



EPPING TOWN COUNCIL

EPPING HALL, ST JOHNS RD, EPPING, ESSEX CM16 5JU

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TO ALL MEMBERS of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CGAC)

Cllr M Wright (Chairman & Deputy Town Mayor)
Cllr G Scruton (Town Mayor & Finance Key Member)
Cllr N Avey (Administration Key Member)
Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk) (Non-voting member)

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE** to be held by **Zoom (digital meeting platform)**, on **Tuesday, 23rd February 2021 at 5pm** for the purpose of transacting the business as set out in the agenda below.

Beverley Rumsey
Town Clerk
17th February 2021

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies and reasons for absence.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to declare disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests, along with the nature of those interests, in relation to any item on this agenda.

3 DISPENSATIONS

To receive requests for dispensations from members concerning any item of business on this agenda.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION TIME

The Chairman will invite public comments and responses in relation to items on this agenda. *Individuals will be permitted a maximum of three minutes each (total time for this session is limited to ten minutes).*

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**(Attachment A)**

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 27th October 2020. **Please note:** these were presented at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th November 2020.

6 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (CGAC) from their meeting on 27th October 2020 (Minutes #250–266 of 20/21) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th November 2020 (Minute #299 of 20/21):

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Audit Commission Act s9 to 11 and the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011;
- (ii) The work of the internal auditor should be **NOTED**;
- (iii) The internal audit programme should be **APPROVED** by Council as per ~~Attachment N1~~ and Council should request a change of auditing personnel (from the same company) from 2022 to 2025;
- (iv) The external audit (AGAR) should be **NOTED**;
- (v) The Statement on Internal Control & Risk Management Statement should be **APPROVED** as per ~~Attachment N2~~ and ~~Attachment N3~~;
- (vi) The revised Employee Handbook should be **APPROVED** as per ~~Attachment N4~~;
- (vii) The half-year financial position should be **NOTED** with no further action required at this time;
- (viii) The new website tender document should be **APPROVED** as per ~~Attachment N5~~ and ~~Appendix 1~~ with the addition of documents being in an exportable format;
- (ix) The staff terms & conditions/payscales, as **NOTED** by the Committee, should be **APPROVED**. (Please note: all job descriptions and salary scales have been through Council prior to officer appointments.);
- (x) There are no staffing matters to **NOTE** at the current time.

7 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT REVIEW

Council **APPROVED** a review of policy and governance documents at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th March 2016 (Minute #478 of 2015/16).

The list of policies for annual review and the dates for review are as follows:

Internal and External Audits: **February 2021** & October 2021 (Dealt with under items 10 & 11)

Internal Audit Programme: October 2021

Statement on Internal Control: October 2021

Insurance Inventory: **February 2021** (Dealt with under agenda item 22)

Asset Register: **February 2021** (Dealt with under agenda item 12)

Internal Risk Register: **February 2021** (Dealt with under agenda item 9)

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2021** & October 2021 (Dealt with under item 24)

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: **February 2021** (Dealt with under agenda item 8)

Employee Handbook: October 2021

Risk management statement: October 2021

Please note these are the current recommended review dates, but legislation may amend the dates if an earlier review is required.

Changing regulations and audit comments may add further items to this list.

The CGAC review process leads to recommendations to Council for amendments to documents to be made.

Committee are requested to **NOTE** the above information.

8 **STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS** **(Attachments B & C)**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, sch 12, para 42 ; Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

There have been some recommended changes to the model Standing Orders (**Attachment B**) since the last review and no changes to the Financial Regulations (**Attachment C**). The Town Clerk has therefore made the necessary amendments to our Standing Orders and no changes to our Financial Regulations (which are based on the models). New legislation/regulations came into effect in April 2020 as a result of the coronavirus health situation and these are appended to the Standing Orders, as **Appendix 1**, as operational rules from April 2020 to May 2021.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Standing Orders (with amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Financial Regulations (with no amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council.

9 **INTERNAL RISK REGISTER** **(Attachment D)**

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The Town Clerk has reviewed the Internal Risk Register and made some additions.

RECOMMENDATION: The revised Internal Risk Register should be recommended for ADOPTION by Council.

10 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS**

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

Committee is requested to **NOTE** the first remote 'visit' of the internal auditor will on 23rd February 2021.

The internal audit report (first interim) will be brought to Council once received.

Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

11 EXTERNAL AUDITS

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 8th March 2016 (Minute #475 of 2015/16), Epping Town Council resolved to 'opt in' to the External Audit arrangements (which was recommended in this sector) and whereby Council would be allocated an external auditor from 2017-2022.

The external auditor for 2017-2022 for Essex will remain as PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

12 ASSET REGISTER (Attachment E)

Statutory Basis: Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

The current form of the Asset Register was ADOPTED following advice from Peter Lacey of NALC/SLCC and advice from the Audit Commission on 29th March 2010. It was reviewed by Council in October 2012 (Minutes #201 & #222 of 2012/13).

