

FORDBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2014

PRESENT: Councillor C. McLaughlin (in the Chair)
P. Allen
M. Hyde
S. McLaughlin
F.A. Nash
F.V. Nash
L. Sorrell

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for non-attendance from Councillor Kimberley was received and noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

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

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held 13th
January 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a
correct record of the proceedings

4. REPORT BY THE CLERK TO THE COUNCIL: INCOME FROM HIRE OF THE FORDBRIDGE
CENTRE

The Clerk submitted a report, for members' information, detailing income from hire of the Fordbridge Centre in the current financial year, and also the two previous financial years. The detailed information is set out in Appendix A.

5. CONSIDERATION OF A REPORT BY THE CLERK TO THE COUNCIL: MONTHLY
EMPLOYEE COSTS

The Clerk submitted a report, for members' information, detailing the monthly employee costs for the previous month. The detailed information is set out in Appendix B.

6. REPORT BY THE CLERK TO THE COUNCIL: BUDGET MONITORING TO 31.12.2013

The Clerk submitted a report detailing a comparison between budget allocation and actual income and expenditure for the period ended 31st December 2014. He reported that there were no new significant variations.

RESOLVED that the details of the comparison between actual income and
expenditure and the budget allocation for the period ended 31st
December 2013 be noted and approved.

7. CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM SOLIHULL LIFE
OPPORTUNITIES

The Clerk submitted correspondence from Solihull Life Opportunities requesting financial support for a project to develop a purpose built centre in North Solihull.

RESOLVED that in accordance with the provisions of Section 137 of Local
Government Act 1972 the Council make a donation of up to £1,000
to provide equipment in the refurbished kitchen and changing room
facilities described in the original correspondence

8. CONSIDERATION OF A DISPENSATION TO ALLOW AN 18TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

The Clerk submitted an email sent following a telephone conversation with a local resident seeking a dispensation from the Council's policy to stage a small family gathering as an 18th birthday party at the Fordbridge Centre.

RESOLVED that no dispensation be granted to stage the 18th birthday party to ensure that no precedent is set for future applications

9. CLOSURE OF THE FORDBRIDGE CENTRE: NEW YEAR'S EVE

The Clerk submitted a report outlining a procedure to allow the Council to let the Fordbridge Centre on a New Year's Eve. He added the proviso that Leisure Bars wished to discuss the issue before proceeding due to possible concerns regarding their overheads.

RESOLVED i) that the Council allow hire of the Fordbridge Centre on New Year's Eve on a trial basis
ii) that a charge of £200 be levied for the evening, with the bar to close no later than 12.30 with the room to be vacated by 1.00

10. THE FUTURE OF THE COUNCIL'S NEWSLETTER AND DISTRIBUTION ARRANGEMENTS

The clerk submitted a report recommending to members that it was an ideal opportunity for the Council to review not only how, but why it communicates with local residents to try and ensure that it makes the most effective decision about the future of the newsletter and other forms of communication. He suggested that the Council must therefore ask the fundamental question of what it is trying to achieve before it can decide the best course of action.

RESOLVED i) that the Council cease production of its newsletter forthwith and use specific posters in as many locations as possible to advertise Council events etc
ii) that the Council utilise social media to engage directly with local residents in addition to the re-launched website

11. ADDITIONAL ADVERTISING OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Members were asked to consider additional advertising of the annual parish meeting in an effort to attract a wider audience

RESOLVED that the Council produce laminated posters and 600 leaflets advertising the meeting to be distributed by members

12. CORRESPONDENCE FROM GOODMAN NASH (PROPERTY AND BUSINESS RATES AUDITORS)

The Clerk submitted correspondence from a company offering to recover on behalf of the Council, business rates potentially overpaid during the previous three years. The company will charge 35% of any sum recovered and no charge will be made if they are unsuccessful.

RESOLVED that consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting and a copy of the approach letter be sent to all members

13. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT ADDITIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Clerk submitted draft amendments to the Council's financial regulations to formalise the policy in respect of use of the Council's debit card and to extend use of direct debits beyond utility suppliers and in approved circumstances.

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

14. CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT SCHEDULE IN RESPECT OF AUTHORISED PAYMENTS USING THE COUNCIL'S DEBIT CARD

The Clerk submitted a draft schedule in accordance with the amendment to the Council's financial regulations. It was proposed that a limit of £100 be introduced on payments using the debit card other than for the purchase of garden competition vouchers

RESOLVED that the draft schedule in respect of authorised payments using the council's debit card as set out in Appendix D be approved

15. CONSIDERATION OF THE COUNCIL'S DRAFT SCHEDULE IN RESPECT OF AUTHORISED PAYMENTS USING VARIABLE SUM DIRECT DEBITS

The Clerk submitted a draft schedule in accordance with the amendment to the Council's financial regulations.

