

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

In accordance with s78 of the Local Authorities and Police Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020

9 JUNE, 2020

MINUTES

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Present:

Councillors:

Alcock	Fojtik
Coles (Chairman)	How
Curtis	Jackson (Mayor)
Dowling	Lee
Dyer	Vos

I Fradgley (observer)	
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Clerk: Deputy Town Clerk, Town Clerk was also present

Press: None

Public: None present (meeting streamed live on Facebook)

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1. To Appoint a Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee

Mayor Jackson took the Chair for the appointment of Chairman and called for nominations.

Councillors Coles and Dowling were nominated and both were willing to stand. In accordance with Standing Orders TC19, the election was determined by written ballot, electronically submitted to the Deputy Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Liz Coles be appointed as Chairman of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year 2020-21.

Councillor Coles then called for nominations for Deputy Chairman.

Councillor Fojtik was nominated and it was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: That Councillor Jason Fojtik be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year 2020-21.

2. To Accept Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of Interest on items on the Agenda

There were no declarations of interest.

4. To Receive Written Requests for Dispensation for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

There were no written or verbal requests for dispensations.

5. To Grant Any Requests for Dispensation

There were no requests for dispensation required.

6. Public Participation

No one wished to speak during public participation.

7. To Approve Draft Open Minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10 March, 2020

Councillor Vos asked for a review of items which had been AGREED or RECOMMENDED at the meeting, prior to the coronavirus pandemic emergency and subsequent lockdown.

The Deputy Town Clerk provided the following updates on items which had changed:

- 7.1) the expected budget surplus at year end 2019-20 from an underspend on Amenities (Bus Shelters / Dog Hygiene / Litter / Cycle Racks) which would have been carried forward to uplift the budget available for 2020-21 had not happened, as the acquisition and installation of a new bus shelter in Bridgetown Ward towards the end of the financial year had resulted in a deficit, funded from previous surpluses held in the General Reserve.
- 7.2) a budget virement transfer of £3,000 from the Tranquility Garden Expenditure – Maintenance & Development Costs Budget to the Cemetery Expenditure – Equipment Budget to be used to contribute to the costs of a new power barrow had not been needed in 2019-20. This surplus was transferred to the General Reserve at year end. The purchase had now been undertaken in the current financial year and a virement of £3,000 from the General Reserve will be used to cover the additional expenditure which was not included in the original budget for 2020-21.
- 7.3) the Cemetery Land & Building Reserve decrease by a virement of £10,000 towards further cemetery driveway improvements had not been needed in 2019-20 because the scheduled work was delayed due to the lockdown. The works have now been completed in the current financial year and the recommended virement of £10,000 from the Cemetery Land & Building Reserve will be used to cover the additional expenditure in 2020-21.
- 7.4) a template used by Warwickshire County Council for Risk Management had been provided but no further changes had been made to the Town Council's Risk Register to date. The review of High Risk items had not been progressed due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdown and other priorities requiring more immediate attention.

Regarding the increase in the Designated Vehicle Replacement Reserve, it was mentioned that the government had just announced possible grants as part of a vehicle scrappage scheme to remove diesel engine vehicles, and this was noted for future consideration as part of the ongoing matter regarding replacement of the civic car.

It was subsequently Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That the Open Minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10 March, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

In accordance with current procedures, the Chairman's signature and the date will be appended electronically to the Minutes.

8. To Adopt the Draft Notes of Sub-Group Meetings

8.1 Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel

A query arose regarding whether a virement was required if both Phase 2 (external works) and Phase 3 (internal decorations) of the ongoing Town Hall maintenance programme were to take place in the current financial year, as this had not been considered when the budget was approved. As the current year's budget includes £227,000 towards Town Hall maintenance costs and there is still uncertainty over exactly what work will be able to be completed over the next 9 months, members were advised that this budget head will be closely monitored as actual costs are incurred during the year and a virement will only be considered if it becomes necessary.

