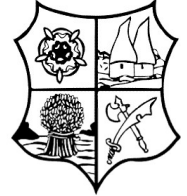


ALTON Town Council



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Town Hall
Market Square
Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1HD

Town Clerk: Mrs Leah Coney

5th October 2021

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** on **Wednesday 13th October at 7.00pm** when the under mentioned business will be transacted.

Yours sincerely

LConey

Mrs Leah Coney
Town Clerk

To: Members of the Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor Graham Titterington (Chair)
Councillor Suzie Burns (Vice Chair)
Councillor Matthew Bayliss
Councillor Pam Jones
Councillor Gideon Cristofoli
Councillor Graham Hill
Councillor Christopher Lawrence

Copied to: All other Councillors for information

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 13th OCTOBER 2021

AGENDA

- 1 Chairman's announcements
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on the 21st July 2021
- 4 Declarations of Interests - Councillors are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest which they may have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached. Unless dispensation has been granted, you may not participate in any discussion of, or vote on any matter in which you have a pecuniary interest. You must withdraw from the room when the meeting discusses and votes on the matter.
- 5 To consider any requests for Dispensations to allow Councillors with pecuniary interests to speak and vote
- 6 Questions to the Committee (including those received in writing)
- 7 Review of Committee Structure, Standing Orders, Public Participation and remote meeting technology
- 8 Financial Reports to 30th September 2021 and conclusion of external audit.
- 9 Assembly Rooms report
- 10 Pitch Hirings Fees and Allotment Rent reviews.
- 11 Appointment of a Tree Surveyor

CONFIDENTIAL

- 12 Mobile Catering Tender – Jubilee Fields, Public Gardens and Anstey Park.
- 13 Community Building, Brewery Site update
- 14 Unit 17, Market Square – CAB Offices.
- 15 Staffing Update

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 13th OCTOBER 2021

REPORTS BY THE TOWN CLERK

ITEM 7 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE, STANDING ORDERS, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND REMOTE MEETING TECHNOLOGY FOR DECISION

A number of Councillors participated in a workshop session on Tuesday 5th October at 6.30pm to consider these items.

Members considered the frequency of meetings and the current committee structure and concluded that no changes were required at this time.

Members then went on to discuss the current Standing Orders and how they need to reflect current practices including acknowledging the use of virtual technology. Enclosed in Members bundles is the resulting proposed changes to the Council's Standing Orders which is tabled for approval. The group noted that discretion would remain with committee chairs to determine if they wish to relax standing orders for any item, with particular reference to committees where it may be appropriate to extend public participation in discussions. (eg Community Committee)

Standing Orders have now also been made gender neutral.

Whilst time did not permit discussion on the evening, Councillor Titterington suggested a number of minor amendments to Standing Order which have been included in the tabled copy. A further request in respect of the 6-month rule for councillors, under S85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 was made by Councillor Titterington asking if there is a mechanism for ATC to exercise discretion in this matter:

S85(1) states: Where a member is unable to attend any meeting of the authority for a period of 6 consecutive months following the date of their last attendance, they automatically cease to be a member of the authority, unless Council has resolved to approve a reason for an extended absence.

Enclosed in Councillor Bundles is an example protocol from Rochdale Borough Council of how this discretion can be applied in genuine cases where there is a realistic expectation of a known return date and a "reason" which Members consider to be valid (e.g such as armed forces deployment) Such decision must be made by Full Council in advance of the 6-month period being reached.

There was a suggestion from Cllr Burns that budget be expensed on "Community Notice Boards" which would be maintained by ward councillors to provide a more "local" means of communicating with residents, particularly those who do not use social media or the internet.

Members agreed to recommend the re-introduction of Networking Cafes prior to Council and Committee evening meetings and to commend to Members participation in ward walks, drop-in surgeries at events and other means of interaction with the Public outside of the Council Chamber. Councillor Bayliss noted that he was seeking to progress the concept of Community Streetwatch at Community Committee which may provide an additional mechanism for engagement.

The use of the current "Owl" virtual meeting technology was discussed with Members debating the merits of interactive meetings versus meeting "streaming". Councillor Bayliss requested that a small additional expense be made to procure a cable to connect the projector to the laptop to enable the Chamber to see those streaming into the meeting, a volunteered to assist in any "trial" run. Members are requested to note the cable has now been purchased.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve:

- i) The updated Standing Orders as tabled
- ii) An addition to Standing Orders to state that in the case of S85 (1) the Council may exercise its discretion in this matter in the event of genuine cases where there is a realistic expectation of a known return date. This motion must be tabled at Full Council.
- iii) Officers to obtain costings for the purchase and placement of 7 “Community Notice Boards”, specification to be confirmed.
- iv) The reintroduction of 6.30pm Networking Cafes (subject to any prevailing restrictions on numbers in the Council Chamber)

ITEM 8 FINANCIAL REPORTS TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AND CONCLUSION OF EXTERNAL AUDIT

FOR DECISION

Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2021

The balance sheet is presented for sign off by the Chairman of the Council and the RFO (Responsible Financial Officer, Mrs Leah Coney – Town Clerk). Please note this includes the recently received second tranche of precept.

Income & Expenditure

Attached is the Income and Expenditure Report for the second quarter of this financial year; this illustrates the Operating Income and Expenditure for the council to 30th September against the budget set by the Council.

