



North Hykeham Town Council

Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting 07/24
held on Thursday 20th February 2025 at 7pm

Councillors Present: N Blanchard (Chair), C Briggs, R Johnston, G Killingsworth, FW Lee, M Lofts, C Nnamdi, SP Roe

In Attendance: Mrs M Parker – Town Clerk

7-24.1 Apologies for absence and acceptance of reasons given to the Clerk in advance of the meeting

It was **RESOLVED** to accept apologies for absence and acceptance of reasons given from Cllrs Holt and Sampson.

7.24.2 Receipt of any Declaration of Members' Interests under the Localism Act 2011

Cllr Nnamdi advised that, in relation to agenda item 09 at this meeting, whilst her employer is one of the optional institutions approved by CCLA those transactions do not directly relate to her Declared Pecuniary Interests (DPI). No other Declarations of Interest were made.

7-24.3 Notes of the Finance & Policy Committee meeting held on 12th of December 2024 be approved as Minutes

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Notes of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting held on 12th December 2024 as a true record of the meeting and were signed as the Minutes accordingly.

7-24.4 Chair's Items

The Chair raised emerging concerns over a part of the skatepark which had been found to have damage at the beginning of this week, and on investigations the Services Team Manager (STM) had been left with no alternative but to close the skatepark temporarily for safety reasons whilst repairs could be undertaken. The STM now wished to bring a contractor in to fully survey the entire skatepark as a matter of urgency to investigate further the longevity of the park.

It was **RESOLVED** that the remaining skatepark budget would now be earmarked to allow for a contractor to assess the park and conduct any emergency works that may be required. Any additional monies required for this scope of works should be requested via the first available meeting of council to avoid any delays.

7-24.5 Correspondence and Clerk's Items

The Clerk had no items of correspondence to present. Updates from the last meeting were noted by Members as:

Item No:	Action	Updates
6-24.6	Recommend that Town Council approves expenditure of £29,512.85 to meet the demands listed on the Schedule of Payments to 30th November 2024	Completed 30 th November 2024
6-24.8	The draft Precept Plan showing all plans as resolved by each committee be presented at the January Town Council meeting for consideration and resolution	Completed 9th January 2025
6-24.10	Progress appointment of Ms Gill Culverwell as the Deputy Clerk and Mr Steven Proctor as the Maintenance	Completed 30 th November 2024

	Technician, subject to suitable references and documentation	
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7-24.6 Management of Accounts

The Income and Expenditure of the Council, up to 31st January 2025, along with the Balance Sheet, list of Earmarked Reserves, and list of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies were discussed and reviewed by Members. It was noted that some of the unplanned expenditure on budgets had been due to unexpected costs for replacement of IT hardware at the Civic Offices and additional costs to develop the new website.

Members were presented with a Schedule of Payments to 31st January 2025 , to a Net Value of £44,865.18, to review and consider recommending to Town Council for approval.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that Town Council approves expenditure of £44,865.18 to meet the demands listed on the Schedule of Payments to 31st January 2025.

7-24.7 Consideration of quotations for new gas supply contract to Fen Lane (current contract expiry 31/03/25)

Members had sight of four quotes for renewal of the gas supply to the Civic Offices, Fen Lane as the current contract was due to expire 31st March 2025. The Clerk advised that this renewal was planned to run until the end of September 2026, to bring its renewal date in line with all the other utility contracts held by the town council. Members discussed the quotations.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation for Total Energies, with an annual cost of £5941.78, to run until September 2026.

7-24.8 Receive and review the Interim Internal Audit Report and consider recommendations within the report

Cllr Blanchard led the meeting through the Interim Annual Report and Members discussed recommendations made within the report. It was noted that the higher priority recommendations had already been actioned by the Town Clerk, and that there were plans in place for the remaining recommendations to be actioned over the next few months, given that the preparations for the financial year-end for 2024/25 were already underway.

It was agreed that the recommendations for the council to use a pre-loaded credit card to replace the current debit card system, and the option for the asset inventory module of Rialtas to be procured would be investigated and findings presented at a future F&P committee meeting.

