

SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes

of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held at the Chamber, Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth at 20:30 on **Monday 17th January 2022**.

Those present

Cllr Angela Alder
Cllr Eric Buckmaster
Cllr Ruth Buckmaster

Cllr David Royle
Cllr Nathan Parsad

In attendance:

Christopher Hunt – RFO
J Sargant – Town Project Manager

Cllr Greg Rattey (Ex Officio)

F 21/17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr D Patel - *[prop Cllr R Buckmaster; secd Cllr N Parsad]*

F 21/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest by Members

F 21/19 MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 13th September 2021 (F02)
[prop Cllr A Alder; secd Cllr R Buckmaster]

- Cllr E Buckmaster asked if there was an update on the energy provider for the council building, the Clerk responded that a one year fixed rate contract had been completed due to the rapid increase in charges.

F 21/20 STAFF MATTERS

To consider any matters relating to members of staff.

Updates:

- The Clerk informed members that Covid restrictions asking people to work from home if possible was negatively impacting on communication and as such all staff were happy to work in the office with caution.
- The Clerk with Cllr Alder were now in a position to complete staff appraisals and these would be completed this month.

F 21/21 FINANCE MATTERS

Updates:

- Cllr E Buckmaster referred to the 2022/23 budget and asked if members agreed to the Clerk referring to the points in his report to cover the main areas of change, all agreed to this.
- The Clerk then proceeded to read from his report:
- Establishment – a new full time Ranger was budgeted for due to

the increase in land management and to save on outsourcing to contractors

- Finance and Policy – the office will move over to a VOIP internet phone system to save money. Computer numbers will be reduced and the website to be upgraded.

Cllr Royle asked if the Eco Audit had impacted on the budget, the Clerk responded that green energy providers had been contacted but were very expensive, so it was agreed for this year to go for a cheaper option until the energy costs had stabilised.

- Estates – storage continues to be expensive and alternative locations are being sought but difficult to find locally
- Amenities – Amin areas are allotments, Cemetery, West Road Play area and Orchard management.

Cllr Alder asked if the new West Road allotments could have funding from the developer to ensure they don't run at a loss. Cllr E Buckmaster stated that this was not likely. Cllr R Buckmaster enquired to the cutting of the grass in the orchard as it had not been completed, the Project Manager said part payment had been made only and it was the site that affected the ability to complete a full grass cut.

- Operations – Bell Street toilets were generating money from users. A lawnmower is required due to the current one getting old and CCTV is to be extended in the town and all had been budgeted for.
- Events – Local Market to start, Fun On The Field to go ahead, Christmas event to be repeated as they were pre Covid restrictions.

Cllr Furnace asked if the Town Selfie Walk was budgeted for which the Clerk informed it was.

- Projects – the Town Green project had been budgeted for another ten thousand pounds added to reserves to support the project.
- Civic Event – Mayor Civic Dinner event to go ahead this year.
- SawboBus – funding has been stopped by East Herts District Council and funding is being sought from several sources to maintain the service.

Options regarding funding were:

1. Do nothing, bus service to be terminated
2. A small fee, £2 per day for passengers, STC subsidy at previous investment of £15,000. This may be sufficient to maintain the service and sponsorship and further funding streams are being explored. The introduction of a fare may reduce numbers further for those who are not willing to pay.
3. Reduce the fee to £1 per day for passengers increasing STC's subsidy to £25,000

It was agreed by all members recommendation 3 was preferred and to promote the service, seek sponsorship and any other funding that may be available. It was recognised the service was valued by the users who are predominantly who are at risk of socially isolated and offered them access to local amenities.

- Summary – the above was summarised by the Clerk and all were happy for the budget to be submitted for the full town Council
[prop Cllr Alder; sec'd Cllr R Buckmaster]

Cllr R Buckmaster raised a point, in the budget playschemes were marked for £2000 and in fact this was no longer required, this money could be removed from the budget for this coming financial year, this will be raised at the full council meeting.

F 21/22 POLICY MATTERS

Updates:

- The Clerk explained that he was required to review Standing Orders and two items needed to be added relating to public and press being able to record Town Council meetings and voting on reasons given for Councillors absence from meetings was to be voted on if it was deemed valid or recorded as an absence.
[prop Cllr Parsad; sec'd Cllr Royle]

F 21/23 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

To consider any items for inclusion on future agendas.
There were none

Meeting Closed at 21.16