

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, St Ives Town Council, held in the Committee, The Guildhall, St Ives on 7 June 2016 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Chairman - Councillor R Tulley
Vice-Chairman – Councillor L Taylor

COUNCILLORS

Andrewes T (until 7.20pm)	Prior P
Mitchell A	Symons J
Nicholls C	Williams T

OFFICERS

Town Clerk
Support Services Manager
Facilities Manager
Visit St Ives Information Centre Manager

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – were received from Councillors Garrood and Glanville.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

None.

F&GP.1 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – that Councillor R Tulley be elected committee Chairman for 2016 / 2017.

F&GP.2. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – that Councillor L Taylor be elected committee Vice-Chairman for 2016 / 2017.

F&GP.3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Chairman signs as a true and correct record the Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 14 April 2016.

F&GP.4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

F&GP.5. DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLOR AND OFFICER INTERESTS

The Town Clerk and Support Services Manager each declared in Interest in Minute F&GP.13 (TOIL Policy and accrued hours) and Minute F&GP.14 (Job Evaluation recommendations) as officers to whom these decisions would apply, and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of these items.

The Facilities Manager and Visit St Ives Information Centre Manager each declared an Interest in Minute F&GP.14 (Job Evaluation recommendations) as officers to whom these decisions would apply, and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of these items.

F&GP6. **END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS 2015/2016**

Members considered: the Annual Statement of Accounts (in draft format); the template for the Annual Governance Statement; and the finance reports for the previous year and for April and May of 2016. As discussions at the committee meeting might require some final adjustments, the Annual Return and Annual Governance Statement were blank at this stage, to be completed for the Council meeting on 16 June. There was a necessity for the statutory annual return to be completed and so this would be presented to Council for decision on 16 June 2016.

The Chairman gave an overview of the financial performance of the council in the last financial year, and summarised the net income / expenditure in the year.

It was noted that there was a significant amount of detailed information tabled at the meeting and the Town Clerk advised that the end of year finance reports required the co-ordinated activity and efforts of the Finance Officer, accounts consultant and the Town Clerk. The draft Statement of Accounts and supporting reports were circulated at this stage to enable some discussion at committee level and that work to finalise the documents would be carried out in readiness for the Council meeting on 16 June. Councillors were advised that the Clerk would be happy to clarify any points raised after the meeting, once the full reports had been read.

In answer to a question raised, it was noted that the 2015/16 surplus included budgets carried forward, for example nearly all the £45,000 for public conveniences refurbishment works had been carried forward to 2016/17 as the works were commissioned but not carried out in the last financial year. An adjustment would be made to cover the PRS charges made and which may not be able to be recovered.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that

- 1) the Annual Return and Annual Governance be considered and signed off at the meeting of the Council on 16 June; and
- 2) the Annual Statement of Accounts 2015/2016 be approved.

Councillor Andrewes left the meeting at this point.

F&GP7. **LOCATION OF WORKSTATIONS**

The Chairman outlined the purpose of the report on the location of workstations, as circulated prior to the meeting.

In summary, the proposal was for the two ground floor offices to remain as they were, with a reception desk (and therefore second workstation) to be installed in the first office. On the first floor, for the wall between the store and the reception office to be knocked through, to create a larger office to accommodate three workstations. The proposals aimed to ensure that there would be a workstation for all staff, with a hot-desking capability to ensure flexible working to meet the business need.

During discussion the following points were considered:

- planning permission was not understood to be necessary (internal wall, not a listed building)
- the structural basis of the wall would be checked before removal
- noted the previous recent council decision to knock through the wall in the ground floor offices to create an open reception office – this did not form part of the current proposal
- the report still aimed to achieve full time office cover and reception
- there could be an option to retain a smaller stationery cupboard with a new stud wall
- noted that the Facilities Committee were due to receive a report at its next meeting, giving options for the use of space in the Guildhall, these options were being considered in conjunction with the currently proposed works.
- an awareness that this and other reports represented significant expenditure and changes to the operation of the council as part of an investment in the effectiveness and efficiency of the running of the council. It was noted that the staffing had increased in recent years and so office provision needed to increase accordingly.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that the principle of setting out the workstations in the way set out in the report be endorsed and a budget of up to £5,000 from the repairs and maintenance budget and administration budgets for the removal of the wall etc and the desks respectively, be approved.

F&GP8. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meeting) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

F&GP9 **PROPOSED ADDITIONAL POST – ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OFFICER** (Paragraph 3)

Members considered the report setting out the Town Clerk's recommendation for a full time administrative support officer.

During discussion, whilst it was noted that a job-share could generate a greater level of interest for potential applicants, the aim of the post was to give dedicated administrative support and continuity, helping towards the commitment to opening the office from 9 to 5 each weekday – a significant commitment of staff time.

The draft job description circulated at the meeting was considered and there was general support for the principle of increasing the administrative support of the council, with some debate around whether the role should be more targeted. Officers advised that a properly resourced staffing team would be more able to be efficient, effective and accountable, with the proposed administrative support officer to be the first point of call for general enquiries / emails /phone / personal callers.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that a proposed, new Administrative Support Officer post be created, and authorises the Support Services Manager to proceed to appoint to this post, to be advertised at Living Wage (£8.25 per hr) on a permanent contract.

F&GP10. **PROPOSED ADDITIONAL POST – FACILITIES MAINTENANCE OFFICER** (Paragraph 3)

Members considered the report circulated along with draft job description and costings.

The Facilities Manager reported on the previous consideration of the Facilities Committee that a new post be created, seeking a semi-skilled facilities maintenance officer, on the basis of a minimum set number of hours per week. The aim of the post was to be proactive with maintenance, and to be able to tackle maintenance issues with in-house staff in the first instance, bringing about cost savings and early reaction times.

