



# PORTISHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING OF THE STAFFING  
AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON  
29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 7.30pm.

**DRAFT MINUTES SUBJECT TO COMMITTEE APPROVAL AT NEXT MEETING**

The meeting was held remotely with video and telephone attendance due to Coronavirus social distancing restrictions and recorded by Microsoft Teams audio and video.

[Vimeo Meeting Video Link](#)

**Present remotely** – 6 committee members were in attendance:

**Chairman:** Cllr Bull

**Councillors:** Aldridge, Gardner, Goddard, Mason and Slatter

**Town Clerk:** M Salisbury

There were 5 members of the public present and no press in attendance.

## **SF.592 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none.

## **SF.593 TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

There were none

## **SF.594 CHAIRMANS REPORT**

Cllr Bull reported:

- With respect to the provision of a traffic warden PTC have been trying to progress this with North Somerset Council (NSC) since January but there is now a commitment to discuss it with them in August. NSC need to be involved as they will employ the warden and PTC will manage and pay for the service. The impact of Coronavirus having slowed matters down.
- The Town Orderly is now back in operation and we are looking at increasing this provision to two days a week and putting together a better process to manage him and ensure value for money.
- Covid has significantly impacted the council with around £21,000 of staff time having been diverted to Covid activity. Which is effectively a person for the year lost over 3 or 4 months. It has impacted the work the council can do with total incremental Covid costs of around £35,000 and a loss of hall bookings of around £15,000. The total finance hit to date being around £50,000. If the Precept increase had not been agreed it is likely the council would be bankrupt by the activity, but fortunately it remains in a good position to support the people of Portishead.

## **SF.595 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The following comment was read out from **Geoff Hardman**. "I am unable to attend tomorrow's meeting but would like to question the items regarding an 'Extra Staff Assistant' and 'Locum' to assist the Town Clerk. The minimum cost for this is going to be £5,000 and that is only for 3

months at minimum rates. Why, when we now have 6 members of staff whereas in the past, we coped with 3-4 staff. Nothing else has seriously changed between then and now. Yes, there is the pandemic but again previously there were only 3-4 staff members at the Town Hall without a pandemic and now we have 6 staff. Surely, at this phase of events we should be looking at what we can do with what we have. There seems to be an assumption, out there, that we are overspending what we have available and you cannot keep blaming the previous Council.”

Cllr Bull again emphasised that PTC had ‘lost’ £21,000 worth of staff time due to Covid and the reasons for the additional assistance will be covered when those items are discussed. However, it is fortunate that the Council can afford to continue to support the people of Portishead.

Cllr Slatter said it would be helpful to publish an analysis of the additional costs and it was agreed to include the July management report with the minutes. The figures are constantly moving but in broad terms the incremental (additional) cost of Covid to date is £13,257, regular staff costs that have been dedicated to Covid are £21,319. Accordingly, a total staff and resources cost of around £35,000 combined with a loss of hall revenue of c£15,000.

Cllr Gardner also noted that a post was being put together to show people the additional activity, such as 800 deliveries of shopping and prescriptions that had been organised.

**Paul Maltby** – asked if a cost had been incurred for the Town Orderly during the period he had not been working. It was confirmed that no cost had been incurred for the period he had not been available.

**Annette Hennessy** – raised the following questions:

- Why is it necessary to employ an additional project assistant on top of existing staff?
- If the council does not employ a traffic warden what will happen to the money that was set aside for this purpose? Cllr Bull said he had no doubt that we will have a traffic warden and it was planned the warden will be focused totally on Portishead and they will work a standard working week, appropriate to that position and to be discussed with North Somerset.
- What is the overtime rate of the Town Clerk? It was confirmed the Town Clerk is not paid overtime and had in common with many other key workers had to work significant additional hours over the past few months. The additional Covid work being the reason why the Town Clerk was asking for some temporary assistance to catch-up with some of the projects that had been delayed or had not been possible to progress over the Covid period.

#### **SF.596 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

**Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2020 are confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman. *All Councillors in favour*

#### **SF.597 TO RECEIVE THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 1**

A resident had asked for a point of clarification around the expenditure on Gertie Gales Allotment to be noted. This concerns expenditure in the first quarter of £1,072 vs a budget of £1,000. It was noted the expenditure was in respect of a pipe repair at the allotment that took place last year. In one respect, this is an oversight as the cost was only picked up in May as it had been thought it had been settled by the allotment committee. However, it is a cost that should be paid by the council and so has been charged in this year’s accounts but that will not affect the amount of money that is available to spend on the allotment this year.

It was noted that the Council remaining to good financial health, but also that considerable uncertainty remained as to the level of additional Covid costs, what projects would be practical and feasible during the remainder of the year and what demands would arise during Covid

recovery as things like the furlough scheme ended and projects such as the Neighbourhood Plan were accelerated.

**Resolved** – that the Financial Management Report of Quarter 1 to 30 June 2020 is approved and for it to be signed by the Responsible Financial Officer. *All Councillors in favour.*

**SF.598 TO RECEIVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 30 JUNE 2020**

**Resolved** – In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.2 the bank reconciliation schedule is approved and will be signed by the Chairman.

