

## THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 11.05am in the Pavilion, Church Road, Thurston.

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

The Chair declared the meeting open at 11.05am and thanked all for attending. The notice for the reporting at meetings of the parish council was taken as read.

1. Apologies of absence –
  - a) Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr. Moy.
2. Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests -
  - a) To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registerable interests and non-registerable interests 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 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 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, aif.**
4. To consider the following matters as part of the council's year-end process:
  - a) To receive an update on the opening of a separate bank account to protect the council's financial assets in accordance with council's Investment Strategy – whilst it had been previously agreed that the opening of an account was a sound idea, the clerk updated the committee with research into accounts open to local authorities. It was noted that Nationwide had stated that they were not opening local authority accounts at the current time and the rates being offered by the Cambridge Building Society and Unity Bank were not sufficiently rewarding. With reference to the council's investment objectives: security; liquidity and return, the meeting agreed that the clerk should look to explore banking institutions such as Redwood (FCsC) or similar to obtain the best return.
  - b) To receive and consider the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft of the Budget for 2025-2026 – having reviewed the paper, the committee was in agreement that the funding of the PCSO should be incorporated into the revenue budget on a sliding scale – 50% for the current year was agreed to be appropriate. Following further discussion, it was agreed that the committee would recommend to full council a draft revenue budget in the sum of £247,372. It was noted that the indicative tax base had been provided by the District Council that morning showing an increase of 5.3% over that set for the previous year. It was confirmed that the indicative tax base would not be finalised until early January 2025 and that this would be required to ascertain the full impact of the budget being set. It was noted that the draft budget would be discussed further at the full council meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and would be treated as a live document.  
The committee also **agreed to the clerk's proposed amendments to the reserves policy confirming that even at times when extreme pressure is put on the council's finances the council would keep a minimum balance sufficient to pay one month's worth of contractual obligations to staff and contractors in general reserves at all times, aif.** The reserves policy was duly reviewed and approved.
5. To consider the following matter in relation to the local government services pay agreement 2024/25
  - a) To note the local government pay award has been agreed nationally with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and that staff salaries will be amended accordingly and remuneration backdated – all were aware that the pay agreement was a nationally agreed policy and that its implementation formed part of the conditions and terms of employment. In accordance with FR 7.3 (No changes shall be made to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the

So approved and signed at the meeting of 12.02.2025

prior consent of the council or relevant committee), **all confirmed that the agreed pay award be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April and implemented in the November payslips, aif.**

6. To note the Fire Risk Assessment of the Parish Council Office as carried out by the Clerk – the Clerk confirmed that she had received clarification of the insurance cover that was in place for the building as part of the services provided by the Trust within the rental charge for the office suite. Further updates had been agreed for the upgrade of the lighting in the New Green Centre as well as the parish office suite. It was confirmed that the issues relating to the emergency lighting had been rectified and all was working satisfactory. The fire risk assessment and office risk assessment as carried out by the Clerk were duly noted. Issues relating to remote access for the alarm were in the process of being sorted.
7. To consider matters coming forth from Committee Members –
  - a) The meeting noted that the chair had completed and recorded a return-to-work assessment for the Clerk following her return to work from her non-work related injury.
  - b) There were no further matters raised.
8. Date of future meetings of the committee:
  - a) 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025 commencing at 6.00pm in the Community Library, Norton Road – the next scheduled date was confirmed although this may be subject to amendment with further meetings scheduled if changes in legislation required review of existing / adoption of new policies.
9. 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: **it was resolved to exclude the public for the reasons stated, aif.**
  - a) To consider the proposal to employ a Ranger to support the council in the delivery of general maintenance and provision of services within the parish – following receipt of the paper submitted by the Clerk, **it was resolved that the committee would approve the proposal to recruit a Village Ranger for a maximum of 10 hours per week with job descriptions and recruitment package to be delegated to the Parish Clerk, aif.** The decision to provide a suitable vehicle for deferred until the post had been filled. The funding for this post to be a two-year project from Neighbourhood CIL. Funding in the range of £10,000 per annum to allow for flexibility in range of work offered.
10. There being no further business to transact, the Chairman closed the meeting at 12.25pm.