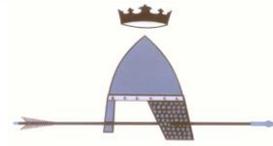




Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 4 June 2013 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr R Bye - Chairman
Cllrs: C Bishop, Mrs M Kiloh, R Harris, R Jessop, Ms M-L Neill
and Mrs S Pry.

1. Apologies for Absence – None.

2. Disclosure of Interest – None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 March 2013. Cllr Bishop proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Ms Neill. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings – None.

5. Correspondence and Communications – None.

6. Appointment of Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer

Cllr Bye proposed that Council be recommended to formally reappoint the current Clerk and his successor. This was seconded by Cllr Ms Neill and agreed unanimously.

7. Budget Report 2012-13

The Clerk had circulated the attached end year report with a brief reminder of the main reasons why final figures had varied from the budget. These had been regularly reported to Committees throughout the year. The final deficit against precept will be offset by a transfer of £4000 from the Almonry repairs reserve. The Clerk emphasised that these figures relate to actual payments and receipts and include a payment in advance of 6 months rent for one of the Almonry offices. The end year position was noted.

8. Bank Reconciliation Statement

The attached statement at 30 April 2013 was noted.

9. Draft Accounts 2012-13

The draft accounts had been circulated, attention being drawn to the fact that these vary from the budget report in that they are prepared on an income and expenditure basis and therefore reflect debtors and creditors. In this context the Clerk highlighted the tenant farmer's rent arrears and the advance rent paid for one of the Almonry offices. He also drew attention to a bad debt of £90 relating to the cutting of the cemetery hedge. **Cllr Bye proposed that Council approval be sought for the writing off of this bad debt and that the accounts, as attached, be agreed. These recommendations were seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry and agreed unanimously.** The Clerk reassured the Committee that arrears of rent owed by the tenant farmer are being pursued.

10. Annual Return

A copy of the Annual Return had been circulated together with reasons for the variations between 2011-12 and 2012-13. Subsequent to the circulation of the papers the Internal Auditors had also signed off Section 4 of the Return confirming that all the various internal

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controls had been implemented satisfactorily. With this reassurance in mind the Committee reviewed each of the questions on the Annual Governance Statement in Section 2 of the Return. With regard to question 5 relating to risk assessments the Clerk reminded the Committee that, in signing off the 2011-12 Annual Return, the External Auditors had drawn attention to the need to “formally review and approve the risk assessment annually”. It was not clear whether this referred to the general policy or individual risk assessments but, assuming the latter, each Committee had undertaken a review of its areas of responsibility during the year. With this in mind the Committee could see no reason why Council should not be invited to respond positively to all the questions in Section 2. **Cllr Bye therefore proposed that Council be recommended:**

- **to endorse the figures in Section 1 of the Return;**
- **to respond positively to each of the questions in Section 2 of the Return and to advise the External Auditors of the risk assessment review work undertaken during the year;**
- **to endorse the Explanation of Variances.**

This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Kiloh and agreed unanimously.

Finally, the Committee agreed that the current internal audit arrangements are working satisfactorily and **Cllr Bye therefore proposed that Council be recommended to reappoint the Internal Auditors for a further year. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry and agreed unanimously.**

Attached to these minutes are copies of the Annual Return showing completed Sections 1 and 4 and a copy of the Explanation of Variances.

11. Budget report 2013-14

Since the budget had been set various matters had arisen, not least the way in which the District Council had allocated the Government’s transitional grant relating to the changed arrangements for the Council Tax subsidy. Unexpectedly this had been paid as an addition to, rather than as part of, the precept. On the other side of the coin, the evidence of the 2012-13 expenditure indicated that some costs would be above budget and new commitments had been entered into including a tree survey and the possible contribution towards the cost of gateways. Excluding the latter, a summary of the current forecast deficit against precept is attached. The Committee could see no reason, at this stage, to ring-fence the transitional grant from Rother.

12. 3 Year Forward Plan

No firm proposals had yet been developed by Committees. It was therefore agreed that, by the next meeting, more precise details must be available so that they can form the basis of a 3 year plan starting with the 2014-15 budget year. In terms of its own responsibilities F&GP proposed that the priorities should be £10k for IT improvements in 2015-16; £6k for improvements to the Almonry kitchen and toilets in 2014-15 of which £2k would come from the repairs reserve contribution of £5k, the remaining £3k being used for external wall repointing. In addition to the £5k contribution to the repairs reserve in 2016-17 a further £4k should be added to the budget.

13. Almonry Garden Report

The Beautiful Battle volunteers had provided a written report stating that the garden is now in a changeover situation from spring to summer, albeit about 3 weeks late. Spring had seen a particularly fine display of tulips and camessias. The lawns are now in excellent condition. The courtyard display of pots and hanging baskets is now in place.

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14. Request for Grant from Methodist Church

Some time ago the Methodist Church had applied for a grant towards the cost of its new building. The Council had felt unable to help in this respect but had indicated that a more modest request to contribute towards the cost of setting up a community facility such as equipment for toddlers' groups or after school clubs might be favourably considered. Such a request had now been received. Whilst sympathetic to the request the Committee felt that, at this stage, the response should be restricted to support in principle but that consideration of a specific grant request could be considered at the next meeting when more precise costs of these facilities should be available.

15. Gifting of Assets to Beautiful Battle and Chamber of Commerce

The list of assets purchased last year on behalf of both Beautiful Battle and the Chamber of Commerce is attached. **Cllr Bye proposed that Council be recommended to agree that the items on the list should be gifted. This was seconded by Cllr Ms Neill.**

16. Matters for Information and Future Agenda Items – None.

17. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 3 September 2013

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

**CLLR R BYE
CHAIRMAN**

