

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee, held at 6:00pm on
Tuesday 8th August 2023,
at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road

COUNCILLORS PRESENT:

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Louis Brown, Vicky Brown, Marjorie Chambers, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davies, Pauline Thompson, John Tully, Victor Bridges and Sophie Robinson.

ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer and RFO, Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant

FGS23/050 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR

Welcome by the Chair, Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

FGS23/051 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bob Walkinshaw, Lawrence Henderson, Caroline Ball and Mark Purvis.

FGS23/052 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

No disclosures of interest.

FGS23/053 DISPENSATIONS

No dispensations were requested.

FGS23/054 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no items for consideration from members of the public, and there were no members of the public present at the meeting.

FGS23/055 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11th July 2023.

FGS23/056 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24

a) Updated Budget Report

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** updated budget report and address any questions to the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

In response to a question from Cllr Marjorie Chambers, the RFO confirmed that Koast Radio had been paid twice for their attendance at Ashington Fair Day, and rather than returning would be simply in credit as attending the Pride Event in September.

b) Accounts Paid and to be Paid (including Bank Reconciliation)

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid and to be paid; to endorse those accounts paid and agree those to be paid, since 4th July 2023.

FGS23/057 CASUAL VACANCY – HAYDON WARD

a) Resignation

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** formal notice of resignation received from Michelle Brannigan, ward Cllr for the Haydon Ward, received on 19th July.

Cllr John Tully asked that the minute reflect he was very sad that Michelle had resigned from the Council, and that everyone wished her well in her future studies and career.

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b) Notice of Vacancy

It was AGREED to RECEIVE and endorse the action taken by the Executive Officer, in consultation with Northumberland County Council Elections Office, to declare the casual vacancy and the timescales therein.

FGS23/058 TOWN TWINNING

a) Itinerary for visit to Remscheid 1st September – 4th September 2023

It was AGREED to RECEIVE the itinerary for the visit to Remscheid.

b) Representative(s) of Council

It was confirmed that Remscheid has offered on arrival hospitality for up to three representatives of the Council. This did not include travel to Remscheid.

Cllr Victor Bridges sadly, and very disappointedly confirmed that he was unable to visit Remscheid as the Civic Head as this has been declared too risky by his doctor. Cllr Marjorie Chambers, who had been asked to attend to support Cllr Bridges, would also now not be attending.

Cllr Victor Bridges and Cllr John Tully left the room at 18:17. Cllr John Tully re-entered the room at 18:19.

It was AGREED those representatives who will be attending on behalf of the Council would be Cllr Vicky Brown, as Deputy Civic Head and standing in for Cllr Bridges, Cllr Pauline Thompson, and Cllr Louis Brown.

It was noted that these members were attending as part of town twinning originally, but their status as representatives would be updated with our hosts.

c) Travel and Budget

It was AGREED to support the travel expenses of the Civic Head, or in this instance, the Deputy Civic Head for transport to and from Remscheid. It was discussed that where possible the Council hoped to support travel with a lower carbon footprint.

The conflict between cost-of-living pressures, the Council budget, and the public purse was considered alongside the ethical question of office holders being out of pocket for carrying out their duties and representing the Council.

Although it was discussed that any Civic Head, presently or in the future, could need to be supported by another, it was considered that it was appropriate in the current climate that the Council only fund the travel of a sole representative.

It was AGREED that a future policy would be presented for agreement, for any international travel in the future, and for representation of the Civic Head at events.

It was AGREED to delegate spending to the RFO in consultation with the Chair on all matters relating to Town Twinning, which would be paid from Civic Expenses and Events, Communication and Engagement budget.

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FGS23/059 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 12th September 2023, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

Meeting ended 18:30pm

DRAFT