



Oundle Town Council

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Minutes of the Town Council held on Wednesday 27th January 2016 at 7.30pm in The Oundle Suite, Fletton House, Fletton Way, Oundle.

Present: Cllrs Chesser, Chapple, Davis, Fitzgerald, Grove, King, Menck, N Oakes, S Oakes, Piercy-Hughes, Sparkes, Stagg and Talbot.

Minutes: Hanneke Soans

15.181. Apologies for Absence

- 15.181.01. To receive apologies for absence.
Cllr Murphy (personal)
- 15.181.02. To accept apologies for absence.
Accepted

15.182. Declarations of Interests

To receive and consider any declarations of interest from Members and Officers under Section 50 of the Local Government Act 2000 (*Standing Order 35*)
(This requirement applies only in respect of matters, which are to be considered by the Council at this meeting.)

- 15.182.01. To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
None
- 15.182.02. To declare any Other Interests.
None
- 15.182.03. To consider any requests for Dispensation.
None
- 15.182.04. To report any gifts or hospitality accepted over the value of £50.00.
None
- 15.182.05. To report any inappropriate gifts or hospitality offered.
None

15.183. Minutes of Previous Meetings – Full Council

- 15.183.01 PROPOSITION: *'To approve and sign the minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 19 January 2016 as an accurate record.'* (*Standing Order 10c*)
Proposed: Cllr Grove **Seconded:** Cllr Talbot
Agree: 9 Against: 2 Abstentions: 1

15.184. Representations from Interested Parties

None

15.185. Consideration of Requests from Interested Parties

None

15.186. Signing & Sealing

RESOLUTION: *'that any two Councillors and the Proper Officer may seal any document required by law to be issued under seal on behalf of the Council.'* (Standing Order 14b.)

Proposed: Cllr King **Seconded:** Cllr N. Oakes

In favour: 12 **Abstention:** 1

15.187. Operations Management Matters

15.187.01. To approve the Atkins December invoice for £4,647.72.

Cllr Fitzgerald explained there are 3 final payments to make as well as the above. Completely confident it will be £14,000 and a separate bill for £150. An update was also given on the heating issues at Fletton over the last few days as a result of dirt in the system.

19.43pm Cllr Murphy arrived.

Standing order 6Q to authorise the payment of money.

Proposed: Cllr Chesser **Seconded:** Cllr N. Oakes **Resolved Unanimously**

15.187.02. To discuss arrangements for using the Unity Bank for internet banking instead of payments being made by cheque.

The Finance Officer gave an overview on the signatories required in order for the Council to use online banking.

All 14 councillors and the RFO to be signatories, with any 3 being required to enable payments to be made.

Phase 1 is to set up signatories for the council, the complication being that whoever sets this up with Unity Bank must be a signatory on the account.

If the Finance Officer were to complete this task, then he would also need to be a signatory on the account, which would require an amendment to our financial regulations, and could also put the finances of the council at risk.

Cllr N. Oakes offer of help to implement Phase 1 of the project was accepted.

15.187.03. To approve the Balance Sheet for December 2015

Proposed: Cllr Stagg **Seconded:** Cllr King **Resolved Unanimously**

15.187.04. Payments for December 2015.

PROPOSITION: *'That the schedule of payments for December 2015 as presented at this item are paid in the amount of £51,218.23 and that all related documentation and cheques are signed'.*

Proposed: Cllr Murphy **Seconded:** Cllr King **Resolved Unanimously**

15.188. Council Matters

15.188.01. PROPOSITION: *'To accept the 2016/17 budget proposals and to approve a precept request of £387,885.00 for submission to East Northamptonshire Council'.*

Cllr King gave an overview of the budget as the precept has to be submitted to ENC by tomorrow to ensure we receive our precept.

Cllr Grove gave the breakdown of percent 8.5% ENC 72% NCC Parish is 6% Cllr King advised we have to budget for staff joining the pension scheme which is a large part of the staff budget.

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Cllr Chapple advised the staffing element of this budget is 48% and to try to trim anything out of it you are literally playing with pounds. In reality we can

only look at the staff budget the Hub, if the Hub delivers the figures. It will make a profit of £12,000. If the income drops by 10% we would make a loss. We are exposed to risk for the first time. We could go ahead and then review in 12 months' time or we could cut staff costs.

Cllr King asked that we again consider the staff structure put place in December which included monthly management meetings which would include a financial review so we would be aware of any risk early on.

Cllr Murphy agreed we need project management on a month by month basis and what The Hub has offered our community cannot be met elsewhere.

Cllr Fitzgerald explained we would be happy if we broke even in the first year as it would be beyond all our expectations.

Cllr N. Oakes agreed and we need a solid business logic to this.

Cllr King advised that is why the new structure reflected this.

Cllr Davis asked about the £400,000 transfer figure on the budget and where it comes from and this was explained.

