



**Staffing & Finance Committee Meeting  
Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 7.30pm**

Attending in person: Councillors Bull, Slatter, Holland, Aldridge, Gardner, Churchill.

Staff in person: S.Sherborne – Clerking

**SF702 Chairman's welcome**

Councillor Bull welcomed everyone. He explained that Councillor Gardner would be chairing the meeting as Councillor Bull has been away for two weeks and Councillor Gardner has carried out most of the preparation for the meeting.

**SF703 Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received for consideration.

**SF704 Declaration of Councillors' interests and requests for dispensations  
(exemptions)**

There were no interests declared or dispensation requests received.

**SF705 Public participation relating to meeting agenda items**

Paul Maltby, member of the public, spoke at the meeting. Mr Maltby wanted to object to Portishead Town Council (PTC) paying an employee a salary of £58,000. He referenced people in Portishead who go to food banks and others that are less fortunate in terms of paying their bills. He felt that the salary could not be justified. Mr Maltby also mentioned the Freedom of Information (FOI) post which he believed has a salary of £15,000. He noted that PTC has only received less than 45 FOI requests since the law came into force around 20 years ago and questioned how this figure could therefore be justified.

Councillor Slatter responded by agreeing with some of Mr Maltby's comments on the increasing cost of living and people struggling to pay their bills. She confirmed that the salary Mr Maltby was referring to relates to a Wellbeing post which is not directly funded by PTC. The post is funded externally. Councillor Slatter also clarified that the amount of £58,000 covers 2 years' worth of salary for this post and all additional oncosts. Mr Maltby felt that the information on this was not clear but that the information provided by Councillor Slatter made the role and salary more palatable.

However, Mr Maltby still felt that the £15,000 for the FOI post was not justified given the small number of FOI requests that the Council has received in the past. Councillor Slatter stated that the number of FOI requests received by PTC had increased in recent years. Councillor Sterndale clarified that PTC is not paying an employee £15,000 for a FOI role but is instead ringfencing that money for paying staff to respond to FOI requests if and when required.

Councillor Cartwright mentioned previous comments regarding staff salaries. He offered his apologies to Mr Maltby.

Mr Maltby stated that he would like to see the salary for each PTC employee. Councillor Bull noted that to publish this information would break Council law.

**SF706 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Minutes of the last Staffing & Finance committee meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 were considered.

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the committee meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 are approved and accepted as a true record, and that they be signed as such.

Councillors Slatter and Holland abstained from voting as they were not present at the last meeting.

**Vote:** majority in favour.

**SF707 Introduction of a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) Working Party**

The community infrastructure levy (CIL) is a charge which developers pay towards the cost of the infrastructure that will support their development. The following explanations and guides had been provided and were considered:

- Explanation and summary of CIL
- NALC - A Guide to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Parish and Town Councils
- North Somerset Council – CiL Guidance for Town & Parish Councils
- Portishead CIL receipt and expenditure log from October 2018

Councillor Aldridge asked whether the CIL money could be allocated to local community groups who request funding from PTC. Councillor Gardner stated that he hadn't explained it well, instead he meant that councillors would engage with the community and get them to come along.

Councillor Holland asked whether this would cross over with the grants. Councillor Gardner stated that this is a separate pot of money with different rules associated with it.

A recommendation to consider nominating up to four Town Councillors, namely Councillors Bull, Sterndale, Aldridge and Gardner, to form a CIL working group to develop a CIL policy for council to approval and to make recommendations to the Staffing and Finance committee for the allocation of CIL money that will support the priorities and services of the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Bull and seconded by Councillor Aldridge.

**RESOLVED:** Councillors Bull, Sterndale, Aldridge and Gardner form a CIL working group to develop a CIL policy for council to approval and to make recommendations to the Staffing and Finance committee for the allocation of CIL money that will support the priorities and services of the Council.

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF708 Internal Auditor Report 2021/22:**

A copy of the internal auditor's report for the year ending 2021/22 had previously been provided and was considered. The Councils internal auditor, based on an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance and controls. Councillors are asked to consider the Internal Audit report for the financial year 2021/2022 and note the findings and outcomes.

A proposal to note and recommend the approval of the Internal Audit report for the financial year 2021/2022 to Full Council was made by Councillor Bull. Councillor Holland seconded the proposal. Councillor Gardner thanked Rachel the RFO (Responsible Finance Officer) for her work on the report.

**RESOLVED:** to note and recommend the approval of the Internal Audit report for the financial year 2021/2022 to Full Council in September 2022.

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF709          Accounts for Financial Year 2021/2022:**

A copy of the Town Council's accounts for the financial year 2021/22 had been circulated ahead of the meeting and were considered.

A proposal to note and recommend the approval of the accounts to Full Council for the financial year 2021/2022 was made by Councillor Bull. Councillor Aldridge seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** to recommend the approval of the accounts to Full Council for the financial year 2021/2022.