Bank Reconciliation Statement as at 30th September 2021

The Bank Reconciliation Statements are as presented with a closing balance of £619,746.82 (Unity) £401,115.51 (CCLA) and £238.90 (Petty cash). This requires signing off on behalf of the council that the figures presented reconcile with the original bank statement which will be given to the Chairman on the night.

Payments over £500

The attached report includes all payments over £500, issued between 1st July 2021 and 30th September 2021 in respect of invoices.

Conclusion of External Audit to 31st March 2021

Enclosed in Members bundles is the report from the External Auditor for the financial year to 31st March 2021. It is noted there were no matters arising.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve:

- 1) The Income and Expenditure account to 30th September 2021
- 2) The balance sheet dated 30th September 2021
- 3) The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit Account
- 4) The Payments over £500 covering 1st July to 30th September 2021
- 5) The report from the External Auditor following the Conclusion of Audit 2020/21

ITEM 9 ASSEMBLY ROOMS REPORT

FOR INFORMATION

Monitoring meetings are due to resume shortly with all staff now back at the Community Association and no restrictions on bookings at the Assembly Rooms. For the last 18 months reporting has been via telephone and e-mail contact with invoicing resuming as restrictions eased from April 2021 onward.

There are still only an average of six hirers a month at the Assembly Rooms but the occupancy rate remains good with Art V Motion and Brazilian Jujitsu under licence to occupy and Vanessa Golborne School of Dance regular users one afternoon/evening per week. A small number of annual hirings have returned including the Alton Arts Society Exhibition, Burlesque, Comic Con, although AODS cancelled this year to relocate to Alton College due to the set arrangements required for this November's production. Pumpkin Panto are new to the Assembly Rooms this Christmas and a couple of public exhibition dates have also been booked. We await further correspondence with the A31 group of practices about use of the Lower Room as detailed at the last Full Council meeting.

The fee charged by Alton Community Association remains at 50% following the extended closure and reduced number of bookings. The hall is currently running at an operating loss of just over £5,000 for the year which is to be expected.

We have also been alerted to some water ingress resulting in damp in one of the rear meeting rooms which will require remedial work, to be undertaken by Grounds, over the winter.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to note the report as tabled.

ITEM 10 PITCH HIRING FEES AND ALLOTMENT RENT REVIEWS

FOR DECISION

Pitch Hirings

Enclosed in Members bundles are the current pitch hiring fees for Anstey Park and Jubilee Fields.

The Town Clerk, together with the Finance and Administration Manager have reviewed the hiring charges in respect of Allotments and Pitches in readiness for the preparation of the budget for 2022/23. Members are asked to note that prices were frozen for 2021 having been increased by 2% in 2020

The pitch hiring fees remain competitive when tested in the local market place, providing a stable income stream for the Council and returning a good occupancy rate across Anstey Park and Jubilee Fields without overuse. The acquisition of additional football goals for Anstey Park in May 2021 has enabled more junior fixtures to be scheduled across the park including Diggers

There are a number of different rates in force which reflect charges levied for juniors and adults across rugby, football and cricket and it is clear that there is a difference between facilities offered at each location however, this is balanced as changing facilities at Anstey Park are far superior to those offered at Jubilee whilst underfoot conditions are more favourable at Jubilee (being flat) as opposed to the partially sloped landscape at Anstey Park.

The Town Council continues to invest in improving both sites with additional seeding, weeding and feeding and also has to account for the increasing costs of line marking paint, pavilion cleaning etc..

It would therefore be prudent for the council to increase its charges with effect from 1st April 2022 by 3% just below the current rate of inflation.

Allotments:

Alongside pitch hiring fees, allotment fees were not raised for 2021, having been increased from £25 to £27 in 2020. Whilst the Council allocates funds each year for allotment improvements and maintenance, the cost administering and inspecting the sites continues to take an increasing amount of officer time. The unit cost of water per cubic meter also continues to rise (please note in the tabled accounts (item 8) the water bills for summer 2021 have yet to be received so are not included.) It is therefore proposed to increase the annual charge from £27 to £30 for a full plot (pro rata for smaller plots) The one-off administration fee for new plotters when issuing tenancy agreements, keys etc.. it is proposed to freeze at the current rate of £30. The allotment sub committee is not due to meet until November but the Allotments Officer has contacted them this week to ask for any comments on the proposed increase before Members debate this at the meeting.

In local market testing, the proposed fee continues to be commensurate with the current charges in other local parishes.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve the increases as follows:

- 1) Pitch hiring fees by 3% from 1st April 2022
- 2) Allotment annual rental fees from £27 per annum to £30 per annum (pro rata for smaller plots)

ITEM 11 APPOINTMENT OF A TREE SURVEYOR.

FOR INFORMATION

Members were requested to note at the May meeting (minute 285 refers) the list of goods or services which were required to go to tender to secure preferred suppliers for the next 3 years for the services listed as under review. One of these services was to appoint a Tree Surveyor.

A procurement process was recently undertaken and the results are included in Members bundles (labelled confidential as they detail commercially sensitive information) along with the tender document. The tenders received, in line with Financial Regulations, were opened and evaluated in the presence of the Chair of Open Spaces. Whilst a tender was issued, due to the resulting contract value being below £5,000 and in view of the requirement for the annual survey to be undertaken as soon as possible, with the agreement of the Committee Chair a preferred contractor has now been duly appointed. The Chair of Open Spaces has requested that this decision be noted by Members.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to note the decision taken to appoint a Tree Surveyor.