

DISS TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive Committee** held in the Council Chamber at Diss Corn Hall on **Wednesday 9th October 2019** at **7:15pm.**

Present: Councillors S. Browne (ex-officio)
J. Robertson
E. Taylor
N. Howard
M. Gingell
J. Mason
D. Poulter

In attendance: Miss S. Richards (Town Clerk)
Three members of the public

EX1019/01 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Olander. Councillor Kiddie was not present.

Post meeting note – Councillor Kiddie sent her apologies as she was not aware she was a member of this committee.

EX1019/02 NOMINATION OF SUBSTITUTE REPRESENTATIVES

There were none.

EX1019/03 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

Members elected a Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019-20. It was

RESOLVED: to elect Councillor Mason as Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2019-20.

EX1019/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Minute No.	Councillors Name	Personal/ Other Interest	Pecuniary Interest	Reason
EX1019/10	S. Browne		✓	This councillor is an employee of the Diss Citizens Advice Bureau.
EX1019/10	M. Gingell	✓		This councillor is volunteer of the Diss Citizens Advice Bureau.

EX1019/05 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was noted that the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 6th February 2019 were confirmed as a true record by a previous Full Council meeting.

EX1019/06 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Councillors considered a resolution under Standing Orders 3 d., e., f., g., & h. to suspend the meeting and receive comments from members of the public on items to be discussed on the agenda. There were three members of the public in attendance who wished to speak on two items on the agenda. Both items were brought forward for discussion.

This item was brought forward to allow two members of the public to speak on it.

EX1019/07 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY FUNDS

Members considered allocating Community Infrastructure Levy Funds to Roydon Parish Council (RPC) in lieu of Section 106 funds, which must be spent by March 2020. It was noted that the Town Council and RPC have been working together for around two years on the expenditure of S106 funds, which must be spent on improving the recreation provision for older children and adults in Diss & Roydon. £20k was allocated to RPC but a suitable project that meets the eligibility criteria and the requirements of their parishioners has not yet been identified. The Town Council is able

spend the funds on an additional piece of equipment for Diss Park in order that the funds are not returned to the developer.

Two representatives for Roydon Parish Council spoke of their gratitude to the Town Council for considering this matter and asked if the Town Council would consider a reasonable timeframe and fewer restrictions on expenditure of the CIL funds. The Clerk advised that the criteria for expenditure of CIL funds is broader than the S106 funds but that the Town Council has no influence over the criteria for expenditure as this is set by South Norfolk Council as the Planning Authority.

It was agreed that RPC would consider bringing forward their next Council meeting date currently scheduled for the end of October in order to avoid additional costs associated with getting the Town Council's contractor back on-site post current works. Given the timescale for spending the money, it was

RESOLVED: to allocate £20k of Community Infrastructure Levy funds to Roydon Parish Council in lieu of Section 106 funds to be spent by December 2020 & delegate to the Clerk the detail around the transfer of funds.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

This item was also brought forward to allow a member of the public to speak on it.

EX1019/08 **ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD WAR MEMORIAL**

Members considered a further contribution of £250 to cover the cost of materials to extend & repair the railings next to St Mary's Churchyard war memorial to display the red poppies to commemorate Remembrance Day. It was noted that Council had previously agreed a contribution of £100 towards the cost of materials for installing poppies along the railings.

The member of the public explained that the memorial is owned by the Town Council albeit affixed to the church building, which is owned and maintained by the church. It was agreed that the railings are an integral part of the war memorial and were deemed in the Council's ownership. It was noted that the memorial is showing signs of deterioration and the costs includes cleaning of the memorial. It was

RESOLVED: to contribute £250 to cover the cost of materials to extend & repair the railings next to St Mary's Churchyard war memorial to display the red poppies to commemorate Remembrance Day.

(Action: Clerk; immediately)

EX1019/09 **ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

There were none.

