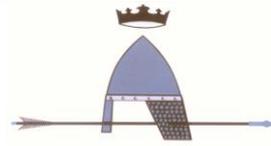




Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on Wednesday, 6 June 2012 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr R Bye - Chairman
Cllrs: Mrs M Kiloh, R Harris, R Jessop and Mrs S Pry.

1. Apologies for Absence – Cllr Ms M-L Neill.

2. Disclosure of Interest – None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2012. Cllr Jessop proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

Cllr Harris queried progress on several matters. Firstly, the Clerk confirmed that the end year accounts include a transfer of **£4000 to an Almonry repair reserve**. Secondly, regarding the **purchase of a tractor and trailer**, various suppliers are being explored and will be followed up in the near future. Thirdly, Cllr Bye said that he will be putting proposals for **Councillor training** to the next Council meeting. Finally, the Clerk said that only a small amount of further documentation is required to enable the application for **Quality Council re-accreditation** to go forward. This includes the outcome of the BLAP review which Cllr Jessop will provide. Pending the full submission the Clerk has registered a signed application with NALC which has been accepted as meeting the relevant deadline.

5. Correspondence and Communications – None.

6. Appointment of Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer

Cllr Bye proposed that Council be recommended to formally reappoint the Clerk. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Kiloh and agreed unanimously.

7. Budget Report 2011-12

As anticipated in the Clerk's report to the previous meeting, the final figures for 2011-12 showed a significant difference to those in the budget. As recorded in the attached table the end year position showed a small surplus of £1125 rather than the need to draw on general reserves as anticipated at budget stage. He reminded the Committee of the main changes in expenditure, both up and down, but highlighted the fact that income had exceeded budget by over £20,000, two of the main reasons being the arrears of roundabout sponsorship money and cemetery fees.

Looking ahead, the Clerk's report detailed a number of factors which had arisen and will impact on this year's budget. If they all materialise they will increase net expenditure by at least £10,000. However, this needed to be considered in the context of the savings made in 2011-12 which had seen a significant rise in general reserves. At this stage therefore the Committee could see no reason to make any changes in expenditure plans. One of the main reasons for the increase in spend is the cost of resurfacing the tennis courts which, at about £12,000, is considerably more than anticipated at budget stage. In view of the urgency of this work the Clerk had already circulated to all Council Members details of the tenders received and obtained approval in principle to accept the recommended quote subject to F&GP's consideration of the impact on the budget. In the light of the

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discussion recorded above **Cllr Jessop proposed that the contract be let, with formal, retrospective approval being obtained at the next Council meeting. This was seconded by Cllr Bye and agreed unanimously.** Cllr Harris reminded the Committee of the commitment to make further contributions to an Almonry repair reserve.

8. Bank Reconciliation Statement

The attached statement at 30 April 2012 was noted.

9. Draft Accounts 2011-12

The draft accounts had been circulated, particular attention being drawn to the movement in both general and earmarked reserves. **Cllr Bye proposed that the attached draft accounts be recommended to Council for approval. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously.**

10. Annual Return

A copy of the Annual Return had been circulated to all Committee Members together with comments on the variations between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 figures. In addition, with specific reference to two governance issues relating to Risk Assessment and Management, the Committee considered a summary of the Council's recent work in this respect. The Committee also noted that the internal auditors had both completed Section 4 of the Return and, in their covering letter, reported positively on the Council's Risk Assessment arrangements.

In the light of the discussions on the information required by the Annual Return **Cllr Bye proposed that Council be recommended to:**

- **Endorse the figures in Section 1 of the Return;**
- **Respond positively to each of the questions in Section 2 of the Return and, in doing so, endorse the attached as the annual review of Risk Assessment.**

This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry and agreed unanimously.

Cllr Bye also proposed that Council endorse the Explanation of Variances. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously.

Finally, the Committee agreed that the current internal audit arrangements are working satisfactorily. **Cllr Mrs Kiloh 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 a copy of the Annual Return showing completed Sections 1 and 4; a copy of the Explanation of Variances and the Risk Assessment and Management statement.

11. Timetable for Policy Reviews

As requested by Council the Committee noted the list of existing policy documents. Since the major task of reviewing Standing Orders and Financial Regulations had only recently been completed, Committee Members felt that by taking individual responsibility for each of the other policy documents it should be possible to review them all prior to the next meeting. Accordingly it was agreed as follows:

- The Clerk to review Health and Safety and the related topic of Risk Management;
- Cllr Harris to review Complaints Procedure;
- Cllr Mrs Pry to review Child Protection Policy;
- Cllr Jessop to review the Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme;
- Cllr Mrs Kiloh to look at the statements of Community Involvement;
- Cllr Bye to review the related subjects of Equal Opportunities, Recruitment, Grievance and Discipline.

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In the course of discussing this item the Committee considered a note by the Clerk responding to a request by the insurers that a risk assessment be undertaken relating to the Council's grounds maintenance staff. Various improvements were suggested including greater emphasis on the role of management rather than relying on self regulation by the staff themselves. Performance in terms of health and safety should also be covered in annual appraisals. Cllr Jessop reminded the Committee of a recommended standard industry "tool box" review on a more regular basis but this was felt to be unnecessarily burdensome. A revised draft is attached **for further discussion at the forthcoming Council meeting.**

12. Repairs to Almonry Building

With a potential budget of £6000 in mind (£4000 from reserve and £2000 allocated in budget) the Clerk had discussed with Cllr Eldridge a range of repairs to the Almonry building. 3 tenders for the work had been invited. One company had failed to submit a quote the other 2 were at opposite ends of the scale, one being for over £11,000 the other just over £3000. This had led to a suspicion that the higher bid was overpriced and the lesser failed to recognise the sensitive repairs to an important listed building. The Committee therefore agreed with the Clerk's proposal to approach another company with an established track record in historic building repairs (including for the National Trust).

13. Almonry Garden Report

Simon Alexander was welcomed to the meeting. He confirmed that the various hanging baskets and tubs in the courtyard are now in place including some beans and tomatoes. The centrepiece in the front garden will shortly be planted with begonias. Regarding the refurbishment of the various beds in the top garden, that adjoining the kebab shop is now becoming well established and the replanted west bed is beginning to mature.

Cllr Mrs Kiloh reported compliments from visitors who had compared the garden favourably with Great Dixter.

Looking ahead it was agreed that a good deal of attention will need to be paid to weeding the various hard landscaped areas.

14. 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 Jessop proposed to recommend to Council that the lists should be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Bye and agreed unanimously.**

15. Matters for Information and Future Agenda Items

Though not on the agenda, Cllr Harris mentioned the problems experienced earlier that day in gathering a quorum for the Planning Committee. He offered options for a solution which will need to be discussed further at the forthcoming Council meeting.

16. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 4 September 2012

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

**CLLR R BYE
CHAIRMAN**

