

WARE TOWN COUNCIL

A meeting of **WARE TOWN COUNCIL** was held on Monday 21 January 2019 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, The Priory, Ware when the following business was transacted.

PRESENT Councillors, D Oldridge (Town Mayor, presiding), D Andrews, P Ballam, J Kaye, M Pope, S Reed,

ATTENDING J Rowlinson (Town Clerk), S Higgins (Finance Manager)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs A Curtis & J Belsey

196 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

197 **MINUTES OF WARE TOWN COUNCIL**

The minutes of the meetings of Ware Town Council held on 3 December 2018, copies having been issued, were considered. It was

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3 December 2018 be received, approved, adopted and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

198 **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor had no announcements since the last meeting.

199 **APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES**

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint the following councillors to these committees

i) Finance and Policy Committee

Cllr Mark Pope – Chair
Cllr David Oldridge – Vice Chair
Cllr David Andrews
Cllr Alex Curtis
Cllr Jonathan Kaye

ii) Community and Environment Committee

Cllr Phyllis Ballam – Chair
Cllr Stephen Reed – Vice Chair
Cllr Joanne Belsey

Cllr David Oldridge
Cllr Mark Pope

iii) Human Resources Committee

Cllr David Oldridge (Mayor)
Cllr Mark Pope (Chair of the Finance & Policy Committee)
Cllr Phyllis Ballam (Chair of the Community & Environment Committee)
Cllr Jonathan Kaye

200 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Town Council's Financial Regulations were last reviewed by the Council in October 2015. It is good practice for Standing Orders to be reviewed annually and the Internal Auditor has recommended that Ware Town Council carries this out.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) published updated Model Financial Regulations in 2016. These are used by many other Town and Parish Councils. It was suggested that Ware Town Council uses these with a few minor amendments. A tracked changes version of the Model Financial Regulations had been circulated showing the proposed amendments for Ware Town Council. It was

RESOLVED to amend these regulations as follows

- i. 2.2 – amend to read “on a regular basis, of at least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, within 6 weeks to that period ending, a member other than the Mayor shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the RFO”.
- ii. 5.1 – amend last sentence to read “they shall be regularly reviewed for safety and efficiency annually by the Finance & Policy Committee”.

It was

RESOLVED to approve the Financial Regulations subject to these amendments.

201 SCHEME OF DELEGATION

It is good practice for Town and Parish Councils to have a Scheme of Delegation setting out decisions to remain with the Council and levels of authority delegated to committees and officers. A draft Scheme of Delegation had been circulated. This was based on those in place in other Town Councils around the country. It was

RESOLVED to amend the Scheme of Delegation as follows:

- Under Town Clerk's delegated authority amend to read “Emergency expenditure of up to £10,000 outside the agreed budget. It was noted that this would require corresponding amendments to the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.”
- Add provision for the Scheme of Delegation to be reviewed annually.

It was

RESOLVED to approve the Scheme of Delegation subject to these amendments.

202 **BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2019/20**

The Finance & Resources Committee met on 19 November 2018 and gave initial consideration to the budget and level of precept for 2019/20. The Committee had recommended that this be reviewed once the net tax base of 2019/20 was available. The net tax base had now been received from East Herts Council and was 7476.79 (compared to 7,336.23 for 2018/19).

The draft budget had been circulated. The overall result was a precept requirement of £635.20 which equates to £84.96 per Band D household, representing an increase of 3.17% on 2018/19. It was

RESOLVED that the draft budget for 2019/20 be approved and a total precept of £635,204 equating to 84.96 per Band D household be raised.

203 **MASTERPLANNING, LAND TO THE NORTH AND EAST OF WARE**

East Herts Council was leading the Masterplanning Process for the proposed development for the land to the North and East of Ware. The process would be starting soon and EHC was putting together a Masterplanning Steering Group. EHC had nominated two East Herts ward councillors for Ware to serve on the group, Cllr's Stephen Reed and Jonathan Kaye. It was

RESOLVED to nominate Cllr P Ballam as Ware Town Council's representative to the Steering Group.