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 10th March 2020, Council RESOLVED to record individual items equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register (Minute #496 (iii) & (iv) of 2019/20).

PLEASE NOTE: The Asset Register records all individual items of £1000 or greater. Council have many assets whose value is less than £1000 and these are recorded in Council's inventories which are updated annually. This is standard practice.

There have some acquisitions and disposals during 2020/21 which are reflected in the Asset Register 2021, as per **Attachment E**.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** the following RECOMMENDATIONS and make appropriate **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Council:

- (i) Council should continue to record assets as individual items with a value equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register;
- (ii) The Asset Register 2021, as per **Attachment E**, should be APPROVED as a correct record of Council's assets at this time;
- (iii) Any revisions to the draft will be presented to full Council in March.

13 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (Attachment F)

Epping Town Council's complaints procedure was APPROVED on 10th March 2020 (Minute #496 (vii) of 2019/20) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk is pleased to report that Epping Town Council receive very few formal complaints and the office team try to deal with any issues efficiently, so they do not become a complaint. The Town Clerk has made some amendments to strengthen the procedure and cover additional issues that may arise with a complaint.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Complaints Procedure should be APPROVED as the Complaints Procedure for Epping Town Council, with those amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

14 **PUBLICATION SCHEME** (Attachment G)

Epping Town Council's publication scheme was APPROVED on 12th March 2019 (Minute #587 of 2018/19) and is now due for review. We have not been advised of any necessary amendments to the publication scheme, but have clarified our photocopying charges. The publication scheme, with these revisions, is provided as per **Attachment G**.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Publication Scheme should be APPROVED as the Publication Scheme for Epping Town Council, with the amendments made.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

15 **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY** (Attachment H)

Epping Town Council's Health & Safety Policy was APPROVED on 10th March 2020 (Minute #496 (viii) of 2019/20) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has amended the policy in light of the current health situation.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Health & Safety Policy should be APPROVED as the Health & Safety Policy for Epping Town Council, with the additions made.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

16 **EQUALITY POLICY** (Attachment I)

Epping Town Council's Equality Policy was APPROVED on 12th March 2019 (Minute #587 of 2018/19) and is now due for review. The Town Clerk has made an amendment in line with the Equality Act 2010's aims. The current sentence has a line through it. The amended sentence has been added in bold.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Equality Policy should be APPROVED as the Equality Policy for Epping Town Council, with this amendment.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

17 MEDIA POLICY (Attachment J)

Epping Town Council's Media Policy was APPROVED on 12th March 2019 (Minute #587 of 2018/19) and is now due for review.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Media Policy should be APPROVED as the Media Policy for Epping Town Council, with no amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

18 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY (Attachment K)

Epping Town Council's Social Media Policy was APPROVED on 10th March 2020 (Minute #497 of 2019/20) and is now due for review.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Social Media Policy should be APPROVED as the Social Media Policy for Epping Town Council, with no amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

19 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY (Attachment L)

Epping Town Council's Community Engagement Policy was APPROVED on 12th March 2019 (Minute #587 of 2017/18) and is now due for review.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Community Engagement Policy should be APPROVED as the Community Engagement Policy for Epping Town Council, with some amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

20 DATA PROTECTION POLICY (Attachment M)

Epping Town Council's Data Protection Policy was APPROVED on 10th March 2020 (Minute #496 (v) of 2019/20). In February 2021, Epping Town Council experienced a minor data breach. This has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). As a result, the Town Clerk has augmented Council's Data Protection Policy and strengthened the Data Breach procedure. Please note: this was a result of human error, rather than inadequate policies. Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

RECOMMENDATION: Epping Town Council's Data Protection Policy should be APPROVED as the Data Protection Policy for Epping Town Council, with some amendments.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this RECOMMENDATION and **DECIDE** what to do.

21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

22 INSURANCE POLICIES (CONTRACTS) & RECONCILIATION

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972 s111; Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members & Officers) order 2004

Council awarded a three-year contract to WPS Brokers (RSA Insurance Group PLC and ERS Motor Insurance) on 1st April 2018 (Minute #520 of 2017/18). Council were given an extra three months cover with this policy (review 1st July of each year). This enables the insurance providers to divert some of their business from the traditional 1st April review dates, but also gave Council three months 'free cover'. Council review the policy annually to ensure it is adequate for Council's needs and covers assets, but the provider and policy remain the same for those three years, apart from operational changes and amendments. The reviews will now take place just prior to July rather than April. This year is the expiration of this policy and as such, Council will need to tender for an insurance provider for 2021-2024 in the coming months. The Town Clerk will provide an insurance reconciliation and tender documentation in order to conduct this process.