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That the Draft Notes of the Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel meetings held on 13 May, 2020 be adopted.

9. Management Accounts for the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

The report was noted.

10. Additional meeting date to review and recommend the Annual Accounts and Annual Return for the year 2019-20 ended 31 March 2020

The Deputy Town Clerk updated members on progress with the preparation of the draft Annual Accounts and the revised timescales for completing the annual audit process due to the coronavirus pandemic. All parties are working towards getting this done by July 2020 in order for the documents to be reviewed and recommended by the Finance & Scrutiny Committee in mid July for approval by Town Council at the meeting on 28 July, 2020.

Members AGREED that a virtual poll survey of dates should be undertaken via email once the dates for the availability of the required documentation had been confirmed.

11. Draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Finance & Audit Committee

A number of members suggested amendments or asked for further information. Queries and concerns were noted by the Town Clerk and will be addressed in subsequent draft versions of the Terms of Reference. These will be debated further at the Town Council meeting on 28 July, 2020.

*To defer issues to Confidential Session*

*The Chairman proposed and it was AGREED that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, agenda item 9.4, minuted as 14, be moved to Confidential Session.*

12. Deputy Town Clerk's Verbal Report – for information only

A number of updates were given:

12.1 Outstanding items relating to the Internal Audit

- 12.2 A suggestion for a new Designated Reserve for Long Term Investments which could be implemented at year end 2020-21 to give greater transparency to the Council's Reserves (note – this will also impact on the Reserves Policy, which will be reviewed as part of the Budget process later this year)
- 12.3 Confirmation that new Designated Reserves per Committee would be considered as part of the Budget process if the restructure goes ahead, but would only be identified in the Financial Statements at year end
- 12.4 A change to the initial procedure for electronic approval of online payments during the lockdown process, to enable a more varied response for internal audit purposes by including all members of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee
- 12.5 A summary of the impact of COVID-19 on Council's income and for 2020-21 to date:
- Town Hall fee income down £5,900 compared to last year and already close to the budgeted deficit for the full year
  - Market fee income down by over £14,000 for the first quarter
  - Investment dividend income expected to fall by 25% to 30% over the rest of the year, estimated to be down by £4,000 to £5,000

Expenditure of £25,000 as the Town Council's contribution to the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations for 2020-21 had been saved due to the cancellation of the event in 2020, but this was likely to be used to cover additional costs incurred by Council's response to COVID-19.

Questions were received with regard to:

- definition of Long Term Reserves – it was explained were in line with the request by the External Auditor last year to separate out the investments in the CCLA Local

Authorities' Property Fund and in Cambridge & Counties  
Bank fixed term bonds

- surplus variances in operational expenditure in 2019-20, the impact of COVID-19 on Council's expenditure and potential changes to expenditure in the current year – it was noted that many surpluses are down to contingency and timing, but that no significant savings had been identified yet in the current lockdown situation to offset income losses.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting is 8 September, 2020 at 6:30pm at the Town Hall or 6:00pm using Zoom software if virtual meetings are still in place.

The date for a meeting to review and recommend the Annual Accounts (Financial Statements) and Annual Return (AGAR) will be determined by a virtual poll survey of members once the timescales for agreeing the Final Draft Accounts and completion of the Internal Audit have been confirmed. The date will be published in due course.

***Confidential Session***

14. Outstanding Debtors Schedule

No actions were required and the report was fully explained and noted.

Cllr Fojtik enquired whether the procedure for dealing with this agenda item could be changed for future meetings, to avoid time being spent on a matter which invariably required no further action.

The Town Clerk advised that Members would need to review this item prior to papers being sent out, in order that it could still be included as an agenda item if a debate on further action was required.

After some discussion, Members AGREED that the Outstanding Debtors Schedule and associated report should be circulated the week before any future Finance & Scrutiny Committee meeting.

*The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7:26pm*