Cllr Chapple questioned the rent paid for the OSM and if we can resolve this in the next year.

We could raise our market pitches and room rental which would reduce the precept.

Cllr Davis questioned if the police are paying for their space within Fletton, it was confirmed they paid for the room for 5 years up front.

Cllr Talbot addressed the concerns about The Hub, it is a great facility, a meeting point. It performs a place for kids to wait between schools. If you cut back on the staff you would lose that safety aspect for a £1 a month.

Cllr S. Oakes asked how youth club is going, Cllr Murphy advised it maintains a steady number of 24 kids each week.

Cllr Chesser still has an anxiety about too much money being spent on staff as it has exploded over the last few months.

Cllr Grove advised we cannot put a price on the community impact of the Hub.

Cllr Chapple questions the drain on our profits of the QVH and our management charges to keep it going which have not changed. Need to let it out commercially now Saturday's are freed up.

Cllr Fitzgerald advised that the Hub is a net contributor to the Council. We will lose the best opportunity to create income for the Council.

The Commercial Manager is looking at all the figures now. Once we correct this staffing cost.

Cllr Stagg landscape has changed since we put the budget together. Who is going to drive this to ensure it happens.

Following the above discussion the original proposition was then considered.

Proposition: Cllr King **Seconded:** Cllr Murphy

In favour 9 Cllrs Chapple, Fitzgerald, Grove, King, Murphy, S. Oakes, N. Oakes, Stagg & Talbot

Against: 4 Cllr Davis, Chesser, Piercy – Hughes and Cllr Menck

Abstention: Cllr Sparkes

15.188.02. To consider and agree the arrangements to further review the profile level of the council, including the participation of Chris Moses and Danny Moody and the associated papers for release.

Both parties are happy to talk to Council at any time. Cllr Piercy – Hughes asked for this to be arranged for the next Full Council meeting in February.

However we need the Clerk to be there as she holds a lot of the paperwork on her computer. There is an issue that documents are not available. Cllr Chapple has prepared a set of draft questions.

There is a risk highlighted by Danny Moody that we have no Deputy Clerk. Cllr King advised, he will ensure that all the necessary papers will be available within the statutory 3 working days.

- 15.188.03. An update on staffing matters.
A sick note has been received from the Clerk until 2nd February. We do need a Clerk as we are very exposed without one.
The Finance Officer advised without a Clerk we have a lot more work. Cllr Chapple requested an Ops meeting to work out how we will manage without a Clerk. Cllr Murphy asked if there is anyone who can be provided from ENC in the interim, however there is not a pool of Clerks available.
- 15.188.04. To consider the limitations of the Hallmaster Booking system and to agree a way forward for the future.
Cllr King gave an overview of the problems with Hallmaster which has resulted in us being four months behind on the invoicing. This is a major issue. Cllr N. Oakes offered to help, as he has no experience of SAGE invoicing, this was declined by the Finance Officer.
Finance Officer asked if he needs to make the input of customer invoices a priority and this was agreed.
What will happen with Hallmaster? Reverting to a manual system is obviously a short term solution, a replacement system which works is essential to the successful running of Oundle Town Council.
- 15.188.05. To consider and agree a potential mediation plan to facilitate improvements in working relationships between councillors.
Cllr Murphy feels we should disband completely and have an election. This would require 10 councillors resigning. Cllr Fitzgerald agrees we should all stand down. Cllr Grove agreed.
Cllr Sparkes asked for an independent governance review and to ask Sharn Matthews for help.
Cllr Stagg asked Cllr Sparkes what he means by this? Cllr Sparkes said "it examine the way we perform as a Council and consider the committee structures."
Cllr Stagg does not feel that is the issue, the issue is about trust.
Cllr Talbot asks Cllr Sparkes to confirm that this was not a single issue but several frustrations that had been brewing for a long time.
I personally don't feel that this can be fixed by a governance review.
Cllr Murphy advised that we are not an elected body for 7 years, this council is broken and we let the public down. Let the public speak. Bringing in a governance team will not make it better, you cannot put a sticking plaster on a broken bone.
Cllr N. Oakes "I am an elected councillor, to me the council is an institution and it needs to be protected. I am not convinced mass resignation is a good idea until the end of the mayoral term."
Cllr King advised we have had moments like this in the past, so I don't understand the need for a governance review. Danny Moody thinks we should

be a National Beacon Council. I am really hurt and felt completely undermined. However we have had a better conversation tonight. I think we need an election, however we managed to set a budget this evening. I accept some sort of mediation/ review needs to take place and I would suggest this stays on as an agenda item in February.

15.189. Correspondence for Action

None

15.190. Correspondence for Information

None

15.191. Any Other Matters to report

CLlr King requested everyone to be on the lookout for the missing person Bert Prior.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.21pm

Signed:..........

Dated:.....16/2/16.....