The potential salary and cost to the council were considered, alongside the potential savings, particularly in view of public conveniences.

During discussion it was considered whether trade qualification and/or relevant experience should be essential rather than desirable, and the proposed rate of pay was considered in comparison with other similar posts being advertised elsewhere, and in the context of the pay profile of the town council.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that a proposed, new Facilities Maintenance Officer post be created and authorises the Facilities Manager to proceed to appoint to this post on the basis of a permanent contract of at least 21 hours per week, with rate of pay of £12.50 per hour, as per job description circulated.

F&GP.11 **IT AND TELEPHONY REVIEW** (Paragraph 3)

Members considered the report circulated prior to the meeting, and the further update report circulated at the meeting.

The Chairman set out the need to update the telephone system and IT equipment throughout the Council, bringing all staff onto a single system, enabling remote working and a fully networked IT system.

The process to arrive at the two companies whose quotes were circulated had involved officer negotiations with four companies originally, with the final two representing the best options in view of service, support and cost. Each of the two companies who had provided a final quote were considered competent and able to meet the requirements of the Council, achieved in different ways and with differing costings accordingly.

Councillors were advised that an independent consultant had been commissioned and that their input into the process had been highly valued. After full negotiations, officers were confident that the quotes presented to Council represented the best options available.

During discussion it was noted that the provision will need to be scalable, allowing for increases or decreases of staff numbers in future.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that the upgrade of the telephone and IT systems be approved, with the preferred package being Option B, of the two options set out in the report. The upgrade to be funded from office equipment budgets and the remainder of the Year 1 cost to be funded from Reserves.

F&GP.12 2016 / 2017 PAYSCALES (PARAGRAPH 3)

The Clerk reported that, nationally, the employers and unions had arrived at agreement for the 2016/2017 local government pay scales and so the agreed figures would be presented to Council to be adopted as the rates of pay for staff to be backdated from 1 April 2016. Due to an administrative oversight, the figures had not been circulated for this meeting and so would be circulated with the Council reports.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that the nationally recommended pay scales be approved.

F&GP.13 IMPLEMENTATION OF TOIL POLICY AND PREVIOUS ADDITIONAL HOURS ACCRUED

The Town Clerk and Support Services Manager each declared an Interest in this item as officers to whom the decision would apply, and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item. Other officers withdrew from the meeting during this item in view of confidentiality of the discussions.

Members considered a report on the level of time off in lieu hours accrued by the Town Clerk and the Support Services Manager in the context of working to implement a forthcoming TOIL Policy which would limit the number of hours accrued at any one time to 30 hours.

As previously requested, a report was circulated setting out a summary of the additional hours worked. Following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED – to Council that

- (1) TOIL card and holiday records already maintained by staff would be more closely monitored by the Council and that for TOIL, a maximum of 30 hours should be held at any one time, with the amount to be zero'd in each financial year; and
- (2) a one-off ex-gratia payment be made to each of the postholders set out in the report, payment of a sum to be reported to Council and on the basis that it would not accumulate any pension liability.

F&GP.14. JOB EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS (Paragraphs 1,2 &3)

The Town Clerk, Support Services Manager, Facilities Manager and Visit St Ives Information Centre Manager each declared an Interest in this item as Officers to whom this decision would apply, and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Members considered the report which set out the recommendations of the consultant appointed to carry out the job evaluation review.

Following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED – to Council that the recommendations from the job evaluation review be adopted, with details to be set out in a report to Council.

F&GP15. **PROPOSED TENANCY AT WILL – NURSERY SITE NEXT TO TREWYN GARDENS**
(Paragraph 3)

Members considered the report circulated, setting out the proposed terms for a Tenancy at Will which would enable the town council to utilise three sheds / outbuildings at the nursery site adjacent to Trewyn Gardens, for use by the operational staff and for storage. It was noted that the greenhouses would still be available for an alternative use, with expressions of interest to be invited.

Following discussion, it was

RECOMMENDED – to Council that signing of the Tenancy at Will, as set out in the report, be approved.

F&GP16 **SUB-LEASE OF FIRST FLOOR OFFICE, THE ISLAND CENTRE** (Paragraph 3)

The Town Clerk reported on the recent decision of the Facilities Committee to advertise the smaller of the two first floor offices at the Island Centre at a cost of £2,000 per annum plus £380 service charge, with the intention that it should be advertised by word of mouth, in the local press and on the town council website. Due to prioritising the completion of the head lease of the Island Centre building to the town council, formal adverts had yet to be placed but there had already been interest from two local businesses and one local organisation who were looking to utilise office space in the area. Of the two businesses, one had withdrawn their interest and another had not placed a formal offer. The local organisation had agreed to the annual rent and service charge, and were keen to take up occupation of the office as soon as possible.

It was noted that there on this occasion, as the office was to be let at a set rent as opposed to inviting expressions of interest, as a prospective tenant had been found, it was not necessary to go through the steps of placing advertisements. There was some concern expressed that without advertising there may have been others who might wish to take up the tenancy, although it was noted that as the prospective tenants were a reputable local organisation offering the asking rent, advertising would only serve to prolong the process before offering them the space.

RECOMMENDED – to Council that as there was a prospective tenant willing to pay the asking rent, that the sub-lease of the smaller office on the first floor of the Island Centre be offered to them on the terms previously set out by the Facilities Committee.

Cllrs Mitchell and Prior requested that their names be recorded as voting against this proposal.

Meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Chairman