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF710          Consolidated Bank Statement 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022:**

A copy of the Town Council's consolidated bank statement for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 had been previously circulated and were considered.

Councillor Bull proposed that the consolidated bank statement 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 should be accepted and approved. Councillor Slatter seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** that the consolidated bank statement 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 should be accepted and approved.

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF711          Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2021/2022**

The meeting understood that smaller authorities are required under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to prepare accounting statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 in the form required by proper practices. The meeting considered and reviewed: the AGAR Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2021/22 and Section 2 Accounting statements for 2021/22, the period of public rights for 2021/2022 to commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> July for 30 working days.

A proposal was made by Councillor Bull to approve and recommend to Full Council to approve:

- Annual Governance statement 2021/2022 (Section 1)
- the accounting statements 2021/2022 (Section 2)
- the period of public rights for 2021/2022 to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> July for 30 working days.

Councillor Holland seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** to approve and recommend to full council to approve:

- Annual Governance statement 2021/2022 (Section 1)
- the accounting statements 2021/2022 (Section 2)
- the period of public rights for 2021/2022 to commence on 1st July for 30 working days.

Councillor Sterndale thanked Rachel for her hard work. Councillor Mason, citing section 9.2, raised the issue that the amounts of money are much higher in March 2022 compared to March 2021. Councillor Mason questioned whether PTC would increase the amount of money in investments as a result. Councillor Gardner responded that PTC did not spend all budgeted money in the last financial year, so this can be used for this year.

Mr Maltby, member of the public, asked how 30 working days would be possible given that Full Council is not taking place until mid-July. Councillor Gardner responded that there is an AGM Full Council meeting next Wednesday which will deal with this.

## **SF712 Financial Reports 2022/2023**

The meeting considered the following reports that had previously been circulated:

- Payments made in May 2022
- Bank reconciliation statement 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022
- Detailed income and expenditure statement to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022
- Summary income and expenditure statement to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022
- Land Registry transparency report 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022

Councillor Gardner ran through the reports. Councillor Mason queried the list of payments for May as she noticed that there was a payment to Duncan Fryer Painter and Decorator in which the details stated that the painting was for Heaven and Under. The Clerk of the meeting confirmed that this payment was for play area painting at Heavens Field and Underwood Road.

Councillor Sterndale raised item 10.5 which is a list of Land Register. Beach Hill is spelt incorrectly and should be corrected.

A proposal was made by Councillor Bull that the Committee agrees the financial reports and recommends to Full Council the approval of the payments made in May, bank reconciliation statement, detailed income and expenditure statement, summary income and expenditure statement and Land Registry transparency report. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Sterndale.

**RESOLVED:** that the financial reports are agreed, and a recommendation is made to Full Council for the approval of the payments made in May, bank reconciliation statement, detailed income and expenditure statement, summary income and expenditure statement and Land Registry transparency report

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF713 Neighbourhood Plan Redrafting following consultation:**

The meeting understood that the Neighbourhood Plan underwent a statutory consultation between 28th March and 8th May 2022. There were 25 statutory consultees, and 42 community groups were asked to respond. More than 900 comments were made by residents and responses were also received from several developers. All the responses require analysis. An estimate of £8250.00 plus VAT has been received from our Planning Consultants, Place Studio to deal with all the responses received and create the next version of the Plan. Once this redrafting is completed, the Plan will be submitted to North Somerset Council for assessment before undergoing formal examination by a Planning Inspector.

Councillor Sterndale proposed approving expenditure of £8250.00 plus VAT for Place Studio to produce a redrafted Neighbourhood Plan, the costs to be covered from the Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2023. Councillor Slatter seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** approval for Place Studio to produce a redrafted Neighbourhood Plan costing £8250.00 plus VAT with the costs being covered from the Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2023.

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF714 Freedom of Information (FOI) Resource:**

The meeting considered allocating funds to procure for a FOI resource service to assist in managing the workload of Town Council staff. It is anticipated the likely costs will be £15k (fifteen thousand pounds) per annum to deliver 2 days' work per week, plus recruitment costs.

Councillor Gardner stated that there has been an increase in the number and complexity of FOI requests that the Council is receiving. Responding to FOI requests in a comprehensive way within the appropriate timescale is becoming increasingly difficult. Responding to FOI requests is taking up staff time. An internal assessment has been completed and shows that budget needs to be allocated to providing this service. Councillor Bull noted that due to the lack of a full-time Clerk, the responsibility for responding to FOI requests is currently falling to other members of staff. A designated member of staff should be responding to these requests. Councillor Holland asked how many hours are being used to respond to FOI requests. Councillor Gardner noted an estimation of 2 days per week.

Councillor Aldridge felt the allocation of £15,000 to this role is a great deal of money. Councillor Gardner responded that the Council has a legal obligation to respond to FOI requests.

