

Minutes of Finance Committee held on the 29th June 2020

In attendance: Councillors M. Harriman, M.J. Edwards, J. Holmes, K. Hobbley, J. Hobbley, J. Jones, A Merry

Chair: Councillor M.J. Edwards

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: S Baxter

Apologies: Councillors M. Wilde

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1. This meeting took place remotely, using GoTo Meetings software, under The Local Authorities(Coronavirus)(Meetings)(Wales) Regulations 2020. which make provision for meetings to take place remotely.
 2. **Apologies:** Apologies were given and accepted.
 3. There were no members of the press and public present for the meeting.
 4. **Declarations of Interest :** Councillors were reminded of the need to declare any interests. No declarations were made.
 5. The **Minutes of the meeting** held on the 28th April 2020 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.
 6. **Quarterly Financial report.:** The Chair took the meeting through the Financial report for the first quarter. An amendment was required on the lighting supply budget figure which is £5000. The high figure in the Administration section is due to the pay out on the annual insurance fee. A £300 grant had been given for PPE. The report was **AGREED**.
 7. **Update on Electronic Banking:** The Clerk advised that the procedure was now up and running and confirmed that Councillors Edwards and Bailey had additional user viewing access to check on the payments made. Councillor Edwards confirmed that he had checked and that payments made from the account had been in accordance with those reported to Full Council and approved. Councillor Edwards suggested that salary payments and those to HMRC and Clwyd Pension Funds need to be notified to those checking, although not to be published. **Action: Clerk.**
 8. **Update of Audit Matters:** The Clerk advised on the advice received from Wales Audit office concerning the change to the Audit timetable and confirmed the relevant notices had been posted on the website as required. The Clerk also advised on the Internal Auditors report and in particular the three items that had been raised, concerning the Council's level of Fidelity cover, Employment allowance claimed from HMRC and the review of the Financial regulations. The Clerk confirmed that the level of fidelity cover had been addressed correctly with the new Insurance policy, that HMRC had been contacted over the Employment Allowance and this had been rectified, and that the missing wording in the Financial regulations had been added in. It was agreed that in the report to Full Council from the Committee it shall be recommended that the revision to the Financial Regulations be approved. The Clerk also confirmed that the 2018-19 Audit recommendations had previously been addressed and this had been reported to the External Auditor as requested by them.
 9. **Consideration of need to move a portion of Council reserves (FSCS) :** It was noted that this item had come to the Clerk's attention and been reported at last Full Council meeting. It was stated that the task now was to determine what proportion of reserves to move and where to. A discussion took place highlighting that the matter also tied in with previous discussions concerning electronic banking and whether the present account arrangements held with HSBC bank met the requirements of the Council in terms of the robustness of electronic banking. The Clerk reported on some research done into what other banks potentially could offer in terms of electronic banking , and reports from other Clerks as to their level of satisfaction with banks such as Unity and Lloyds. Councillors Harriman and Edwards reported on banks they had looked into. Councillor K. Hobbley

reported on his findings in regard to the activities of HSBC bank and was disappointed with their ethical stance. This was echoed by Councillor J. Hobbley. Councillor Harriman proposed contacting Unity bank, if necessary, via zoom meeting to see what they could offer. Councillor Edwards noted the need firstly to establish how much to move and over what period and the period of notice that was required. The Clerk advised it would be necessary to keep the existing accounts running in parallel while this was done and then they could in future be closed. It was decided that a current account as well as a savings account be looked at. Councillor Edwards proposed that the requirements need to be set out by the Clerk and then a comparison of what the different banks can offer can be made. Councillor Harriman proposed a specific meeting to take place within three weeks with this information. Following discussion it was decided to proceed on this basis, looking initially to move a proportion of reserves of around £70k to another bank to be determined, and at a later date consideration could be given to moving a further proportion to a savings account, possibly for a set period depending on the interest rate, and to look into the Credit Union. **Action: The Clerk to investigate further, taking account of recommendations on different banks, and the statutory Financial guidance, and to set up a further meeting. Committee to recommend to Full Council that an amount of £70k needs to be moved to another account at notice of no more than three months.**

10. **Lone Working Policy** : It was noted that this item concerned the possible provision of portable items (App or fob) ,linked to a control centre, on a contract basis to support staff in their lone working, as outlined in the report which had been discussed at last Full Council meeting. The Clerk advised that the three staff had downloaded the free online App. that had been suggested but that this seemed to be more of a locator once something had happened rather than a preventative tool. The outline prices and functions received from each provider, concerned either a fob or an App or both, and it was stated that the App would probably be sufficient, and the contract prices were cheaper for the longer contract period. Following discussion, it was **AGREED** that the need to equip staff with what they needed for safety was supported, and this would be recommended to Full Council. The Clerk is to determine which of the Apps reported on seemed the best. Both were similar in price and worked out at an overall figure of £150 per year. It was also suggested that a personal attack alarm could be purchased for each staff member relatively cheaply as an additional item of safety and this was **AGREED**. **Action: Clerk to determine prior to Full Council meeting the supplier and the cost. Committee to make recommendation to Full Council.**
11. **Draft Equality and Diversity Policy:** The draft policy was considered, and a discussion took place about a commitment to training as contained within the policy. Different methods of delivering such training were considered as well as the need or not to consider this as mandatory. The Clerk will determine with One Voice Wales the list of training on offer online. It was **AGREED to recommend the policy to be adopted to Full Council.**
12. **Any Grant requests received.** No urgent request had been received.
13. **Members urgent matters for consideration.** The Clerk raised a request concerning her additional work for Abenbury Community Council and whether Gresford Community Council would allow their printer and mobile phone contract to be used for this purpose ,with a proportional annual recharge back to Abenbury Community Council. This was **AGREED**. The Clerk thanked those present for agreeing to this and assured that she would manage the recharge arrangements. The Clerk further advised the Committee where matters were up to regarding the application to the Charity Commission for a charitable trust status concerning the Allotments. This had unfortunately been protracted but was now underway. Councillor Harriman advised letting the University of Wales know where this was up to. The purpose of the Trust in purchasing the land was reiterated. The concern raised was about detailing in the application an amount of reserves for this purpose, and it was **AGREED** that as an amount had previously been identified in reserves for this purpose, that this be the amount detailed in the application. After discussion it was also agreed to write to those Councillors who had not responded asking if they had an objection to becoming a Trustee.
14. **Date of next meeting.** The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be **23rd September 2020 at 6.15pm at a venue to be notified in due course.**