Insurance Premium Tax is currently 12% (this is expected to remain at 12% for this financial year; it is set by Government). The insurance premium for 2020/21 was £10,042.25, plus £751.19 for inspections and £299.99 for cyber insurance. This includes the main insurance policy and motor fleet insurance. We also received a no claims refund of £323.85. This equates to overall total insurance expenditure of £10,769.58 for 2020/21.

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 9th July 2019 (Minute #129 of 2019/20), Epping Town Council RESOLVED to take out cyber insurance. This cost £299.99 in July 2020 (per annum), including IPT at 12%, and will be due for renewal in July 2021. This will be included in the documentation brought to Council in June 2021.

Council's assets must be recorded in an Asset Register which forms part of the externally audited Annual Return each year. It is necessary to ensure the current levels of insurance are adequate for Council's assets on an annual basis.

Please note: the total approved budget for insurance 2021/22 is £13,470.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** if any further action is required at the current time.

23 DATA PROTECTION (GDPR) OFFICER

Epping Town Council appointed a Data Protection (GDPR) Officer in May 2018 (Minute #514 of 2017/18 refers). This was the Local Government Public Advisory Service (LGPAS) and was to be reviewed after one year. At the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th November 2019 (Minute #312 of 2019/20), following the RECOMMENDATION of the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (Minute #279 of 2019/20), Council decided to monitor the situation and possibly appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO) at point of need. Please note: if such a DPO were necessary, the Town Clerk would recommend an independent person, perhaps a retired Clerk or similar, employed on a retaining or ad hoc basis.

In February 2021, Epping Town Council experienced its first data breach under the current Town Clerk's period of office (since 2015). This was minor and has been dealt with by the Town Clerk in accordance with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) requirements. Epping Town Council has a strong data protection policy and procedures in place. This was human error. The Town Clerk would RECOMMEND that continuing to monitor the situation should be sufficient.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** whether to RECOMMEND to Council continuing with the monitoring of the situation and appointing someone should it be necessary.

24 STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS/PAYSCALES**(Attachment N)**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

Epping Town Council staff are governed by the terms and conditions of the NJC (National Joint Council) (set by NALC and SLCC). The current staff pay scales are listed as per **Attachment N**.

Staff received a salary review in April 2020 for 2020/21.

Please note the rebanding or restating of pay grades from 2019. This is a restating only, with the financial implications remaining comparable to previous terms (this was to remove any scales points that would be below minimum wage).

In 2019, the salary review equated to approximately 2% for staff on scale points 18-49, 3-4% for those from SCP14-17 and up to 6% for staff on scale points 6-14. This was to continue to close larger earning gaps between different pay scales. The pay scales for 2021 onwards have, to date, not been received. This is quite common and when they are received after the 1st April 2021, salaries are backdated accordingly. The Town Clerk has built an increase of approximately 2% into the 2021-22 budget. The Clerk is now awaiting confirmation regarding the potential public sector pay freeze in 2021.

The Essex Pension Fund (which relates to all relevant staff employed with Epping Town Council prior to 2018) has advised Council of an employer pension contribution rate from 1st April 2021 of 23.3%. This was 23.3% in 2020 and is set until 2022 at the time of writing.

The employer pension contribution rate for NEST (which relates to all relevant staff employed with Epping Town Council after 2018) is currently 8% (a minimum of 3% from the employer) (from 6th April 2019 onwards). This continues to be the rate for 2021.

Committee is requested to **NOTE** this information.

25 **STAFFING MATTERS** (Attachment O)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk has provided an update on staffing matters as per **Attachment O**.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** if any further action is required.

26 **STAFF COMBINED ROLE** (Attachment P)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk has provided some information and SUGGESTIONS on a staffing matter, as per **Attachment P**.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS and **DECIDE** what to do.

27 **TOWN CLERK APPRAISAL**

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk was formally appointed Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer on 1st February 2016 (Minute #392 of 2016/17). The Town Clerk joined Epping Town Council as Deputy Town Clerk on 5th January 2015 and was made Interim Town Clerk on 14th July 2015 (Minute #100 of 2015/16).

The Town Clerk's Review and Development is now due and will be undertaken in February 2021. The Review and Development process for the Town Clerk will be completed by the Chairman of Council (Cllr G Scruton: 2020-21) and the Chairman of the Task & Finish Personnel Committee (Cllr B Scruton).

Committee are requested to **NOTE** this information.

28 **TOWN CLERK CONDITIONS** (Attachment Q)

Statutory Basis: Local Government Act 1972, s112

The Town Clerk has provided an update on the Town Clerk's conditions as per **Attachment Q**.

Committee is requested to **CONSIDER** this information and **DECIDE** what to do.

(NB: The matters on this agenda have a statutory basis under the Local Government Act 1972 in sections 101 and 111, in addition to those stated.)