

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY 2015 AT EASTON METHODIST CHURCH HALL

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs S. Bradley (Chair), G. Chadwick, R. Hughes, A. Matthews, I. Munro-Price, R. Nowak, Mrs S. Reynolds and R. Wild.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ian Looker (Town Clerk), Cllrs. R. Denton-White, Ms S. Lees and J. Thorner, together with over fifty members of the public.

89 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs. Miss A. Munro, T. Munro and Mrs. E. Munro-Price.

90 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was taken by the Chair that all the members present had a pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 – 2015/16 Budget and Precept as Council taxpayers, but a dispensation to debate and vote on it. Likewise the Chair accepted that by a previous decision of the Town Council the three other members present were able to debate, but not vote on item 8.

91 – PUBLIC HALF-HOUR

Paul Snow expressed concern that there had been more than one figure proposed relating to the precept at the previous Town Council meeting. As a member of the Voice of Portland he was against any increase. He quoted figures for Council Tax across the country that showed Portland's high rate of contribution and the results of a local petition requesting no increase. He also questioned the need for additional administrative expenditure. Instead he thought Town Councillors should be attending Borough and County meetings to press for better council services on the Island.

Jess Nagel, also a member of Voice of Portland, stressed that the petition results were resoundingly in favour of a zero increase in Council charge this year.

Roger Luther put the case for those on the Island who had had little or no rise in their incomes over the last twelve months.

Speaking from the floor Cllr. Lees questioned the Council's need to hold more than £70,000 in reserves, including money not spent this year on providing an Island Caretaker.

Also from the floor Cllr. Thorner criticised the Council for wasting money on postage and the Neighbourhood Plan.

92 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14TH JANUARY 2015

Minute 77 – Public Half-Hour

Cllr Reynolds pointed out that para 3 should have begun, “Paul Snow ...”. With this amendment the minutes of the meeting were formally agreed and signed as an accurate record. (For: 8 votes, Against: 0 votes, Abstentions: 0 votes)

93 – MINUTE UPDATE AND MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

94 – FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Payments for Authorisation

RESOLVED – that the schedule of invoices (cheque refs. 3233 - 3238) in the sum of £702.16 including VAT be approved. (8-0-0)

b) 2014/15 Financial Report to 31st January 2015

RESOLVED – that the report be accepted.

95 – RESERVES POLICY

Cllr. Matthews spoke to his agenda paper, which included a draft reserves policy. He reminded members that the Council did not at present have such a policy in operation. He proposed and it was **RESOLVED** – that the document be adopted as a working draft reserves policy. (8-0-0)

96 – 2015/16 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Cllr. Matthews explained that the Council had set lower and upper limits to an increase in Council Tax of zero and £10. He had been asked to provide details of the various options available, which he had simplified to increases of zero, £5 and £10.

Cllr. Chadwick advocated a zero increase. The new Council elected in May might wish to go along a different route from hitherto, so he thought the priority was for the Council to set its house in order, looking at the various options and projects before them while trying to keep in touch with public opinion.

Cllr. Nowak endorsed this view with some regret. He felt issues around the last precept and the Council taking time to implement its new committee structure had largely wasted the past year. He regretted the lack of services the Council was providing and therefore not fulfilling its potential.

Cllrs. Hughes and Matthews both spoke in favour of a modest increase in the charge.

It was proposed by Cllr. Chadwick and **RECOMMENDED** – that there be a zero increase in the Band D Council Tax charge, shortfalls in expenditure to be met from reserves. (5-3-0)

(Cllr. Munro-Price left the meeting at 8.10 pm.)

97 – INVESTMENT ADVICE

It was proposed by Cllr. Chadwick and **RESOLVED** – that Cllr. Matthews and the Clerk attend the investment selection interviews at Dorchester on 26th February. (7-0-0)

98 – DELEGATION OF TASKS

It was proposed by Cllr. Nowak and **RESOLVED** – that this become a standard agenda item at Finance & Resources meetings. (7-0-0)

99 – EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that pursuant to the provisions of Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for agenda item 11 by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. (7-0-0)

(The recording of the meeting ceased at 8.22 pm.)

100 – ADMINISTRATIVE WORKLOAD & ADDITIONAL STAFFING PROVISION

a) It was proposed by Cllr. Nowak and **RESOLVED** – that the quotation for carrying out additional administrative tasks recommended by the staffing review be accepted in the sum of £500.00 excluding VAT.

b) It was proposed and **RECOMMENDED** – that the Council appoint a temporary Assistant Clerk for a period of three months.

101 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 18th March 2015, starting at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.

Signed Dated
(Chair)