



PORTISHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE REMOTE MEETING OF THE STAFFING AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13th MAY 2020 at 7.30pm.

The meeting was held remotely with video and telephone attendance due to Coronavirus social distancing restrictions and recorded by Microsoft Teams audio and video.

Present remotely – 6 committee members were in attendance:

Chairman: Cllr Bull

Councillors: Aldridge, Gardner, Goddard, Mason and Slatter

Town Clerk: M Salisbury

There was 1 member of the public present and no press in attendance.

SF.582 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

SF.583 TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND ANY REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were none

SF.583 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Paul Maltby – asked for an update on Council staffing. It was explained that there had been no change in permanent staff but as the Covid-19 response had placed a considerable extra burden on office staff and two temporary staff had been engaged to help with the community response. One to manage the Portishead Coronavirus Support Network and the other to deal with shopping and prescription orders from residents. It was confirmed that these positions were agency or temporary ones and would cease with the end of safeguarding and self-isolation restrictions.

In total 5 PTC staff are now working pretty much full time on the Covid community response that requires long hours and weekend/bank holiday working All PTC office staff are fully occupied and continue to work. Additional and unbudgeted Covid related staff and overtime costs will therefore be incurred.

In line with government guidance for public sector employers PTC has not furloughed any staff and has taken the decision to continue paying part-time caretaking staff in order to ensure that the halls remain available for use and that improvements to them can be made during the lockdown period.

SF. 583 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2020 are confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman. *All Councillors in favour*

SF.584 TO RECEIVE THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 4

The treatment of Earmarked Reserves (EMR) and the new EMR established for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was noted.

Resolved – that the Financial Management Report of Quarter 4 is approved and for it to be signed by the Responsible Financial Officer. *All Councillors in favour.*

SF.585 TO RECEIVE THE DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

Resolved – that the draft Financial Statements are accepted and to recommend them for approval by the Town Council. *All Councillors in favour.*

SF.586 HALL HIRE CHARGES REVIEW

The report reviewing hall hire charges was discussed as was the need to modernise and improve the condition, facilities, and marketing of the halls to encourage use and generate revenue after the Covid-19 lockdown. The lack of use of the Folk Hall kitchen for functions was noted and it was proposed that the additional fee for kitchen use be reduced to £20 (from £30 currently). The restriction on decorating the halls for functions was felt to be overly restrictive and outdated and so removal of that restriction was also proposed.

In respect on Sunday opening Cllr Mason noted that NWH was subject to a covenant restriction that precluded its use on Sundays. It was noted that RBH was currently available on Sundays and consideration should be given to hiring the Folk Hall where RBH was not available or suitable.

Resolved – the changes in hall hire charges as set out in the report are approved subject to reducing the fee for use of the Folk Hall kitchen to £20.00 (per use) and removing the current restrictions on decoration of the halls for functions and parties. *All Councillors in favour.*

SF.587 INSURANCE RENEWAL

Resolved – to terminate the current insurance policy with Zurich at an approximate cancellation cost of £470, to purchase general insurance cover from BHIB for the year ended 31 May 2021 for a premium of £4,826.20 and enter into a three-year insurance agreement with BHIB. *All Councillors in favour.*

Resolved – to purchase additional cyber insurance cover from BHIB at a cost of around £300 for the year ended 31 May 2021. *All Councillors in favour.*

SF.588 STAFF OVERTIME, TOIL AND HOLIDAY BALANCES

The draft update to staff overtime, TOIL and holiday policy and the need to reduce accumulated balances to sustainable levels to enable the Council to function after the Covid-19 period was discussed. It was noted that staff TOIL balances of c188 hours had accumulated at 30 April 2020 due mainly to the additional Covid-19 demands and community response effort. In addition, staff accumulated holiday balances at 30 March 2020 were around c156 hours, although these were not generally Covid related and were available to carry forward by staff to the 2020-21 holiday year.

Resolved – to pay overtime in May 2020 to reduce all accumulated TOIL balances to nil at 30 April 2020. *All Councillors in favour.*

Resolved – where requested by staff to make a payment in lieu of accumulated holiday balances of more than 5 normal working days, at 50% of the value of the excess balance at 2019-20 pay rates. All staff to otherwise retain the right to carry forward 100% of the excess balance for up to 2 years. *All Councillors in favour.*

SF.589 EMPLOYER PENSION CONTRIBUTION FOR 2020-21

It was noted for information that the increase in the Avon Pension Scheme employer funding contribution was in addition to deficit funding payments. The increase in the current benefit funding rate was most likely due to the reduction in investment returns. The additional cost of c£6,000 per annum being unbudgeted as the increase in the employer funding rate was not expected. There was no immediate action that can be taken to mitigate the cost but in the longer term the continued provision of defined benefit pension schemes in the public sector may be subject to review.

SF.590 EMPLOYEE PAY INCREASE FOR 2020-21

The NJC letter was considered and it was noted that although a final pay offer had been made by the employer side this had not been accepted by the trade union side and accordingly with was not collective agreement. The impact on the current Covid-19 crisis on public finances was currently being given wider consideration by government and pay freezes or other budgetary constraints may need to be considered. Accordingly, now may not be an appropriate time to determine a pay award for 2020-21.

The increase in basic holiday entitlement was discussed and it was noted that PTC general policy was that holiday must be taken by staff in the year to which it relates and normally (excluding Covid emergency measures) any balance at the end of the holiday year should be forfeited without payment. The policy being designed to ensure staff take appropriate breaks for their well-being. The NJC suggested increase in base holiday to 22 days was proposed to be met by PTC by ensuring that all staff had a minimum full-time holiday entitlement of 21 days plus an additional 2 Christmas holiday days (23 days in total, plus the 8 statutory public holidays).

Resolved – to defer a decision on the 2020-21 pay award pending further government guidance on public sector pay and finances and the progress of an NJC collective agreement. *All Councillors in favour.*

Resolved – to harmonise staff basic full-time holiday entitlement at 21 days and 2 additional days to be taken between Christmas and New Years Day. *All Councillors in favour.*

SF.591 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that future committee meeting dates would be considered at the next Town Council meeting currently scheduled for 27 May.

Meeting Closed: 8.19 pm

Signed:.....Chairman.

Date:.....