

Final Minutes of Finance Committee held on the 9th April 2019

In attendance: Councillors M. Harriman M.J. Edwards, J. Holmes, B. Blackmore. (Councillor S. Atherton not Committee member attending for part of meeting), J. Hobbley (arriving late)

Chair: Councillor M.J. Edwards

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: S Baxter

Apologies: M. Wilde

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1. **Apologies:** Apologies were given and accepted.
 2. There were no members of the press and public present for the meeting.
 3. Councillors were reminded of the need to Declare any Interest.
 4. The **Minutes of the meeting** held on the 21st January 2019 were agreed as a true record. Councillor Holmes advised on the status of the Bowling Club and Gresford Trust.
 5. **Lead Councillor policy:** This item was brought forward to enable Councillor Atherton to take part in the discussion. The Clerk had produced a briefing note and introduced this to the meeting, stating that following advice received on certain issues, during which Lead Councillor policy had been mentioned, it had become apparent that the Lead Councillor policy, in its current format and operation, appears to not have a legal basis, and has potential for Councillors in taking forward projects, to be acting beyond their remit as Councillors with potentially difficult consequences for the Council. The Clerk stressed she was alerting the Council to this at an early opportunity for this reason so that the Council and its members were aware and could make the necessary changes if they wished, to ensure they were within the law. She produced a document from NALC which further outlined the legal basis. A discussion took place. Councillor Edwards stated that the term 'Lead Councillor' needs to be altered. He stated that if a Councillor was simply doing research on a topic to bring back to Council, that would not be a problem. But where a Councillor is meeting with Contractors for example, that could be a problem. Councillor Harriman stated he agreed with Councillor Edwards, and suggested that a Councillor can report to Committee that they sit on or to a Council as to what they recommend. Councillor Atherton stated her understanding of why the policy had been brought in, following the Clerk's appraisal, and stated that there were checks and balances within the policy through Councillor's reporting to Committee. She felt the policy should continue. This was echoed by Councillor Holmes. Councillor Edwards explained the issue of a Councillor undertaking a piece of research to be reported back, but not to act on behalf of the Council in a Contract / Finance situation, as there is potential for things to be misconstrued. Councillor Atherton gave the example of the agreement for the Football club. Two Councillors had taken this forward and this was the Chair and Vice Chair. Councillor Blackmore raised the example of a project she is currently dealing with – the war memorial. Councillor Edwards stated that in his opinion the research aspect was fine but when it came to discussions with a potential contractor, this should be undertaken by, or with, the Clerk. Further discussion took place on how to take this forward. Councillor Blackmore made a point that compared with past Clerks, the Council had 'never heard so much from a Clerk'. Councillor Harriman stated that there is a lot more work now needing to be taken forward. Councillor Holmes stated that speaking to local people is a fundamental part of the work of a Councillor, but agreed with the Clerk's estimation of the Lighting project as being a good example of taking a project forward. However, it was important with all works involving contractors that there was an agreed specification in place. Councillor Atherton stated that 'loads had been achieved' since the introduction of the policy. Councillor Harriman stated that if there is an issue with the Clerk's hours then this needs to be approached in a different way. Councillor Atherton raised the issue of three quotes having been obtained for tree work at the

Cemetery. The Clerk clarified the position with regard to the need for the quotes, as distinct from the tree survey but advised that in her view the tree survey was an example of statutory work of the Council, as if not done it could lead to insurance issues potentially, but had initially been given to a Councillor as lead Councillor which had led to a delay. A discussion took place about rewording the document and bringing it back, however it was stated that advice needs to be obtained first. Councillor Edwards clarified that the Clerk is the legal officer to the Council. Councillor Atherton stated that she thought the Clerk has a 'prejudicial interest' in the matter and that in her view the Clerk is prejudiced to the policy. The Clerk stated that she is not, but that as the point had been stated she would prefer it if the Council were to seek an independent view of the policy. It was agreed that One Voice Wales would be asked to review the policy and see if it is lawful or needs tweaking. The policy will then be looked at again in the light of the comments of One Voice Wales.
Action: Clerk to send a request with the policy to One Voice Wales.