Councillor Mason noted that in a previous Council there were an enormous amount of FOI requests which took time away from other important tasks. She also noted that 2 days a week is a lot of time and £15,000 is a lot of money. Councillor Gardner noted that the money is already being spent because staff are already responding to these FOI requests.

Councillor Mason asked whether the new Clerk would do this work. Councillor Bull noted that the Council is still looking to recruit a Clerk and whether they can do this work will depend on their skill set. Councillor Bull noted that this is a budget to allocate responding to FOI requests when there is not a full time Clerk to deal with this and take the workload away from current members of staff.

Councillor Sterndale noted that some aspects of FOI requests are basic clerical jobs which do not merit the time of a well-paid Clerk. The member of staff that will respond to each FOI depends on the complexity of each request.

Councillor Slatter noted that £15,000 is a lot of money, but that this is a budget and the amount of spend will depend on the number and complexity of FOI requests received.

Councillor Mason suggested that an improvement to the search function on the Council's website might reduce the number of FOI requests received. Councillor Sterndale responded by stating that the Council had received recent FOI requests where the relevant information was all on the website. The Council still has an obligation to respond to these requests, even where the information is available to view by the public. Councillor Gardner also stated that most Councils don't get as many FOIs as PTC but those that do tend to use a similar service.

Councillor Bull proposed procuring a freedom of information resource up to the value of £15k (fifteen thousand pounds), and associated recruitment costs. Councillor Slatter seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** approved procuring a freedom of information resource up to the value of £15k (fifteen thousand pounds) and associated recruitment costs.

**Vote:** majority in favour.

#### **SF715 Wellbeing Coordinator:**

The meeting considered a previously circulated Job Description for a Wellbeing Partnership Co-ordinator in accordance with the funding of £58,000 (fifty-eight thousand pounds) received from North Somerset Council. It understood that once accepted by North Somerset Council, a MOU (memorandum of understanding) can be formed between Portishead Town Council and North Somerset Council.

Councillor Aldridge clarified that the funding has been offered by North Somerset Council and will benefit residents. Councillor Mason also noted that the money originally came from the Government so is not from taxes paid to North Somerset Council. Funding will be allocated from Grant Wellbeing Partnership funding.

Councillor Aldridge proposed approving the Wellbeing Partnership Co-ordinator job description and to submit it to North Somerset Council to progress a MOU. Councillor Bull seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** to approve the Wellbeing Partnership Co-ordinator job description and to submit it to North Somerset Council with a view to an MOU being prepared.

**Vote:** majority in favour.

**SF716 Unity Charge card:**

The meeting considered a report to approve an application on behalf of the Town Council for a Charge Card from Unity Trust Bank.

Councillor Bull proposed approving the application for a Multi pay corporate card through Unity Trust Bank with a limit of £1000 (one thousand pounds). Councillor Aldridge seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED:** approval for an application to be made for a Multi pay corporate card through Unity Trust Bank with a limit of £1000 (one thousand pounds).

**Vote:** majority in favour

**SF717 Date of next meeting:**

The date of the next Staffing and Finance committee meeting would be Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022 at 7.30pm.

**SF718 Exclusion of press and public:**

The meeting considered, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 that Members of the public and press were required to leave the meeting due to the sensitive nature of the items considered relating to staffing and clerk arrangements.

Councillor Gardner proposed that members of the public and press leave the meeting due to the sensitive nature of the items considered relating to staffing and clerk arrangements. Councillor Aldridge seconded the proposal.

**RESOLVED** that Councillors agree to exclude the public and press from the meeting.

**Vote:** majority in favour

**CLOSED 20:13**

Members of the public and non-voting members left the meeting.

The confidential session of the meeting resumed 20:16

**Attendees:** Councillors Bull, Sterndale, Slatter, Holland, Aldridge, Gardner and S.Sherborne (Clerk).

**SF719 Hub Co-ordinator:**

The meeting considered a previously circulated confidential report and approved to extend the trial of the Hub to 30<sup>th</sup> November, extend the employment of the Hub Coordinator post until 30<sup>th</sup> November and to review the salary of the post.

**Vote:** all in favour

**SF720 Temporary Project Officer Role:**

Members received a confidential report to consider making the existing temporary post and current post-holder part of the permanent staffing establishment. It was understood that the post-holder

would continue to work 30 hours per week. Members were pleased to note that the officer will be relocating back to Portishead in September 2022 and will take over the operations of the Hub in its entirety.

**RESOLVED:** to make the current temporary Project Officer role permanent with effect from 1st October 2022.

**Vote:** all in favour.

**SF721 Clerk Provision:**

Members received and considered a confidential report relating to the interim clerking arrangements until a new Town Clerk is recruited and in office.

**RESOLVED:** To accept and approve the details in the confidential report.

**Vote:** all in favour

**MEETING CLOSED 20:42**