RESOLVED that the draft schedule in respect of authorised payments using variable sum direct debits as set out in Appendix E be approved

16. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY IN RESPECT OF RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The Clerk reported that the Council should have in place a system to help it manage risk, particularly as the Council must give an assurance on its annual return each year that it has carried out an assessment of the risks facing it and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks. He submitted a document setting out the risks facing the Council and details of the controls or insurance currently in place to manage the various risks. He reported that proposals for a planned pro-active approach to building maintenance was the only item requiring attention and a report was due to be submitted to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the contents of the document and the proposed further action be approved

17. CONSIDERATION OF A STRATEGY REGARDING MAXIMISING FUTURE USE OF THE FORDBRIDGE CENTRE

The Clerk submitted a report suggesting that members may be well advised to start looking at ways of increasing usage of the Fordbridge Centre to maintain revenue but also looking to cement and enhance the Centre's position as a facility for the local community. He added that it is therefore an opportunity for members to consider what its priorities are in terms of use of the building. He outlined a number of potential objectives, targets and possible action.

RESOLVED that consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting to allow members to reflect and come up with some ideas

18. STAGING A TABLE TOP SALE TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE CHAIRMAN'S CHARITY FUND

Councillor Hyde offered to stage a table top sale to raise funds for the Chairman's Charity Fund either this year or next year.

RESOLVED that Councillor Hyde produce information regarding the cost of catering and advertising and report to the next meeting

19. COST OF REPLACING MAIN HALL FLOORING AT THE FORDBRIDGE CENTRE

The Clerk reported that he had received an invoice for the above work which exceeded the original quotation by approx. £800. He advised that additional materials had been required for the work but he had not been approached to agree the extra sum.

RESOLVED that the additional sum be paid provided that Property Services can justify the extra amount, but it be made clear that the Council is unhappy with the way the issue has been handled.

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

FORDBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

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APPENDIX A

Income from hire of the Fordbridge Centre

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
	£	£	£
April	3,039.00	2,066.00	2,361.00
May	2,573.00	2,518.00	1,738.00
June	1,528.00	1,660.00	2,039.00
July	2,565.00	2,021.00	1,905.00
August	1,343.00	1,786.00	1,616.00
September	1,458.00	2,031.00	1,383.00
October	1,881.00	2,170.00	1,725.00
November	1,753.00	2,326.00	2,363.00
December	1,221.00	1,771.00	1,788.00
January	<u>2,956.00</u>	<u>1,543.00</u>	<u>2,077.00</u>
	<i>20,317.00</i>	<i>19,892.00</i>	<i>18,995.00</i>
February	2,078.00	1,798.00	
March	<u>2,238.00</u>	<u>2,360.00</u>	
	24,635.00	24,050.00	

APPENDIX B

Monthly Employee Costs

December 2013:	
Salaries & Wages	£3,761.66
Employer's NI	£176.98
Employer's Pension Contributions	£500.26
January 2014:	
Salaries & Wages	£3,932.41
Employer's NI	£174.91
Employer's Pension Contributions	£500.26

APPENDIX C

6.5 If thought appropriate by the council, payment for utility supplies (energy, telephone, water) and other recipients authorised by the Council may be made by variable amount Direct Debit provided that the instructions are signed by two members and any payments are reported to council as made. The use of a Direct Debit shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least once every two years

6.6 Payment may be made using the Council's debit card in the following circumstances:-

- a) In pursuit of a specific Council decision (where appropriate or when supplier requires)
- b) in accordance with the Council's specific schedule which is to be reviewed and approved at least annually.

After payment is made two members of the Council to counter sign a pro-forma setting out details of the payment made and how it complies with this policy and any payments are reported to the council as made

APPENDIX D

Payments can be made using the Council's debit card up to a maximum of £100 in the following circumstances:-

- Gas heating boiler service
- Purchase of filter cartridges for catering boiler
- Purchase of raffle prize for Chairman's Charity Dance
- Purchase of refreshments/treats at garden competition presentation evening and Christmas carol concert
- Purchase of equipment for use at the Fun Day
- Data protection registration
- Purchase of replacement equipment
- Purchase of vouchers for garden competition prizes (exempt from £100 restriction)

APPENDIX E

Payment by variable direct debit in the following circumstances is approved by the Council:-

- Payment to electricity supply, gas supply, refuse collection and telephone providers at the Fordbridge Centre
- Payments to Solihull M.B.C. in respect of business rates
- Payments to the Public Works Loan Board in respect of loan repayments