health and safety

We will: -

- Complete all risk assessments and take action.
- Review all risk assessments periodically and when working practices or conditions change.
- Provide employees and sub-contractors with health and safety induction and provide appropriate training
- Provide relevant information to users of the Fordbridge Centre
- Ensure suitable arrangements are in place for employees who work remotely
- Consult staff routinely on health and safety matters as they arise and formally when we review health and safety
- Ensure escape routes are well signed and kept clear at all times

Evacuation plans are tested from time to time and updated if necessary

APPENDIX B

Wages and salaries

Payments to HMRC in respect of tax and NI

Payments to the West Midlands Pension Fund

Loan repayments to the PWLB

Annual payments in respect of rental and maintenance of intruder alarm, provision of washroom service, personal alarm monitoring, payroll software subscription, data protection registration

Ongoing payments in respect of gas, electricity and water supplies, telephone services, grounds maintenance contract, refuse collection, window cleaning and photocopying

APPENDIX C

Remove the following sections: -

6.19. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and shall be subject to automatic payment in full at each month-end. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used under any circumstances.

6.20. The RFO may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Vouchers for payments made shall be forwarded to the RFO with a claim for reimbursement.

a) The RFO shall maintain a petty cash float of £150 for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses. Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept to substantiate the payment.

b) Income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.

c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on the schedule of payments presented to council under 5.2 above.

11.1. Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:

a. Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:

i. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;

ii. for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants;

g. Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order 18(d) of the NALC model standing orders and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.

Insert the following updated and revised sections: -

6.19. A pre-paid debit card may be issued to employees with varying limits. These limits will be set by the council. Transactions and purchases made will be reported to the council and authority for topping-up shall be at the discretion of the council.

6.20. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and shall be subject to automatic payment in full at each month-end. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used under any circumstances.

6.21. The council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact. Any payments made in cash by the Clerk shall be refunded on a regular basis, at least quarterly.

11.1. Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:

a) Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (vi) below:

- i. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;
- ii. for specialist services such as are provided by legal professionals acting in disputes;

g) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order 18(d) and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.