

Minutes of the **FINANCE & HR COMMITTEE** meeting held in the Parish Office, Lower Green Road, Pembury on **Friday 3 February 2023** at 10:30am.



**Councillors Present:**

Cllr N Stratton (Chair)

Cllr K Brooks (Vice-Chair)

Cllr D Reilly

**Apologies:**

There were none

**Also in attendance:**

Helen Munro (Clerk)

22/369. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** There were none.

22/370. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.** There were none.

22/371. **MINUTES.** The minutes from the committee meeting held on 16 November 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

22/372. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.** There were none.

22/373. **CLERK'S REPORT.** The following report was **noted:**

- a. Pavilion Joint Management Agreement – All parties have approved the agreement and it is being prepared for signature.
- b. IT Hardware and Software – 2x Samsung tablets have been purchased and work to create an IT Policy is in hand.
- c. Hardship Fund – A grant of £150 towards the Winter Warmth Packs has been received from the Co-operative. This will fund various food items for the packs being supplied by the Community Warden. The Community Warden needs to be reimbursed for various items and this is on the next Accounts for Payment.

22/374. **OPEN SESSION.** There were no members of the public present.

22/375. **AUDIT.** The Interim Internal Audit on 15 February 2023 was noted.

22/376. **GOVERNANCE & POLICIES.** The following were reviewed:

- a. Financial Regulations and Checklist. A significant number of changes were being suggested and it was agreed that these should be reviewed

again at the next Committee meeting in April. Some minor corrections were suggested and would be implemented prior to the review in April.

- b. Publication Scheme. No changes proposed. It was **RESOLVED** that a recommendation would be made for Full Council to approve the policy.
- c. Complaints policy. No changes proposed. It was **RESOLVED** that a recommendation would be made for Full Council to approve the policy.
- d. Privacy Notices. Minor amendments were made, and it was **RESOLVED** that a recommendation would be made for Full Council to approve the policy.
- e. IT Policy. The new policy was circulated. The Clerk was due to speak to the Council's IT Contractor shortly about various issues. It was **RESOLVED** that the initial changes would be made and circulated to Committee members for comment. It was **RESOLVED** that the amended policy would then be circulated to all councillors for their views. The policy would then be discussed at the next Committee meeting in April.

22/377. **CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE.**

- a. Model Dignity at Work Policy. The Model policy was discussed, and it was **RESOLVED** that it be put into the Parish Council format and recommended to Full Council.
- b. Model Councillor – Officer Protocol. The Model policy was discussed, and it was **RESOLVED** that it be recommended to Full Council.
- c. Councillor and Officer Training. It was **RESOLVED** to add an item on to the March Full Council agenda to highlight Councillor training required. Confirmation of what was needed to sign up to the pledge would be circulated.

22/378. **TERMS OF REFERENCE.**

- a. Finance & HR Committee – the number of meetings was discussed as workload was high. It was **RESOLVED** that no changes be recommended to Full Council. However, two extra informal meetings would be arranged annually to have initial discussions about policies and budgets.
- b. Planning & Highways Committee – it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council.

- c. Open Spaces Committee – it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council.
- d. Internal Audit – the dates to be updated then it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council.
- e. Working Groups – it was **RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to Full Council to consider the operation of the current Working Groups to reduce the impact on office staff.

22/379. **RISK ASSESSMENT.**

- a. There were no new risks affecting the Council.
- b. There had been no new risk assessments undertaken since the last Committee meeting.
- c. The draft Council Risk Assessment was reviewed. Computer and internet security issues needed to be resolved which were being discussed with the Council’s IT contractor. This one item would be added to the next Committee agenda for a further review prior to recommendation to Full Council.

22/380. **SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL.** The system of internal control was reviewed, and amendments were agreed relating to changes to how bank reconciliations were approved as discussed earlier in the meeting. Following this change, it was **RESOLVED** that it be recommended the system of internal control to Full Council and that the system is effective.

22/381. **SOFTWARE.**

- a. Accounting software quotes had been obtained but one had increased significantly since prices were obtained for budgetary purposes. It was **RESOLVED** that the Clerk carry out further research and share an update with Committee Members by email. This would then be added to the next Full Council agenda for a decision.
- b. It was agreed that the annual Zoom subscription would not be renewed from April 2023. Use of Teams or the free version of Zoom to be trialled.

22/382. **FINANCIAL INFORMATION.** Reports to 31 December 2022 were reviewed. It was **RESOLVED** that they be recommended to Full Council:

- a. Budget monitoring report.

- b. Bank reconciliation and bank statements.
- c. Reserves.
- d. Vires. None required.

22/383. **BANKING & INVESTMENTS.** For recommendation to Full Council.

- a. Update on research into investing via cash management was reported. It was agreed that this was not suitable and would not be progressed.
- b. After discussion it was **RESOLVED** that a recommendation to move the current reserve money from one Nationwide account to new notice accounts with better interest rates be made to Full Council. It was agreed that the Clerk would review current funds and make a recommendation to Committee Members by email about how to best spread the reserves across the different notice period accounts.
- c. It was highlighted that balances were higher than the protected FSCS limit of £85,000 at times in the NatWest accounts. Cllr Stratton would liaise with the Internal Auditor for advice.
- d. The updated banking arrangements would then be recommended to Full Council at their next meeting.

22/384. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME.**

- a. The pension scheme valuation and employer contributions from 2023/24 to 2025/26 were noted.
- b. The Kent Pension Fund Draft Funding Strategy Statement Consultation was noted.

22/385. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS OR AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS.** There were none.

22/386. **NEXT MEETING DATE.** 24 April 2023 at 2pm in the Parish Office.

22/387. *Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960, the public and press were excluded from the meeting at 16:12 for the next item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.*

22/388. **SALARY INCREASES 2022/23.**

- a. The recommendation was discussed. It was **RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to Full Council.

- b. Annual staff appraisals would take place in March. The Chair and Vice Chair to attend the Clerk's appraisal only.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12:54pm

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair