

**Minutes of Finance and Resources Committee**  
**Held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7.30pm in Bruton Community Hall.**

Present: Councillors Buckland, Cullen, Fradley, Hood, Jones, Robinson.

In the chair: Cllr Cullen from agenda item FR23/11.

Officers present: Town Clerk.

Members of the public present: 0.

The Public Session was not required.

Meeting started: 7.31pm

**Minutes**

**FR23/11: To elect a chair of committee.**

Cllr Cullen was proposed and seconded as Chair of this committee.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] [for-against-abstain] to elect Cllr Cullen as Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.**

**FR23/12: to elect a vice chair of committee, if required.**

Cllr Jones was proposed and seconded as Vice Chair of this committee.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] that Cllr Jones was voted as vice chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.**

**FR23/13: Apologies for absence (LGA 1972 s85(1)).**

To receive and approve any apologies of absence and to approve the reasons given.

Apologies received from Cllrs Anderton and Coulter.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] to approve the apologies submitted and the reasons provided.**

**FR23/14: Declarations of interest**

Declarations of Interests Members to declare any interests, including disclosable pecuniary interests (DPI) they may have in agenda items that accord with the requirements of the Town Council's Code of Conduct and to consider any written requests from members for dispensations that accord with the Localism Act 2011 s33 (b-e) (This does not preclude any later declaration).

None.

**FR23/15: [Minutes of the last meeting](#) held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023 (LGA 1972 sch 12 para 41 (1)).**

To agree the minutes from the meeting on 20 June 2023 as a true and accurate record.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] to approve the minutes of the meeting on 20 June 2023 as a true and accurate record.**

The chair to signed minutes from the meetings on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2023, and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

**FR23/16: Review of Risk Register.**

To review the Risk Register, and consider any changes if required.

The clerk needs to action the amendments from the previous Committee meeting which included downgrading the risk of bank likelihood to crash.

There is a reputational risk to the Town Council (BTC) which was highlighted recently as a result of the Library Junction road works. Somerset Council seemed to fare much better than BTC, and the fallout of dissatisfaction and frustration is received by BTC. Public perception of BTC responsibilities is important and Social media has not helped with this perception. The difficulty is that the term 'Council' covers multiple levels of local government.

Cllr Hood proposed that reputational risk of this nature was added to the risk register.

Cllr Cullen proposed that BTC has an agreed standard statement to respond to attempt to manage any backlash from the public/residents, should an instance

similar to the roadworks at Library Junction occur in the future. Should this arise again, a strategy needs to be considered beforehand, to attempt to be proactive rather than reacting.

The proposal for the risk register entry: Reputational risk for major projects. For a communication strategy to be in place to mitigate any additional risk to reputational damage, and to ensure that there are robust statements in place, even if the projects are not ultimately the responsibility of the Town Council.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] that this point is added to the risk register.**

**FR23/17: to receive the conclusion of audit for 2022/23.**

The conclusion of the 2022/23 audit has been received and published.

The Except for matters were discussed, and will be reported to Full Council. The except for matters covered: The Asset Register, which needs to be agreed by Full Council before the end of the financial year; and also the processes now in place covering income. It was noted that the incorrect AGAR was published on the website for the Public Right to view the unaudited accounts, which was an error by the clerk.

The closing figure for the AGAR would need to be restated by £3 when completing the year end for 2023/24.

**FR23/18: To consider a grant application received from Promise Works.**

The grant application has been circulated to councillors to review.

Cllr Jones overviewed Promise Works, and also the recent Somerset award that the organisation received. Questions were posed that included how do Promise Works select the young people who benefit from the mentoring scheme, and how many young people have they directly assisted in this area. The application would benefit from further details specific to the Bruton area. It was pointed out that the purpose of the organisation is to empower local individuals.

It was proposed that the agenda item is deferred and is considered as part of the main budget process, and that Promise Works are contacted to provide further information about the number of people directly assisted, and the number of people trained in Bruton under this scheme.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] that the agenda item is deferred and is considered as part of the main budget process, and that Promise Works are contacted to**

**provide further information about the number of people directly assisted, and the number of people trained in Bruton under this scheme.**

**FR23/19: To consider a grant application received from Octopus Studios, Bruton.**

The grant application has been circulated to councillors to review.

This grant could not be considered due to a technicality and this has been communicated to the applicant. Should this be resolved then they can apply again. Further details of sound proofing advice, and finances would need to be provided with any subsequent grant application.

**FR23/20: To consider an Investment Policy, as required once balances held exceed £100,000 in total.**

Cllr Cullen recommended that this is considered as a matter of urgency.

Councillors discussed the parameters for investment, and to consider liquidity, risk aware, and environmentally ethical. An investment management firm, Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) is a sector specific investment provider, suggested by the Town Clerk, to approach for further information. Councillors were satisfied to use the basic Society of Local Council Clerk's model investment policy to provide a policy for consideration at the next Finance and Resources Committee meeting.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] that the clerk to produce a policy for consideration, taking into account the above parameters, for consideration at the next Finance and Resources committee.**

**FR23/21: To consider outsourcing Town Council IT support to an independent contractor.**

To discuss the Town Council IT provision and requirements, and to consider outsourcing the provision to a suitable contractor.

Cllr Anderton has done a fantastic job of maintaining the current IT provision. It is felt that now is the time to formalise the IT provision and determine the requirements of the Town Council, and bring options back to the committee for consideration.

**It was RESOLVED [6-0-0] that the committee agrees in principle that IT support needs to be outsourced and that the clerk to obtain quotes from both sector specific providers and local providers for consideration.**

**FR23/22: to discuss the National Association of Local Council Model Financial Regulations Consultation and to consider any response by the Town Council.**

To consider any responses or contribution from the Town Council to the consultation.

Councillors did not feel that a response to the consultation was required.

**FR23/23: To review the spend to budget thus far for 2023/24 financial year.** The spend to budget to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 has been circulated to councillors for review and approval to date.

Councillors discussed the budget as circulated. It was noted that:

- There are two project and grant budget lines that need to be merged.
- The national staff pay increase has not been agreed as yet, but likely by end of October.

The budget was viewed page by page, and any issues considered.

**FR23/24: To consider the budget for 2024/25.**

To consider the timetable for budget setting for 2024/25 and how the committee will work towards producing a budget for consideration at the next meeting.

The following points were raised:

- The clerk to use 7% as an inflation guide.
- Maintenance within the town and surrounding area is a concern. A maintenance plan to be considered about maintenance that covers the next three years, to include gates footpaths, and council assets.
- The further concern is the difficult financial situation that Somerset Council are experiencing, and the possible impact on BTC. It is quite probable that a contingency budget provision will be required from BTC in the next budget and possibly beyond.
- To try and follow the timetable.

Cllr Cullen raised concerns about using reserves to balance the budget.

It is important to engage with the residents, and also communicate with residents regarding any budget and therefore any precept increase.

The Strategic Planning Questionnaire may be crucial to residents being able to contribute.

**FR23/25: Date of next meeting.** The next meeting is scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Agenda items to the clerk by 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

Meeting closed at 8.51pm

**END OF MINUTES**