

**Portishead Town Council Minutes: Staffing & Finance Committee meeting
19.30 Wednesday 23rd February 2022**



Committee Members:

- Councillor Bob Bull (Chair)
- Councillor Sue Mason (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Patricia Sterndale
- Councillor Paul Gardner
- Councillor Tanya Slatter
- Councillor Ben Aldridge

This was a hybrid meeting

Members present:

- Councillor Bob Bull (Chair)
- Councillor Sue Mason (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Patricia Sterndale
- Councillor Paul Gardner
- Councillor Ben Aldridge

Other present:

- Councillor Churchill in the Hall
- Councillors Goddard and Davey online
- 2 members of staff online

SF678 Apologies for absence

- Councillor Tanya Slatter absent

SF679 Declaration of Councillors' interests and requests for dispensations (Chair – Councillor Robert Bull)

- None given

SF680 Chair's verbal report:

- Clerk leaving the Council 8th March 2021 and thanked her for hard work.

SF681 Public participation:

- None given

SF682 Information item: To note the receipt of the External Auditor report & certificate for 2020-21. Report will be available on the Council website. (Chair)

- Noted

SF683 Information item: To note the notice of conclusion of the Audit for 2020-21. Report will be available on the Council website. (Chair)

- Noted

SF684 Information item: To receive and note the review of the Interim Internal Audit Report Sept 2021. Report will be available on the Council website. (Chair)

- Noted

SF685 Decision item: Recommendation to delegate authority to the Community Halls Manager and Chair to source and procure folding doors to separate the Folk Hall Heritage Centre from the main Hall up to a maximum cost of £2,000 from the 21-22 Council budget. (Chair)

- Discussion:
 - Councillor Aldridge: considered budget too low, requires evidence of the need to separate spaces. Suggested a screen. Also, raised fire safety concerns.
 - Councillor Sterndale: agreed budget too low and suggested curtains
 - Vice Chair: agreed re. budget. Used these doors in the Church, they are very expensive. Asked if income from Gordano Society would pay for screen as there should be a cost to use back room. Also suggested checking fire exits.
 - Clerk: all risk assessments would need to be updated.
 - Councillor Churchill: need to maintain access to facilities / toilets & kitchen.

- Chair: It may be possible to rent back of Hall if separate to the main Hall. Historic Society wants to use Hall but cannot jeopardise income in the Hall. There may be a charge.
- Councillor Gardner: suggested changing wording to just be a soundproof separation.
- Councillor Aldridge: Suggests bringing decision back once investigation complete.
- **Recommendation to delegate authority to the Community Halls Manager and Chair to investigate a suitable separation for Folk Hall Heritage Centre from the main Hall up to a maximum cost of £2,000 from the 21-22 Council budget and bring back to future meeting for decision:**
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF686 Decision item: Recommendation to receive and approve the list of payments totally £73,914.03 made in January 2022. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF687 Decision item: Recommendation to receive and approve the Bank reconciliation statements for January 2022. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF688 Decision item: Recommendation to receive and approve the petty cash reconciliation statements for January 2022. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF689 Decision item: Recommendation to receive and consider the summary and detailed income & expenditure statements for January 2022. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF690 Decision item: Recommendation to receive and approve the list of regular payments made by direct debit. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF691: Decision item: Recommendation to consider and recommend amendments to the Fixed Asset register. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF692 Decision item: Recommendation to consider and approve any transfers to earmarked reserves at financial year end. (Chair)

- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation

- All agreed

SF693 Decision item: Recommendation to give online access to the Council's Bookkeeper for the Lloyds Bank account. (Chair)

- Discussion:
 - Councillor Aldridge: asked about progress with new Unity Bank account. Chair: the account is being set up, this will be a temporary measure. Asked Bookkeeper to comment on experience with Unity. Bookkeeper online: very good customer service, more set up for public sector
- Vote on recommendation
 - All agreed

SF694 Decision item: Recommendation to note and confirm that the Precept for 2022-2023 is set as £820,863. (Chair)

- Discussion:
 - Councillor Gardner: has any change to this figure been reported from NSC. Clerk: no, this figure remains.
 - Councillor Aldridge: some residents have complained in Scotland about Precept rising.
- Vote on recommendation
 - All agreed

