

CHESHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the **FINANCE COMMITTEE** held on Monday 21st March 2022

PRESENT Councillor S.J. Booth – Vice Chairman (presiding)

Councillor	A.K. Bacon	Councillor	F. Holly
"	J.L. Baum	"	P. Harding

Officer: Mr W. Richards - Town Clerk

In Attendance: Ms K. Hallett

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J.E. MacBean and F.S. Wilson

24. **VICE-CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

Councillor Booth welcomed Ms Kathryn Hallett as an observer to the meeting and advised Members she would be commencing in her role as Head of Finance in mid-April.

25. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest that were brought to the Chairman's notice.

26. **MINUTES**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 6th December 2021, be confirmed and signed by the Vice-Chairman as a true record.

27. **FINANCIAL REPORT TO JANUARY 31ST 2022**

The Committee considered the Financial Report for ten months as produced by the Town Clerk.

The Clerk advised that the surplus was currently considerable and much higher than predicted though the current figure was likely to drop at the end of the financial year with accruals and staff holiday and back pay being a factor. He suggested that the reasons for the high surplus were broadly: the success of officers in obtaining grants related to the pandemic at the start of the year, the lack of demand in respect to utilising the emergency Covid Recovery budget and the inability to initiate and complete major capital projects. He opined that there was a capacity issue in taking on new projects and stated he believed that this needed to be taken into account when the new Chief Executive Officer undertook a comprehensive staffing review.

The Vice Chairman congratulated officers for keeping finances robust but did express his hope that the new Head of Finance would be able to lead on delivering more accurate

forecasting from next year when the uncertain effects of the pandemic were no longer an issue.

The Committee generally agreed that it was advantageous to be in such a healthy financial position with the national and international situation resulting in spiralling costs in terms of utilities and raw materials and it was

RESOLVED

that the Financial Report be noted.

28. **IT AND COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report in respect to IT and improved communications and the recommendations forthcoming from the external consultants. It was noted that the consultants and officers were proposing a two-stage approach but prioritising an upgrade in communications, specifically phones and improved broadband, first.

In respect to Members' questions, the Clerk advised that no previous, in-depth IT review had been undertaken and it was well overdue. Councillor Booth also suggested that fixed phonelines were not needed anymore, even in an emergency, such were technological advances. It was also agreed that a review of Pegasus/Opera accounting system should be undertaken only when the new Head of Finance had a chance to assess current provision.

It was

RESOLVED

that the IT update be noted and that Committee agrees to commissioning Empiric to seeking submissions for the communications improvements as proposed in the draft tender.

29. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

It was moved by the Vice Chairman and

RESOLVED

that the Public and the Press be excluded from the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by The Local Government Act 1972, Section 100, in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

30. **PARKS AND PREMISES STAFFING MATTERS**

It was

RESOLVED

that the Clerk be authorised to proceed in connection with this matter in the terms expressed at the meeting.

31. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

CHAIRMAN