



POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Wednesday 24th January 2024 which commenced at 7pm.

Present

Chair – Councillor D Hare

Councillors: A Bassett, M De Jong, J Eastwell, T Holton, N Jorgensen, G Littler, A Long, T Maher, S Matthews, S Newton and C Smith.

In attendance: J Friend (Town Clerk) and E Carroll (Deputy Town Clerk)

80. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

82. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

83. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Matthews requested an amendment to Minute 67.2. The last sentence to read “Councillor Matthews asked that when a further report is provided to Councillors, that it is supplied with an overview of the position to date.”

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on 8th November 2023, were confirmed as a true record and **RESOLVED** for signature by the Chair. (Minutes 62 – 79).

84. BANK RECONCILIATIONS

Councillors noted that the Bank Reconciliations for October and November 2023 had been made available to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee for information.

Cllr M De Jong entered the meeting.

85. BUDGET & PRECEPT 2024/25

85.1 Budget 2024/25

Councillors considered the Budget Working Party’s recommendations for the 2024/2025 budget. Councillors were also provided with details of the fees and charges recommendations from the Amenities & Leisure Committee for 2024/25, which were small in nature and would not significantly impact the estimated income. A request was made that the Health & Safety budget be increased to allow for an external health & safety audit to be carried out. The Committee agreed that 360/4255 Health & Safety be increased by £2,000. Members began their discussions on the 2024/25 precept.

It was **RESOLVED** that, with the suggested increase to the Health & Safety budget, the Budget 2024/25, as presented, be accepted and be put forward to Full Council at its meeting on 7th February 2024 for approval.

85.2 Precept 2024/25

Councillors discussed in depth the precept for financial year 2024/25, taking into consideration the recommended budget figures and current economic climate.

Two motions were proposed, seconded and voted on:

- (i) an increase of 2% on the current precept figure – four in favour/seven against – the motion failed.
- (ii) a 0% increase on the current precept figure, proposed by Councillor Newton – 8 in favour/three against – the motion passed.

It was therefore **RESOLVED** that a recommendation of a 0% increase on the current precept figure for financial year 2024/25, would be recommended to Full Council at its meeting on 7th February 2024.

86. TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS

86.1 Grants Policy 2024/2025

- 86.1.1 Members discussed the draft Grants Policy 2024/2025, as produced by the Grants Working Party, which included an increase in the number of application intake periods per year. Councillor Littler requested a slight amendment to the title.

It was **RESOLVED** that, with the above amendment, the draft Grants Policy 2024/2025 would be recommended to Full Council, for adoption at its meeting on 7th February 2024.

86.2 Grants Awarded

- 86.2.1 Members noted that thanks had been received for grants awarded to: -

- Earley Environment Group
- EASI
- Friends of Bulmershe Open Space

86.3 New Applications

Councillors considered three grant applications received following the Town Council's promotion that 2023/24 grant monies were still available. It was:

- 86.3.1 **RESOLVED** that The Link Visiting Scheme would receive £500, towards ongoing provision of services. (Cllr Maher declared an interest and did not take part in discussions or the vote).
- 86.3.2 **RESOLVED** that Me2 Club would receive £750, towards ongoing provision and support of volunteers.
- 86.3.3 **RESOLVED** that Wokingham Job Support Centre would receive £300, towards ongoing provision of services.

87. SIBLEY TODDLER PLAY AREA

Members noted that a detailed specification document for the proposed play area works to replace the existing play equipment had been sent to five ESPO approved suppliers, inviting them to quote for the project. The deadline for quotes to be received is 4th March 2024.

88. ORDERS FOR PAYMENT

Councillors received details of Orders for Payment since the last meeting of the Town Council (Vouchers 6277 - 6304, 6305 – 6327, 6328 – 6331, 6332 – 6366, 6367 – 6392, 6393 – 6399, 6400 – 6429, 6430 - 6454 and 6455 - 6470 and Imprest Account (Vouchers 888 – 917).

The Town Clerk reported that there was an error on Orders for Payment by Direct Debit for November 2023, voucher no 6428 should read ‘RH Rates Nov 23’.

89. PUBLICATIONS

It was noted that the following communications had been received and were available for perusal from the Council Offices:

CCB (Connecting Communities in Berkshire)	E-newsletter January 2024
TVP	Police & Crime e-bulletin December 2023
NAG	Agenda 15 th January 2024
Me2 Club	E-newsletter November & December 2023

90. PRESS RELEASES, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

No press releases were requested.

91. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

There were no members of the public or press present. It was agreed that the remaining items on the agenda be taken under Part II.

PART II

92. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

93. STAFFING

93.1 Staffing Committee & Further Updates.

94. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chair at 8.22pm.