Littlehampton Town Council

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Town Clerk – Peter Herbert

MINUTES of a meeting of the **GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** held in the **MILLENNIUM CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, LITTLEHAMPTON** on **TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2014** at **6.30PM**

Present: Cllrs Northeast (Chair), Caffyn and Hulmes.

2013/2014

22. **EVACUATION PROCEDURES**
The evacuation procedures were noted.

23. **MOBILE PHONES**
Members and the public were reminded that the use of mobile phones (other than on silent) was prohibited at Town Council and Committee meetings.

24. **APOLOGIES**
There were none.

25. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**
Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. There were none.

26. **MINUTES**
The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2013 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

27. **PUBLIC FORUM**
There were no members of the public present.

28. **CHAIR'S REPORT AND URGENT ITEMS**
There were none.

29. **OFFICER'S REPORT**

29.1 Annual Review of Internal Controls

29.1.1 The Committee considered a report which set out details of the Town Council's Internal Controls (previously circulated). The Finance and Resources Manager explained that Local Councils were required to have a system of internal controls in place to prevent and detect fraud and corruption. Whilst the Internal Auditor would test the effectiveness of the system, it was good practice for the Town Council to undertake an annual review. It was therefore important that Members were both aware and had a good understanding of the nature of the controls that were in place.

29.1.2 Members went on to review the internal controls and comment upon the current arrangements. It was suggested that the list be amended to include details of the responsible officer and that the location of secure storage be removed. The Finance and Resources Manager stated that the cheque

signing arrangements were set out in the Financial Regulations and described the internal procedures that were in place for purchases paid for using the Town Council's Charge Card. She also highlighted aspects of the payroll and purchase order systems designed to reduce the potential of losses and Members were reassured by the procedures that were in place. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The List be amended in line with the Committee's comments and that the Councils Internal Control system be approved.

29.2 Annual Review of Corporate Risk Register

29.2.1 The Town Clerk introduced a report which outlined the procedure for the annual review of the Corporate Risk Register (previously circulated). He explained that it was important that Members were satisfied that proper arrangements were in place for the governance of the Council's affairs and the stewardship of its resources. A Corporate Risk Management Strategy (CRMS) and procedure (previously circulated) had been developed to help staff and Members understand the process of identifying the Council's key policies and services and the risks attached to these activities. He emphasised that whilst there were some elements of the software that could not be changed, it was for Members to determine if the content of the Register was appropriate. As part of the Annual Review, Senior Officers had reviewed and updated the Councils Risk Registers and Members were therefore asked to consider and comment upon the revised Register. It was noted that this process had highlighted the need to review the Council's Policies which the Committee would be considering as a separate item.

29.2.2 Regarding the CRMS, the Committee considered the relevance and detail of the objectives and how they would be achieved. In this respect, Members felt that it would be more meaningful if the objectives were prioritised. The consensus was that the main objectives were captured in the statements at bullet points 7 and 10 and it was agreed that they would be reprioritised accordingly.

29.2.3 Turning to the Risk Registers, the Committee discussed the process of identifying, evaluating and managing levels of risk. Members considered the Register to be a thorough assessment of the Council's activities and in view of the comprehensive nature of the document, asked whether there was any scope to change the layout by grouping activities into the types of risk as set out in the procedure. Conscious that the Committee had made a similar request previously, the Finance and Resources Manager explained that owing to constraints within the computer programme it was not possible to change the presentation of the Register.

29.2.4 In terms of the process, the Finance and Resources Manager stated that the Register was very much a "living" document which was updated throughout the year to reflect changes in policy and practice. It was therefore important to have Member input in terms of determining whether the levels of assessment were appropriate. Members discussed how to evaluate the effectiveness of the Register and the Town Clerk stated that Officers would welcome the opportunity to demonstrate how the Register was used in practice. The Committee therefore **RESOLVED**:

To note the Report and recognise that the Councils Risk Registers were living documents, open to all Members to review at anytime by arrangement with the Town Clerk or the Finance and Resources Manager.

29.3 Review of Council's Strategic Polices

29.3.1 The Town Clerk introduced a report (previously circulated) which set out details of a recently undertaken initial review of the Town Council's existing Strategic Policies. Referring to the previous item, he explained that during the review of the Councils Risk Registers it had become apparent that a number of Strategic Policies were either obsolete or out of date. Officers had therefore undertaken a review of the Policies and the Committee was asked to consider a number of proposed amendments as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

29.3.2 The Committee went on to consider the list of policies and recommended changes. Beginning with the Council's Mission Statement, Members were broadly happy with the content and given the historic connection between Littlehampton and Wick, was content that the statement retained the reference to the two communities.

29.3.3 Members scrutinised the list of policies in terms of their relevance to the activities of the Council and the following changes were agreed during the ensuing discussion:

Planning

- The policies for handling planning applications to be divided into two separate polices to reflect the role of the Town Council as both consultee and decision maker on matters relating to Devolved Planning.
- The policy regarding design standards to be amended to include reference to the retention of high quality conservation areas and significant buildings.

Transportation

- The policy to press for improved traffic flows to be amended and refer to traffic management.
- The policy to support the need for a Town Bus to be further amended to make reference to services being aligned with new developments through S106 agreements.
- New policy required to oppose the spread of Controlled Parking in the Town.

Property

- New policy required regarding the proposed development of a new community facility on the Manor House site.

Fair Trade

- Policy to be reviewed and updated to reflect the current practice of promoting the use of local businesses.

Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS)

- The policy to oppose the long-term provision of a HWRS at Mill Lane to make reference to protecting the quality of life for local residents.
- The policy not to make allotment land at Mill Lane available to WSCC for further development of the HWRS to be retained.

Littlehampton Hospital

- The policy to be enhanced to reflect the Councils stance of continuing to work with the relevant agencies to secure additional and high quality medical facilities for the Town.

Therefore, having considered the list of Strategic Polices in depth, the Committee **RESOLVED** that:

The Policy and Finance Committee be RECOMMENDED to endorse the revised list prior to the Committee developing draft aims and objectives.

29.4 Filming and Recording of public Council meetings

29.4.1 The Town Clerk reported that following the recent introduction of the Local Audit and Accountability Act, local authorities were expecting changes to the provision of Parish Polls, the introduction of a Statutory Publicity Code and the filming and recording of public meetings by the general public. Last June, the Council had delegated authority to the Town Clerk to agree permission to record meetings pending receipt of further guidance from Government. It was considered that this guidance was imminent and Officers were therefore investigating the best way to facilitate this activity. Conscious of the concerns previously raised by Members that this was open to abuse, the Town Clerk had concluded that the best way to protect against this was for the Council to install its own cameras and recording equipment. The cost of the equipment was expected to be in the region of £3,000 and the Town Clerk sought the view of the Committee on this course of action. He confirmed that if the Committee were content with this proposal, it would need to go before the Property and Personnel Committee to approve the expenditure.

29.4.2 The Committee noted the current position and were content with the proposal to install recording equipment in the Millenium Chamber. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The Property and Personnel Committee be RECOMMENDED to authorise the purchase of the necessary cameras and recording equipment to facilitate the recording of all Committee and Council meetings.

30. MASTERPLAN – NORTH LITTLEHAMPTON

30.1 **Lyminster By Pass**

It was reported that a planning application was expected soon which would hopefully see work start on the By Pass in 2016. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The update be noted.

31. EXEMPT BUSINESS

There was none.

The meeting closed at 8.22pm.

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CHAIR