



## **Finance, Operations and Personnel Committee Meeting**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 7pm**

**Meeting held at Pye Green Community Centre, Bradbury Lane, Hednesford, WS12 4EP**

### **Present:**

Cllr Paul Jones (Chair)  
Cllr Arthur Roden  
Cllr Alan Pearson  
Cllr Sheila Cartwright  
Cllr Sharon Jagger  
Cllr Annette Walker  
Cllr Ronald Turville  
Cllr Ann Turville

### **In attendance from Hednesford Town Council:**

Cheryl Kinsella – Finance Officer

### **Members of the Public:**

There were 0 members of the public present.

### **1. Public Participation**

No points were raised under public participation.

### **2. Apologies:**

Cllr D Cartwright  
Cllr L Harrison

### **3. Declaration of Interest**

No declaration of interest was raised.

### **4. Previous Minutes**

Previous minutes from the FOP Committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023 were agreed and approved.

**Proposed** by Councillor Jagger

**Seconded** by Paul Jones.

**Accepted** by all who attended on 25<sup>th</sup> July.

Councillor Jagger pointed out outstanding actions from the previous meeting and requested further update.

1. Progress on the Risk Register – Councillor Jones confirmed this was in hand.
2. The Chief Officer's concerns raised regarding work pressure and excessive TOIL. Councillor Jagger asked how this was being addressed. Councillor Jones stated he would provide an update during Private and Confidential business.

## **5. Review of Local Plan**

Cllr Jagger presented the draft document which had been prepared by the Planning Committee working group [Cllr Sharon Jagger & Cllr Annette Walker]. Cllr Jagger emphasised the need for this to be a piece of work in which we were all involved. It was previously agreed that discussion and work around this document could take place outside of formal meetings.

The document has been requested repeatedly by Officers since May 2023 and it will be brought to every committee meeting and every full council meeting for discussion over the next couple of months.

It was noted that Task One has been completed – The Council's Vision Statement was approved unanimously by full council on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Cllr Pearson and Cllr Ron Turville requested to amend the Vision Statement, making the argument that this is a “working document”. Cllr Ron Turville objected to the addition of the “Debate Not Hate Campaign”.

Cllr Jagger explained that the next task is to agree the four priorities – some of which had been drafted by Officers as the works had been already completed since May or were currently being undertaken.

There was a lengthy discussion as to the necessity for this document, as to the nature of its content, wording used and as to its comparison with the HTC Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Jagger explained that this document will serve as “direction” for Officers who are currently without agreed direction or strategy from HTC and have been requesting this since the current administration were elected in May 2023.

Cllr Jagger explained that HTC Neighbourhood Plan relates to local development and does not relate to the council's directional strategy – the two documents are not the same.

Council could not agree to any of the priorities in this document and the document was set aside to be presented in perpetuity over the coming months, for councillors to discuss, amend, adjust, and ultimately agree its content and the measures suggested. Council was reminded that this piece of work can be undertaken outside of formal council meetings.

## **6. Finance**

### A. Finance officer presented the **Quarter 2 Summary Reports**

A discussion was held relating to queries raised about some of the expenditure items.

Councillor Pearson requested the RFO to find out what our legal requirements were for letting the public know our activities on a quarterly basis. This is currently being done via social media.

#### **Action** RFO

### B. **Precept – Budget for 2024 25.** Noted but not debated.

### C. **Audit update** regarding minor queries which had been raised. No further discussion or requirements.

### D. **CIL update.** A discussion about proposed spend was had. No written proposals were presented. RFO reminded Councillors regarding the discussion at the extraordinary meeting. Councillor Jagger and Councillor Annette Walker confirmed that they had been working up costed proposals for the provision of

- i) South Staffs College
- ii) Support for urgent works at Hednesford Nursery
- iii) The preservation and re-siting of St Saviour's church bell. These proposals would be written up and submitted as a matter of urgency. Bus shelters and ownership if purchased were also discussed.

### E. **Prosperity Funding.** Not as time critical. There was a suggestion from the Chief Officer regarding using UK SPF funding for the Remembrance Day booklets. The RFO informed the Chair that this may not be possible due to the criteria for use.

### F. **Christmas Lighting Budget** of £4,500 discussed. Current expenditure is £1593.92 to the end of Quarter 2. There is an unexpected additional testing cost due to EON requesting this in advance of switch-on, but the RFO believes this event should still come in on budget.

### G. **Nationwide Savings Account.** Previous signatory has signed the form requesting new signatories. Nationwide have been back in touch saying that they are trying to contact the signatory who they had not received authorisation from – Robin Kingston. Councillor Jagger offered to contact him regarding this so that he was aware of why Nationwide were getting in touch and could respond.

**Action** – Councillor Jagger. Councillors requested the value of the matured account which the RFO provided. Once access is granted, further investment of the funds can be discussed, and new savings account agreed in future meetings.

## **7. Operations**

- A. Finance Officer advised Committee that the additional bank signatories were now in place, so no further action was required on this item.
- B. Council Brand – tied into local plan. There was a discussion as to what the front facing brand currently is. This was explained further by Councillor Jagger. HTC's front-facing brand [*Visit Hednesford*] had been created and developed by a former Town Regeneration Officer who had engaged with the local community via our front-facing branded social media pretty much 24/7 and as a result, HTC had garnered a huge community engagement. By way of illustration, Cllr Jagger explained about the life-size "nutcracker" figures around the town centre at Christmas, and how much community engagement they had generated. HTC no longer employs into that role, and current officers do not have the capacity to operate this effectively- as a result our front-facing brand is unfortunately currently not fully operational. Our Council brand will be incorporated into the local plan already under discussion [see No.5 above].

## **8. Personnel - Private and Confidential**

Councillor Jones as Chair of the FOP Committee gave councillors and update on HR Matters.

A message from the Chair to treat all with respect.

There was a heated debate about officers' time and what can or cannot be achieved with the Chief Officer on leave of absence.

Councillor Jagger apologised to the Committee Chair, and she left the meeting following the debate saying that she had never walked out of a council meeting in four and half years. Apologies and thanks were given to the RFO before leaving.

Councillor Walker left the meeting a short time later after further exchanges ensued.

No vote was taken with regards to the reporting structure for the Chief Officer.

**Outstanding Action** – All Councillors

## **15. Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 7pm

Meeting Closed at 9.04pm

Signed (Chair of FPOPs Committee):

Date: