

THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Friday 20th May 2022 at 10.30am in the Parish Council Office, New Green Centre.

In the Chair: Cllr. Dashper. Present: Cllrs. Bond, Rainbow and West. In Attendance: Mrs V Waples, Clerk.

The Chair for the meeting declared the meeting open at 10.30am thanked all for attending and the notice for the reporting at meetings of the parish council was taken as read.

1. Apologies of absence –
 - a) There were no applicable apologies for absence as all were present.
2. Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests -
 - a) To receive declarations of pecuniary, non-pecuniary and personal interest in items on the agenda and their nature including gifts of hospitality exceeding £50 – there were none received.
3. To approve the minutes of the Committee Meeting of 18th February 2022 as previously circulated –
 - a) the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting that took place with agreement forthcoming for them to be signed as such by the Chair following an amendment to the sentence in 1b, aif.
4. To consider the following as part of the Council's Year-End Process:
 - a) To review the Council's Fidelity Guarantee in light of balances held - From an insurance viewpoint all appeared to be fine once the additional assets for the year 2022-2023 were added. It was agreed that these would not impact the cover provided and as such, insurance was deemed to be adequate and fit for purposes. Following discussion over the amount of fidelity guarantee required and the anticipated movement in the Council's finances, **all were in agreement that delegated powers be given to the Clerk and Cllr. Rainbow as the Council appointed Internal Controller to review and agree a defined sum for the fidelity guarantee to be held in accordance with recommended guidelines (maximum year-end plus 50% of precept), aif.**
 - b) To consider the adoption of an Investment Strategy – it was agreed that any strategy must be flexible and beneficial, and any investments made must ensure that the Council adheres to the policy investment objectives as written. **Adoption of the policy was agreed by all.**
 - c) To consider approving the opening of a separate bank account to protect the Council's Financial Assets in accordance with the Council's Investment Strategy – all agreed that the optimal sum to be invested was in the region of 40-50k and consideration should be given to Unity Trust Bank; Nationwide, Cambridge Building Society. **Delegation to select an account was given to the Clerk and Cllr. Rainbow and would be brought back to the Committee for formal approval, aif.**
 - d) To consider the adoption of a Use of photographs policy – **the adoption of such a policy was approved inclusive of Appendix A Data Protection Policy, aif.**
 - e) To consider steps to be taken over the monitoring of MSDC's performance in planning matters - Background to this request had been to look at correspondence and work towards making a response to MSDC over its performance in planning terms. Clerk and Chair are still to discuss this matter with other parish councils facing similar situations. It was agreed that the peer review had been tight parameters in what might have been discussed and overall the review appeared to state that the referrals committee was a timing issue not a performance issue. Response to the community is still paramount. It was agreed that input into the council's response should come from it's legal team to ensure there was no cross over with the current Judicial Review. It was also noted that it had been stated by the District Councillors that it was the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio Holders for Planning who had made the decision to go to appeal which appeared to be an arbitrary decision. **All agreed that there was a need to await the publication of the full peer review to enable the Council to make a comment on the overall findings, aif.**

So signed by the Chair at the meeting of 30th September 2022

- f) To receive an update from MSDC on the Peer Review undertaken of its Planning Committee processes, supported by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

The meeting received the comment from the Assistant Director Planning and Building Control who stated that there were plans by the LPA to publish the report and the action plan imminently. A cross party member group has met a few times and should be in a position to publish both over the coming weeks. All agreed that the report should be the focus of any response and in particular, how the LPA are to proposing to address the recommendations contained therein. It was agreed that a planning application needed to be judged in response to the LPA's own policies (including that of adopted Neighbourhood Plans) and not their preoccupation with their land supply. Concern was raised that there was a one-track process which failed to consider fully the overall impact of continually striving for numbers. It was also stated that the peer review did not address the Officer ability to sign off on planning applications during the Covid period. **All were in agreement that the Planning Committee needs to be fit for purpose and should that the peer review should be used to give a response and challenge areas that have not been covered, aif.**

5. To consider matters coming forth from Committee Members: there were no further matters raised.
6. Date of future Meetings of the Committee:
 - a) Policy & Resources Committee Meeting – 30th September 2022 at 10.30am in the Parish Council Office.
7. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed:
 - a) Staffing Matters – following the successful completion of the ILAC course, **it was agreed that the Committee recommend to full Council that an incremental point be added to the Deputy Clerk's salary backdated to when the qualification was achieved, aif.**
8. There being no further business to transact, the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.24am.