**SF.599 FINAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020**

**Resolved** – the final internal audit for the year ended 31 March 2020 is approved. *All Councillors in favour.*

**SF.600 RISK ASSESSMENT 2020**

It was noted that the Council had not fully completed a risk assessment in previous years and so one of the projects that had been undertaken was to put a risk control framework in place with an exercise to identify significant risks and actions that should be taken to mitigate them. The presented risk assessment being a candid review of current controls and to highlight areas for improvement, such as health & safety compliance, a review of the internal audit function and computer system resilience.

It was noted that the Risk Assessment being considered is part of the Annual Governance Return requirement and accordingly is primarily an assessment of financial and reputational governance. It is not intended to be a detailed risk assessment of operational issues, such as the reopening of halls for which separate, focused and detailed risk assessments have also been undertaken.

**Resolved** – The Risk Assessment as at July 2020 is approved. *All Councillors in favour.*

**SF.601 REVIEW OF HR POLICIES**

It was noted the updated Human Resource policies are based on NALC templates and cover the normal areas of staff policy and relations. The review has been to update them to the latest versions available from NALC.

**Resolved** – The HR policies are approved. *All Councillors in favour.*

**SF.602 HEALTH & SAFETY SUPPORT/SERVICE AGREEMENT**

The Risk Assessment has identified Health & Safety as a constantly changing area and one in which the Council could do with some external professional support to ensure it follows best practice. There are three main providers in the market and we are talking to them to put together a package of support and external audit to ensure we remain compliant and an annual cost of up to £2,500 is envisaged for such professional assistance.

**Resolved** – To appointment a Health & Safety consultant service of up to £2,500 per annum a final proposal to be made to the September Town Council. *All Councillors in favour.*

**SF.603 HALL HIRE DEBTOR BALANCES REVIEW**

**Resolved** – To write off £122.50 debtor balances relating to hall hires. *All Councillors in favour.*

## SF.604 BUDGETTING PROCESS 2021-2022

It was noted that due to staff and councillor holidays it was hoped to complete the budgeting process by the end of December, with some uncertainty over the North Somerset budgeting process and timetable due the Covid.

The proposed timetable being:

Issue of budget instructions to Committees	31 August 2020
Submission of budget requests by Committees	30 September 2020
First budget planning meeting (Internal)	21 October 2020
Presentation/discussion of draft budget – Town Council	18 November 2020
Second budget planning meeting (Internal)	30 November 2020
Presentation and approval of budget & Precept – Town Council	16 December 2020* or 20 January 2021*
Notification of Precept to NSC	22 January 2021

**Resolved** – The proposed budgeting timetable is approved. *All Councillors in favour.*

## SF.605 STAFF - EMPLOYMENT OF TEMPORARY OFFICE ASSISTANT

There are two drivers to this proposal. The last few months have shown a need to improve communication both on the website and social media and we have a member of staff that is willing to work on this project who is currently the office administrator. We also have staff who are finding it difficult, due to safeguarding and other circumstances, to work physically in the PTC office and we would like to be able to offer an office-based service as Covid recovery progresses. To facilitate these objectives, we are proposing to have temporary cover of the office administrator position, for around 3 hours a morning, for the next 3 months.

**Resolved** – The appointment of a temporary office assistant for up to 15 hours a week at an SCP pay range 7 to 12. *All Councillors in favour.*

*Cllr Mason temporarily left and re-joined the meeting (due to technical issues).*

## SF.606 STAFF – EMPLOYMENT OF PROJECT ASSISTANT

A proposal to work with a Locum Clerk, to review all policies, procedures, financial regulations and standing order that have been delayed by Covid. This request being for some temporary help to accelerate this work and complete some specific legacy projects so that the council can return to business as normal and forward-looking projects. A maximum length of time of 3 months is proposed and projects will also include transparency and publication scheme requirements as well as new website accessibility rules for which compliance is required by 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

**Annette Hennessy** – felt the position should be advertised in the North Somerset Times and on the PTC website. Cllr Bull agreed that if this were a permanent position that would be the case but that there was currently an urgency to act and for a short term position to delay matters for a full recruitment process would not be in the best interests of the council or its staff. It was also confirmed that the project position was temporary to complete some specific tasks and it would not be extended beyond those specific objectives.

Cllr Goddard felt that it would be better to follow a full recruitment basis in the interests of transparency. It was again noted that there was an urgency to act and the expertise required was that of a qualified Clerk to assist with some specific and technical deliverables. Having

identified someone with the appropriate qualifications and experience who was temporarily available it was considered that it was best to act quickly.

Cllr Mason also asked that in the future and if there is time can all positions be advertised in the local paper. It was agreed that moving forward priority would be given to an open recruitment process and this would be the case if the temporary office assistance position is extended beyond 3 months.

**Resolved** – The appointment of a temporary project assistant for up to 10 hours a week at an SCP pay range 45 to 46 for up to 3 months. *4 Councillors in favour and 2 against.*

**SF.607 STAFF PAY AWARD 2020-12**

This point was discussed with no conclusion reached. It was noted that all staff should be dealt with in the same way, whether pensions scheme members or not. It was agreed, to wait until the results of the NJC process is known before taking a decision, reflecting on the total costs to the council.

**SF.608 HALLS – REDCLIFFE BAY SNOOKER CLUB HIRE**

**Resolved** – to offer a 75% reduction in rent for the period April to July and a 50% reduction in rent whilst capacity is limited to two players. *All Councillors in favour.*

**SF.609 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Staffing & Finance Committee meeting was noted as Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 7.30pm.

*Meeting Closed at 20:22*

Signed:.....Chairman.

Date:.....