

## MINUTES

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE** held in the Guildhall, Mill Street, Ludlow on **MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015** at **7.00PM**

### **PF/130**    **PRESENT**

Chairman:                      Councillor Draper

Councillors:                 Cobley; Parry; Sheward; Smithers

Officers:                      Gina Wilding, Town Clerk  
                                     Sarah Hughes, Finance Assistant

Also Attending              Councillor Perks

### **PF/131**    **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Smithers Proposed that Councillor Draper be elected as chairman for the remainder of 2014/15.

#### **RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/PD**

That Councillor Draper be elected as chairman for the remainder of 2014/15.

### **PF/132**    **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Chairman informed Councillors and members of the public of the fire exits, fire assembly point and asked that everyone sign the attendance log.

### **PF/133**    **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ginger, Lyle, Kemp.

### **PF/134**    **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

#### Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

<u>Member</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Reason</u>
V. Parry		Chair of Ludlow in Bloom

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

<u>Member</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Reason</u>
V. Parry	12	On the board of SALC

Declarations of Personal Interest

A. Cobley	Item 10	Member of the Local Government Pension Scheme
C. Sheward	Item 10	Member of the Local Government Pension Scheme

**PF/135 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION (15 minutes)**

There were no members of the public or press present.

**PF/136 UNITARY COUNCILLORS SESSION**

Councillor Parry stated her concerns over grant funding for local schools as government funding is set to be cut in 2018 by a further £7million.

**PF/137 MINUTES****RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/AC**

That the open and closed session minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**PF/138 ITEMS TO ACTION**

Members thanked staff for completing the items to action.

**RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/PD**

That the Items to Action table be noted.

**PF/139 FINANCIAL INFORMATION****RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/AC**

That Payments and Income Reports, Barclaycard Statement and Bank Reconciliation for February 2015 be received.

**PF/140 PENSION SCHEME UPDATE**

Councillor Parry questioned whether staff were given the choice to enter into the scheme, which the Town Clerk clarified that they were.

**RESOLVED (Unanimous) PD/VP**

That the Freedom and Choice update to the pension scheme be noted.

**PF/141 POLICIES****a) Flag Protocol**

Discussion took place regarding flag protocol for special events.

Councillor Sheward asked if press are informed when a flag is flown to mark a special event, as this would help the public become aware of National days. The Town Clerk replied that we do not currently send out press releases for this, but that it could be added to the protocol.

**RECOMMENDED (Unanimous) PD/JS**

That the Flag Protocol be readopted with the addition of a press release being sent out to inform residents of the protocol.

**b) Training Policy**

Councillor Draper confirmed that the Training Policy and Dignity at Work Policy had both been to Ellis Whittam for consultation.

Councillor Sheward asking whether the policy is sufficient with regards to mandatory training such as Health & Safety, to which the Town Clerk clarified that such training would be discussed at staff appraisals to make sure requirements are met.

**RECOMMENDED (Unanimous) JS/CS**

To adopt the Training Policy.

**c) Dignity at Work Policy**

Councillor Parry stated she would be pleased to see this policy readopted as she felt it was important for staff.

Councillor Smithers asked whether there was a separate policy for Whistle Blowing, to which the Town Clerk clarified that there was.

**RECOMMENDED (Unanimous) JS/CS**

To adopt the Dignity at Work Policy

**PF/142    LEGISLATION****a) Consultation on extended Ombudsman's remit**

Members welcomed the principles of openness and transparency in local government

Councillor Sheward expressed his concerns at extending the scheme to smaller Councils because the increased work load would be too onerous and ???.

Councillor Parry stated she felt the Ombudsman proves a good last resort.

Councillor Smithers suggested that it may be a positive change, and that the response form should be completed by the Committee for approval by Full Council. Members agreed and went on to discuss the questions in detail and make suggested answers.

Councillor Perks entered the meeting at 7.30pm

**RECOMMENDED (Unanimous) PD/JS**

The following responses:-

Q1. *Should the Local Government Ombudsman's jurisdiction be extended to larger Parish and Town Councils?*

YES

Q2. *Should a larger Parish or Town Council be defined by having a population the same as or greater than 35,000 people, or should the threshold be set at a different limit?*

Councillors agreed the limit should be 35,000 or greater.

Q3. *Should a larger Parish or Town Council be defined by having an annual precept of £1m or more?*

YES – Councils of this size should have sufficient staff and resources to enable them to successfully comply with the Ombudsman process.

Q4. *Should a larger Parish or Town Council be defined by both population and budget?*

YES

Q5. *Once subject to the Local Government Ombudsman's jurisdiction, should the parish or town council remain so for a fixed period of time?*

YES – there should be an option to review

**b) Fit for Work Guidance****RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/CS**

That the Fit for Work Guidance be noted

**c) New National Minimum Wage Rate**

The Mayor stated that the Town Council's minimum pay scale began at SCP7 £7.28 p/h.

**RESOLVED (Unanimous) JS/CS**

The new National Minimum wage rate of £6.50 p/h be noted.

**PF/143 SCHOOL SUSTAINABILITY IN SHROPSHIRE**

Ludlow's aging population is reflected in the reducing school age population. It was important to consider the 5 year and 10 year impacts in Ludlow.

Lack of affordable housing, low wages and lack of employment opportunities are a significant disincentive for young families.

There is further impact on surrounding parish schools that may have to merge or close, which could also increase travel to and from schools.

**RECOMMENDED (Unanimous) JS/VP**

To:-

- i) Note the information provided by the Shropshire Schools Forum and Shropshire Council
- ii) Provide information on our website
- iii) Request further information specific to Ludlow
- iv) Refer the matter to the Town Plan Working Group

**PF/144 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC: PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

The Chairman moved that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business pursuant to section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**RESOLVED (Unanimous) PD/JS**

That the public be excluded and the meeting continue in closed session.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

N.B. Closed Session Minutes will be issued.