



Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee
held at the Council Meeting Room, Trane Cemetery, Tonyrefail
at 6:30pm on Monday, 10th July 2023

Present: Cllr Austin Davies (Chair)
Cllr Glenn Evans
Cllr Danny Grehan - remote
Cllr Amanda Richards

Absent: Cllr Karen Webb

Officers: Ms Jo van Tonder (Clerk & RFO)

1. Election of Chair

Having confirmed his acceptance of the nomination, it was proposed, seconded and

Resolved: To elect Cllr Austin Davies to the role of Chair.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Linda Michel.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

4. Annual Return 2022/23

a) Submission of Annual Return 2022/23 to Audit Wales

Members noted the Annual Return for the year ending 31st March 2023 and supplementary documents that had been submitted electronically to Audit Wales in advance of the deadline of 5th July.

b) Schedule of Variances submitted to Audit Wales

The Clerk presented the Schedule of Variances that had accompanied the Annual Return as part of the supplementary information requested by Audit Wales.

The reasons for the significant increase in *Other Payments* in FYE2023 of £63,112 over the previous year in particular, were noted.

c) Findings and recommendations of Internal Auditor

The Internal Auditor's report was considered.

Members noted the recommendations made in respect of *Corporate Governance* that highlighted shortcomings in the Council's grant application process and recording of declarations of interest.

- Remedial action:**
1. This Committee to review the draft Grants Policy for adoption by Full Council in July 2023 (see 7, below).
 2. The Clerk to ensure declarations of interests are correctly minuted and that members are reminded of the rules for declaring interests in meetings.

Members noted the recommendations pertaining to *Expenditure*.

- Remedial action:**
1. All payments made to be listed in the minutes.
 2. The Clerk to draw up and maintain a Contracts Register.

Members noted the recommendation pertaining to *Wages and Salaries*. The Clerk advised that all members of staff would be receiving updated Contracts of Employment based on the NALC template as soon as she had completed the review of the grounds staff restructure and issued revised job descriptions.

Members discussed the observations of the Internal Auditor on the *Fixed Asset Register*. The Clerk confirmed the asset register was inaccurate and did not comply with the Council's policy to capitalise expenditure over £250. Members noted the recommendations.

- Remedial action:**
1. A full audit of inventory is to be completed* and a new Fixed Asset Register drawn up in compliance with the Practitioners Guide Wales.
 2. This Committee to develop a Fixed Asset Management Policy.

* The Clerk advised that, following the review of the grounds staff restructure, tools and equipment would be split between the teams to ensure accountability. Separate lockable spaces would be allocated to each team and a full audit of tools and equipment would take place during the week commencing 24th July. Thereafter, checks would be undertaken annually.

5. Quarterly Financial Accounts April – June 2023

The Clerk presented the Quarterly Income & Expenditure against Budget Statement for the period April to June 2023.

The Balance Sheet as at 30th June 2023 was discussed and it was noted the payment made for the purchase of the Cemetery extension land had been taken from earmarked reserves set aside for that purpose.

When asked, the Clerk advised there was nothing in the quarterly accounts that she was aware of that caused her concern although the level of general reserves would need careful monitoring.

6. Financial Risk Assessment 2023/24

The Clerk advised that this would be a standing item on this Committee's agenda and that progress against areas of high risk would be tracked at each meeting.

Members were presented with the current Financial Risk Assessment and the following was noted:

- The Council's Reserve Policy would be reviewed by this Committee in October 2023;
- Financial Procedures would be drawn up by the Clerk to ensure segregation of duties and compliance with Financial Regulations;
- This Committee would look to address the need for a sufficient repairs and maintenance budget in next and subsequent years' budgets**;
- The Clerk would be putting forward a proposal for the recruitment of a part-time assistant to progress to Deputy Clerk over 3-5 years at the next Full Council meeting.

** The Clerk advised damage to one of the Cemetery gate pillars had been identified and that repairs could amount to several thousand pounds. The Clerk was asked to look into the possibility of claiming this on the Council's insurance.

It was noted that salaries and wages were currently being paid from the Barclays bank account via weekly BACS payflow as there was still a significant balance in that account.

Following discussion, it was

Resolved: To recommend to Full Council that the majority of the funds held in the Barclays accounts be transferred to the Unity account, leaving sufficient funds to cover direct debits that have not yet switched over to the Unity account.

7. Draft Grants Policy

Members went through the draft Grants Policy previously presented to Full Council.

The number of times a year that grants would be made available to the community was discussed and it was agreed to recommend the consideration of applications twice in this current financial year with a view to extending that to three times in future years.

To facilitate the assessment of applications according to the scoring system outlined in the draft policy, it was agreed the Finance Committee were best placed to assess applications in the first instance. A recommendation would then be passed to Full Council for a final decision.

Subject to Full Council agreement of the above, the committee would meet in early September to agree the list for recommendation.

Following discussion, further minor amendments were made and it was

Resolved: To recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Grants Policy as amended, and associated application form.

7:50pm – Cllr D Grehan left the meeting

8. Finance & Governance Toolkit (Wales)

The Clerk presented the previously circulated Finance & Governance Toolkit (Wales) and suggested the committee might work through the toolkit one theme at a time. She envisaged the process would take 12 – 18 months to complete.

a) Part 2: The Self-Assessment [Theme A]

Members considered the Part 2: Self-Assessment notes pertaining to **Theme A: Vision, purpose and community planning**.

In addressing the questions posed in the toolkit around having, reviewing and applying a plan to realise the Council's vision and purpose, members suggested the Council's primary purposes were to provide a public service (eg. Cemetery) and enhance the lives of residents.

It was felt formal community consultation was not necessary as members regularly interacted with the public and had their ears to the ground.

Members considered actions that could help the Council better address the aims of this theme and agreed that it should be made clear to residents what duties fall within the remit of the Community Council and which do not.

b) Part 1: The Health Check [Theme A]

The Clerk presented Part 1: Health Check – **Theme A: Vision, purpose and community planning** as completed by herself.

It was noted that, while the Council did not yet have a vision and purpose statement (A.1), the Wellbeing of Future Generations (WFG) Committee had been tasked with the further development of the Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027.

In response to A.2 – A.4, members noted the 2022 Biodiversity Duty, 2022/23 Annual and 2022/23 Wellbeing Reports were outstanding and that their completion had been tasked to the WFG Committee.

Members noted the summary of actions drawn up to address identified shortcomings.

9. Date of the next Committee meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will be on 9th October 2023 at 6:30pm.

Meeting concluded at 8:04pm.

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