EX1019/10 **BUDGET**

Members considered key principles for the 2020/21 budget setting process (report reference 15/1920 referred). The Council's Internal Auditor has confirmed that Earmarked Reserves (E/R) can be adjusted during the financial year. The proposed summary E/R report combines allocations into groups and by committee for ease of reference and to reduce the requirement for multiple allocations when expenditure exceeds allocation. It was noted that each of the groups can be drilled down for further information if required and that each committee will be reviewing allocations relevant to them.

There was discussion about the principle of setting a maximum staffing budget as a percentage of the total budget to enable the Clerk to make staffing decisions within this allocation. It was agreed that all costs including agency work should be factored in. It was noted that there are several unknowns such as cost of living increases which would require some flexibility and should be reflected as a contingency in reserves.

There was a request for some reporting amends such as an explanation of variances on the monthly Income & Expenditure report and it was agreed that Councillor Poulter would meet with the Council's newly appointed Responsible Financial Officer to discuss.

(Action: DP / RFO; by 06.11.19)

Members discussed the Council's Community Grant Scheme and noted that completed monitoring forms have been requested from all organisations in receipt of funds by mid-October in order to inform the budgeting process. It was also noted that most of the grants have been supporting the recipients operationally and that there are other organisations doing valuable work who may benefit from such

support. It was agreed that the monitoring forms would be reviewed to include a question regarding how the organisation has used the grant to meet the Council's key objectives.

There was discussion regarding the importance of recruiting and retaining suitable councillors in relation to the small allowance received and that a similar allocation to the current year could be re-profiled to reflect the additional responsibilities of the Council Leader and Committee Chairs in addition to the Town Mayor.

The final key principle regarding publicity of the budgeting process was discussed. It was agreed that providing more information to and asking for views from the public about the budgeting process would help members to make more informed budgetary decisions. It was

- RESOLVED:
- i) To simplify the Earmarked Reserves list into fewer allocations (Appendix B)
 - ii) To appoint Councillors Gingell, Howard and Robertson to a Budget Action Group to work alongside the Responsible Finance Officer and Clerk to review the current year budget, determine spending plans and assess levels of anticipated income including a review of the completed grant monitoring forms and publicity plan with proposals to be presented to a future meeting.
 - iii) That the Responsible Finance Officer investigates the councillor allowances of other similar sized Town Councils for review at a future meeting.
(Action: RFO / MG / NH / JR / Clerk; by 6.11.19)

EX1019/11 **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

Councillors reviewed the Council's communications strategy. There was discussion around appropriately filtering the Clerk's weekly update to exclude confidential or commercially sensitive information and it was noted that the revised strategy better embraces different communications channels. It was

- RESOLVED: To adopt the revised Communications Strategy and review every four years.
(Action: Clerk; by 6.11.19)

EX1019/12 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members reviewed this committee's Delegations and Terms of Reference. It was

- RESOLVED: to approve the Executive Committee's Delegations and Terms of Reference.
(Action: Clerk; by 6.11.19)

EX1019/13 **PROGRESS REPORT**

- a) Members noted progress on decisions made at the last meeting of Council related to the Executive Committee. There was a request to always include a note in the comments / further action column even when there is no update.
- b) Members considered key objectives for the remainder of 2019-20 and beyond. It was noted that the deadline / review dates and progress columns have not been updated since the document was last reviewed and that former councillor / staff references have been removed. There were no comments made on the objectives.

EX1019/14 **MEMBER FORUM**

There was no information or issues relevant to this committee raised by members for brief discussion, action or inclusion on a future agenda.

EX1019/15 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Councillors noted that the next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled for 6th November 2019.

EX1019/16 **PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSIONS TO MEETINGS)**

Members considered a resolution under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 and Standing Orders 1c to exclude members of the public and press in order to discuss the following item, which is properly considered to be of a confidential nature.

EX1019/17

STAFFING

Members received a confidential report regarding changes to staffing hours (report reference 17/1920 referred) and it was noted that they would have an overall effect of reducing annual staffing expenditure. It was

RESOLVED: to note the contents of the report regarding changes to staffing hours (report reference 17/1920 referred).

Meeting Closed at 9.05pm.

Chairman: Councillor Howard