6. **Agreement to be made with Gresford Junior Football Club.** This item was brought forward to enable Councillor Atherton discuss with the Committee. Since the Committee had last viewed the document it had been updated and sent out to the Football Club. Councillor Atherton explained the issue around the maintenance of the pitch. Councillor Atherton stated once signed it would be over to the Clerk to manage going forward. Councillor Edwards stated this would be with involvement of Councillors or Committee. It was agreed the Clerk is to write again and give a deadline for return of the document. In future the Clerk will arrange once yearly for a joint inspection of the pitch, and in future years if sufficient notice is given for arrangements for maintenance, it is thought the club might then be able to notify the league in respect of fixtures needing to be altered. Councillor Atherton left the meeting.
7. **Grant request received:** The Committee considered a request received from Gresford Trust. Councillor Holmes declared an interest in this matter due to her involvement with the Trust. It was clarified that the grant application had been submitted by the Chair of the Events Committee of the Trust. Councillor Edwards suggested that the grant form needs to be changed to state 'up to £500' and '500 and over' so that the criteria can be correctly applied. Councillor Harriman suggested putting forward a recommendation to Full Council. A discussion took place about the status of the group in relation to the Trust. Councillor Harriman suggested there may be a matter for audit within the rules set around grant applications. The Clerk confirmed the grant form criteria stated only one application per organisation in a financial year. **Action: Clerk to write to Chair of the Trust asking for clarification with regard to the grant application.** The Committee also considered a query that had been raised by the Chair of Gresford Trust in regard to the award of grants for revenue costs to organisations. The Committee asked that it be reported back that has always been careful not to fund revenue costs in line with the grant criteria, however in the past it has supported start ups and exceptional circumstances regarding day to day costs. **Action: Clerk to write to Chair of Trust in response to his letter, and also to write to Gresford and District Library.**
8. **Quarterly Financial report for the end of the Financial Year:** The Clerk presented the report on income and expenditure to the end of March 2019. It was noted that it had already been presented to Full Council at their meeting on the 4th April, in order for the information to be presented timely. A few amendments to the document were suggested regarding the presentation of Reserves. **Action: Clerk to amend.**
9. **Audit Considerations:** The Clerk presented a copy of the revised Assets register that she had updated with the current year's purchases, and in light of points raised by internal Audit in their last report. The Assets register was considered and amendments suggested. **Action: Clerk to make Amendments to Register.** The Clerk advised Committee of the Internal Audit checklist and Timescales. The Clerk will ensure that all documentation reaches the Internal Auditor by the 25th April. The Clerk advised Committee of the letter sent by Grant Thornton, and the deadlines set by them, in particular in regard to the Electors Rights, since this had been an issue raised after last year's external Audit. This was discussed and noted by Committee. The deadline set by Grant Thornton in their letter is

the 8th July 2019. The Accounting Statement will be reported to Full Council on the 6th June. The appointment for the date of Electors Right's will be the 1st July 2019 and will end on the 26th July 2019. The Notice of the Audit must be displayed in a conspicuous place no later than the 16th June 2019. The notice must remain on display until at least 1st July.

Action: Clerk. The Chair of the Committee advised that he has checked all the figures in the Bank reconciliation, as an independent check for the Council.

- 10. Draft CCTV policy:** The Clerk had previously sent a copy of a draft CCTV policy. She advised that the source of the document was WCBC and she had adapted the document for the Council's purpose. A procedure / Protocol needed to be drawn up to show who is to view the images and under what circumstances. A letter of understanding is to be drawn up with the Scouts. **The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Policy be adopted.**
- 11. List of Policies to be taken forward and timeframe:** Due to the time it was agreed that the Clerk will revise the document and circulate it electronically prior to the next meeting.
- 12. Date of next meeting.** It was agreed that the Committee will next meet on 3rd June 2019. Venue to be confirmed.