204 **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

The Town Council's Social Media Policy was agreed in February 2018 and was due for review. An updated policy was attached with amendments shown in red. The following revisions have been made:

1. Provision for the Town Clerk to delegate other officers to use social media.
2. Provision for officers to use any social media sites deemed appropriate to promote the work of the Town Council (this will enable the Town Council to establish Facebook, Instagram pages etc).
3. Provision for the Council to review the effectiveness of its social media via the Community & Environment Committee (eg. No of followers, likes etc).

It was

RESOLVED to amend the revised policy as follows:

- i) 4.1 – amend to read “only the Town Clerk, or other officers delegated by the Town Clerk are permitted to post material on a social media website in the council's name”.

- ii) 4.2 – amend to read “the Town Council officers as specified above are authorised to use any social media sites deemed appropriate by the Town Clerk to promote the work of the Town Council”.

It was

RESOLVED to approve the Social Media Policy subject to the above amendments.

205 **RAILINGS TO THE NEW RIVER**

The railings to the New River in London Road had been damaged following a road traffic accident and temporary barriers had been in place for over 6 months. The Ware Society had written to Thames Water about this and was requesting that Ware Town Council also write to them. It was

RESOLVED to send a letter to Thames Water asking them to address the issue with the repairs to the railings.

206 **EAST HERTS AFFORDABLE HOUSING SPD CONSULTATION**

Details of the consultation had been circulated. It was

RESOLVED not to respond.

207 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Application 3/18/2731/FUL - Glaxo Smithkline Services Ltd Priory Street Ware

It was **RESOLVED** to respond as follows :

Ware Town Council welcomes the development and investment in our town. However, we would ask that the applicant is mindful of construction hours and traffic and the fact that there are two schools nearby on quite a narrow road. We would therefore request conditions regarding construction hours to minimize disruption to residents, with no deliveries at weekends and to ensure safety of access to Park Road.

208. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

209. **STAFFING**

i) Appointment of Responsible Financial Officer

In February 2018, the Finance & Resources Committee reviewed the System of Internal Control and an Action Plan for meeting the standards required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations. One of the recommendations in the Action Plan was for the Council to consider the appointment of the Finance & Administration Manager as Responsible

Financial Officer. This was also recommended by the Internal Auditor and included as a recommendation in her report. The Town Council employs a Finance & Administration Manager who is already fulfilling the duties of a Responsible Finance Officer as part of his existing job description. Separating the function of Clerk and RFO would provide an independent overview of the management of the Council's financial affairs and an additional scrutiny opportunity within the officer group, which would not compromise the Clerk in carrying out their responsibilities. It allows the RFO to focus on the required regulations to ensure the Town Council is complying with legislation. The Clerk would remain the Head of Paid Services and Proper Officer of the Council, responsible for signing contracts, agreements or other legal documents. It was

RESOLVED to appoint the Finance & Administration Manager as the Responsible Finance Officer.

- ii) The Town Clerk had tendered 3 months' notice of resignation and was due to leave on 19 March.

Job description

The Town Clerk's job description dates back to 2008. An updated job description which more accurately reflects the role of Town Clerk had been circulated. It was

RESOLVED to approve the updated job description.

Interviews are scheduled to take place during the week commencing 4 February. The Council will need to approve any appointment and so an additional Council meeting will be required.

Recruitment Process

It was **RESOLVED** that the recruitment process should be:

- Interviews by a panel of 3 or 4 councillors
- Candidates asked to prepare a short presentation to bring out a particular skill, area of knowledge within the person specification that the panel would like to test. 5 minute presentation with 10 minute question time.
- Formal interview – 45 minutes
- Lunch with any councillors able to attend and staff
- Tour of building, grounds and lido

It was

RESOLVED that any 3 of Cllrs Curtis, Ballam, Kaye & Pope would be on the panel.

210 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

4 March 2019 at 7pm

211 **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting closed at 8.30pm