SF695 Decision item: Recommendation to delegate to the Bookkeeper to write off old invoice debts on the Sales Ledger totalling £605.11. Report will be available on the Council website. (Chair)

- Councillor Sterndale: asked for an explanation. Bookkeeper online: explained lockdown was cause of bookings made on the system but later cancelled.
- Vote on recommendation
 - All agreed

SF696 Decision item: Recommendation to consider and approve the updated Financial Regulations Policy. Report will be available on the Council website. (Chair)

- Councillor Sue Mason: asked about the process. Clerk: Bookkeeper made initial changes, then Clerk finalised.
- **Vote on recommendation**
 - All agreed

SF697 Decision item: Recommendation to delegate authority to the Communications Manager and Chair to procure a replacement Council website up to a maximum cost of £10,000 from the 2021-2022 Council budget. Report will be available on the Council website. (Chair)

- Councillor Aldridge: Asked about process for transferring data. Questioned budget availability. Suggested removing figure from recommendation and getting 3 quotes to discuss at future meeting.
- Councillor Gardner: Does not agree website requires replacement. His independent assessment said it is fine. Believes issue is lack of current staff training. Questioned budget availability. Suggests resident consultation on need for improved website. Discussed use of a toolkit.
- Councillor Sterndale: current site is too old fashioned compared to others and is now out of maintenance contract. Links don't work and needs a complete refresh. This is an operational decision and should be made by staff with Councillor input.
- Vice Chair: the life of a website is short because technology moves fast, soon after it was created it started to not work well. Knows where to navigate so knows where to look but can't find things with a different search function. Liked examples the Comms Manager shared. Thinks new website needed now for new and existing residents.

- Clerk: The website is now out of contract, and costing money to maintain, plus staff time as information is not stable and requires lots of work. £10,000 is allocated in this year's budget although some spent on fixes. Suggested wording changed to spread across 21-22 & 22-23.
- Chair: some information can be copied over, and the Comms Manager / supplier would run a test site 1st before switching old site off. A maximum cost should be set.
- New wording: **Recommendation to delegate authority to the Communications Manager and Chair to investigate a replacement Council website from the 2021-2022 & 22-23 Council budget to bring recommendations to a future meeting**
- Report is available on the Council website.
- Vote on the recommendation
 - All agreed

SF698 Decision item: Recommendation to delegate authority to the Deputy Clerk and Chair to contribute £9,500 from the 21-22 Council budget to the Avon Way Highways improvements on the condition that North Somerset Council covers the remaining project costs (expected total project cost is £14,812).

- There is a longstanding issue near the playground.
- Discussion:
 - Councillor Gardner: there have been a lot of accidents. Councillor Sterndale agreed.
 - Councillor Aldridge: agrees road work should be done, but does not agree the Council should pay. Councillor Gardner: Highways budget is central grant, NSC bids and usually only gets money for big schemes. Does not come from council tax
 - Chair: yellow lines, build out and signs are included in the plan.
 - Vice Chair: this was built out before, but not far enough. Where are double yellow lines and where are people going to park who live on Avon Way.
 - Chair: its not the bend as you come down, next junction down on the brow so cars that pull out of turning can see what's coming, yellows on other side of road as no room for parking and passing, finishes at the bus stop. Has meetings with NSC Highways teams next week.
- Vote on recommendation
 - All agreed

SF699 Decision item: Recommendation to delegate authority to the Deputy Clerk and Chair to contract a temporary Locum Clerk via a national supplier for a period of up to 6 weeks, giving the Council time to recruit a replacement Clerk, at a maximum cost of £10,000 from the 2022-23 Council budget (Chair).

- Any further costs must be approved by the Full Council
- Councillor Aldridge: thought cost is high.
- Vote on recommendation
 - All agreed

SF700 Decision item: Recommendation to approve the minutes of the last meeting 24th November 2021.

- Councillor Aldridge abstained as he was not present.
- Vote on recommendation
 - All agreed

SF701 Date of the next meeting: 15th June 2022

The public meeting then closed as the remaining information is considered exempt under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12a. The Staffing & Finance Committee Chair ended the public meeting and ask everyone except Staffing & Finance Committee Members to leave (both online and in-person), before continuing with confidential items.