Members were very pleased with the new internal report process and the level of detail that was being presented to the council, giving the council assurances that systems and processes were examined and reported upon. The report included predicted changes to industry/audit standards which would allow the council to make any changes at the earliest opportunity.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk continues to undertake actions on the informed findings of the Interim Internal Report, prioritising those which are necessary actions above those that are best practice recommendations.

7-24.9 Consideration of the Town Council’s Investment Strategy

Cllr Blanchard confirmed that several Members of the committee had attended an online presentation from CCLA (Churches, Charities, and Local Authorities) in order to consider the town council's future Investment Strategy. The CCLA offer an account entitled the Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) which is a secure, FCA-regulated money market fund designed for UK public sector organisations, including town and parish councils.

Managed by CCLA, the PSDF allows councils to invest surplus funds in a diversified portfolio of short-term, high-quality assets. It prioritises liquidity, capital preservation, and competitive returns, enabling councils to manage their finances responsibly while adhering to their statutory duties (currently under the Local Government Act 2003).

It was discussed that the Town Council is not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme as a Local Authority with an annual budget in excess of £500,000 and so the council needs to find a suitable mechanism to invest its reserves whilst protecting public monies. Cllr Nnamdi also pointed out the positive that the CCLA went beyond the minimum requirements of governance and that the PSDF was a low risk low return account, which tracked about the rate of inflation.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendation be made to Town Council to open a PSDF account with CCLA, and that monies be transferred into that account, with £250k being retained in a current bank account to meet the council's operational expenditure.

7-24.10 Review of Hire Fees (including Football pitch fees) and Cemetery fees

Members reviewed the current hire fees, pitch fees and cemetery fees. Discussions were had regarding the council not being required to charge VAT on the hiring of the Community Hub, as no service provisions were being made. Members also considered any changes to the current fees and felt that there was no requirement to make any changes to fees for the coming financial year.

It was **RESOLVED** that all fees for hire of buildings and open spaces and football pitch fees would remain unchanged for the financial year 2025/2026, with VAT charges removed from any hiring fees.

It was **RESOLVED** that burial fees for all full (coffin) burials should be removed immediately as this service provision could no longer be fulfilled at Mill Lane Cemetery and that all other fees should remain the same, pending the review of the Cemetery Policy.

7-24.11 Review of the following policies: Environmental and Sustainability, Equality and Diversity, ICT Policy, Volunteer Policy, Publication Scheme

Cllr Blanchard confirmed that the following policies were brought before the committee for consideration as part of the council's review procedures, and not because of any legislative changes that would require they be reviewed:

- Environmental and Sustainability Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- ICT Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Review of the Publication Scheme

Members discussed whether there was any necessity to review the policies in consideration of any political changes that may be arising, but it was felt that this was an unpredictable situation and any legislative changes would be dealt with at the time they are made.

It was **RESOLVED** that the policies were fit for purpose, no changes were required, and as such should be marked accordingly with the appropriate next standard review dates.

7-24.12 Receive the reviewed draft Community Grants policy with recommendations from the C&P committee

Cllr Johnston made a Non-Pecuniary Declaration of Interest in this item in relation to him being a member of the North Hykeham Twinning Association.

Members received the revised draft of the Community Grants policy, as recommended by the Community and Planning (C&P) committee. The recommended changes were to change all references to Community Committee to Community & Planning Committee, and to amended dates for receipt of grant applications to now read as 'the 10th of the month before a meeting'.

Members discussed whether standard operating costs should be covered by grants in the future and that the council was currently eligible to operate the Grants Policy using the General Power of Competence, rather than under the LGA s.137 regulations. It was suggested that the current wording of the policy gave fluidity for the Community & Planning (C&P) Committee to consider individual grant applications which may refer to running or operating costs without the need for tighter definition.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft Community Grants policy be presented to the Town Council for consideration to adopt.

7-24.13 Review of the Council's GDPR documentation and consider the development of new policies

Members were presented with the following new draft GDPR documentation and policies, and discussed them in consideration of recommendations made in the council's latest Interim Internal Audit: -

- GDPR Policy
- GDPR Data Protection Impact Assessment
- GDPR – Remote working Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft GDPR Polic, GDPR Data Protection Impact Assessment, and the GDPR – Remote working Policy be presented to the Town Council for consideration to adopt.

