



Minutes of the Bridgwater Town Council's Finance and Policy Executive Committee held on Thursday 23 September 2021 at 10:00hrs

Present - Councillors B Smedley - Chair G Burrows G Granter L Leavy	M Lerry K Pearce L Redman joined the meeting at 10:30hrs
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In Attendance:

David Mears – Town Clerk, Fiona Tuck - Finance Assistant. There were no members of the public and no members of press present.

No questions had been received from the public.

FEC2021/37 To receive Apologies for Absence and to approve the reasons given (LGA 1972 s85 (1))

Apologies had been received from Councillor Cordiner who had a conflicting appointment.

RESOLVED – to accept the apology and the reason given.

FEC2021/38 Declarations of interests - Members to declare any interests, including Disclosable Pecuniary Interests they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any prior requests from members for Dispensations that accord with Localism Act 2011 s33(b-e) (NB this does not preclude any later declarations).

None declared.

FEC2021/39 To approve and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Thursday 15 July 2021 (LGA 1972 sch 12, para 41(1))

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the Finance and Policy Executive Committee Meeting held on Thursday 15 July 2021 be signed as a correct record.

FEC2021/40 Grants – to receive grant applications for approval:

- I. Bridgwater Together - £1,000
- II. Bridgwater Photographic Society - £2,500

RESOLVED – to receive the grant applications and approve for payment.

FEC2021/41 Finance – Accounts for Payment and Income – to note items of expenditure as approved under delegated authority or under previous Council/Committee decisions and income received for August 2021.

RESOLVED – to note.

FEC2021/42 Finance— to note the Year to Date Budget as of 17 September 2021.

The Town Clerk presented the Year to Date Budget which was performing better than expected.

RESOLVED – to note.

FEC2021/43 Work Mobile Phones – to agree six mobile phone contracts for key staff.

The Town Clerk presented the case for acquiring 6 mobile phone contracts for key members of staff.

RESOLVED – to agree the acquisition of 6 i-phone mobile phone contracts via QSS (a local company who currently manage our telephone and internet systems).

FEC2021/44 Staff Policies – to adopt a Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy for all staff.

Further to recent issues, the Town Clerk updated Committee on the reasons behind his advice to adopt a Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy for all staff. The Town Clerk and Finance Assistant had now received training and testing kits were in place. All staff had welcomed the introduction of this Policy.

The Town Clerk took questions from Committee.

RESOLVED – to adopt a Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy for all staff.

FEC2021/45 Youth Grants – to agree to a temporary change to the way in which Youth Grants are awarded. N.b. due to COVID and safeguarding the Youth Council hasn't been able to meet, and there are organisations awaiting grants.

The Chair updated Committee on the recent "mis-informed" posts on social media by a fellow Councillor, regarding Youth Grants and the removal of power from the Youth Forum. Councillor Cordiner, Portfolio Holder for Youth had now been in contact with schools and the Forums were due to recommence on 22nd October 2021. The Chair confirmed that there was no intention to change the way the Youth Forums were run.

RESOLVED – that the Chair formally write to the Councillor Rodrigues on behalf of the Committee voicing their disapproval at the way Councillor had handled the situation, pointing out that there had been ample opportunity for him to raise his concerns with the Portfolio Holder, and reminding him of the unusual circumstances we were working under due to the pandemic. It should also be pointed out that the cuts made to Youth Service by the County Council were moot and we therefore suggest that Councillor Rodrigues write to County Council to make his strong views known.

FEC2021/46 Climate Emergency

- I. Seed the Day – Evaluation of the 2021 Seed the Day event; to discuss and agree plans for a 2022 event;

There had been positive feedback from members of the public and stallholders and Councillor Redman commended organisers and marshals for a well organised event. It was suggested that with the Cultural Partnership wishing to extend their activities, there could be a run of festivals from summer to Christmas incorporating Seed the Day, Fuse and Quayside Festival.

RESOLVED - that Seed the Day be booked again for next year, that there be a community led element to compliment the event, the Town Council take ownership of who will be invited to take part, and there be conditions regarding the distance travelled by stall holders and. no single use plastic stalls.

- II. Green Week – to agree to hold a ‘green week’ in 2022 in conjunction with Bridgwater Flower Show;

Councillor Pearce put forward a suggestion for a “Green Week” event which she proposed to take place mid-summer in order to encourage people to think about the environment. This could incorporate the Flower Show in a marquee on one of the Town’s open spaces with plant related stalls, the Tree Trail, the Meads etc.

RESOLVED – agreed to hold this event, and to pass this event to the Green Events Working Party to work together with the Flower Show.

- III. To create a Green Events Working Party.

RESOLVED – to create a Green Events Working Party and for membership to be agreed at next meeting of Full Council.

FEC2021/47 Unitary Council – update on Unitary Council preparation and meetings with neighbouring parishes

The Chair updated the Committee on the meetings that had taken place with neighbouring parishes to find out their feelings with regard to Unitary. When all meetings have been concluded, a full report will be brought to Council.

The Town Clerk confirmed an overall positive response with 8 parishes met so far, a further 8 parishes due to be met and 11 parishes yet to respond. These parishes will all potentially make up the LCN which the Town Council hopes to lead on.

The Chair and Clerk took questions from Committee.

RESOLVED – to note the update.

FEC2021/48 To resolve to exclude members of the press and public – to agree that agenda item FEC2021/49 and FEC2021/50 be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded as publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

RESOLVED – That agenda item FEC2021/49 and FEC2021/50 be dealt with after the public (including the press) had been excluded.

FEC2021/49 Town Deal – *Update and to authorise the Town Clerk to seek quotations and have the delegated authority to appoint contractors to undertake planning and feasibility work for the Town Hall and Arts Centre in the following areas Architects; Quantity Surveyor; disability access and such specialists that may become apparent as the projects develop*

RESOLVED – *To note the update and authorise the Town Clerk to seek quotations and have the delegated authority to appoint contractors to undertake planning and feasibility work for the Town Hall and Arts Centre in the following areas: Architects; Quantity Surveyor; disability access and such specialists that may become apparent as the projects develop.*

FEC2021/50 Staffing

- a) *To receive a general staffing update on current vacancies, and staff annual leave balances;*

RESOLVED – *to receive the general staffing update on current vacancies, and staff annual leave balances.*

b) *To agree to pay overtime to the Finance Assistant and uplift whilst covering the period of absence of the Town Clerk;*

RESOLVED – *to agree to pay overtime to the Finance Assistant and uplift whilst covering the period of absence of the Town Clerk.*

c) *To agree to create the posts of a Project Officer and Democratic Services Officer;*

RESOLVED – *to agree to create the posts of a Project Officer and Democratic Services Officer.*

d) *To consider the request to continue the Community Governance Course funding for the Town Clerk.*

RESOLVED – *agreed to continue the Community Governance Course funding for the Town Clerk.*

With no further business the meeting closed at 10:55hrs.

Signed

Date

DRAFT