7-24.14 Development of the Council's Statement of Internal Controls

Members were presented with a draft Statement of Internal Controls for consideration; the document was part of the recommendations made in the council's latest Interim Internal Audit. Members discussed the content of the document.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft Statement of Internal Controls be presented to the Town Council for consideration to adopt.

7-24.15 Review of the Exclusive Rights of Burials refund policy, in accordance with Standing Order No.7(a)

The Clerk asked that the calculations for refunds be revisited, in consideration of the known costs of original purchase prices, so as to ensure all refunds were made appropriately and would not be detrimentally affected by future changes in fees.

It was **RESOLVED** that the wording of the policy be amended to read as follows: -

- a. Single Plot Purchasers
 - i. Refund Amount = Original Purchase Price of Single plot - Maintenance and Upkeep Deduction.
- b. Double Plot Purchasers
 - i. If a single interment has already taken place:
Refund Amount = Difference between cost of Double and Single Burial at the time of original purchase.
 - ii. If no interments have taken place:
Refund Amount = Original Purchase Price of Double Plot - Maintenance and Upkeep Deduction.

7-24.16 Development of the committee's 5-year plan

As there were no new matters to be presented for the 5-year plan, it was agreed to move to the next agenda item.

7-24.17 To consider whether the Sub-Committee will move into Closed Session in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 for the following confidential agenda items:

It was **RESOLVED** that the committee moved into Closed Session to discuss the following confidential agenda items.

7-24.18 To receive quotations in relation to outsourcing payroll services

Members considered three quotations for the outsourcing of payroll services. It was noted that the Deputy Clerk, who had past experience of outsourced payroll, would receive training in relation to the council's in-house payroll procedures. The Clerk offered that in time this could give a realistic comparison of the two processes for councillors to consider at a future meeting to aid with decision-making.

It was **RESOLVED** that the clerks continue with the in-house processing of payroll, to be reviewed in 6 months' time.

7-24.19 To consider a request of appeal on a refund from a Grant of Exclusive Rights of Burial holder in view of exceptional circumstances relating to their requested burial being made within two weeks of the Council's change to types of burials permitted in North Hykeham Cemetery (Mill Lane)

A request in relation to an Exclusive Rights of Burial to receive a refund greater in value than that provided by the Exclusive Rights of Burial Refund Policy was considered by Members. After careful consideration, Members felt that the applicant's reasons given for an increase to the calculated refund did not warrant any increase in the refund calculated in accordance with the Refund Policy

It was **RESOLVED** to reject the request for an increased refund in relation to an Exclusive Rights of Burial.

7-24.20 Personnel Matters: to receive updates and consider ratification of recommendations from the Personnel Sub Committee.

As there had been no Personnel sub-committee meeting held since the last Finance and Policy committee meeting, there were no items to report.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Actions from this meeting:

Item No:	Action	Allocated to	Complete by
7-24.7	Accept the quotation for Total Energies, with an annual cost of £5941.78, to run until September 2026	Town Clerk	As soon as possible
7-24.8	Continue to undertake actions on the informed findings of the Interim Internal Report, prioritising those which are necessary actions above those that are best practice recommendations.	Town Clerk	Ongoing
7-24.9	Recommendation to Town Council to open a PSDF account with CCLA, and that monies be transferred into that account, with £250k being retained in a current bank account to meet the council's operational expenditure	Town Council	Next Town Council Meeting
7-24.10	Burial fees for all full (coffin) burials be removed immediately and all other fees remain the same – to be published.	Town Clerk	1 st April 2025
7-24.12	The draft Community Grants policy be presented to the Town Council for consideration to adopt.	Town Council	Next Town Council Meeting
7-24.13	The draft GDPR Polic, GDPR Data Protection Impact Assessment, and the GDPR – Remote working Policy be presented to the Town Council for consideration to adopt	Town Council	Next Town Council Meeting
7-24.14	The draft Statement of Internal Controls be presented to the Town Council for consideration to adopt	Town Council	Next Town Council Meeting
7-24.15	Amend Exclusive Rights of Burial Refund Policy	Town Clerk	As soon as possible
7-24.18	Clerks to continue with the in-house processing of payroll, to be reviewed in 6 months' time.	Town Clerk	Ongoing
7-24.19	Inform applicant that the request for an increased refund in relation to an Exclusive Rights of Burial was rejected.	Town Clerk	As soon as possible