

**MINUTES of the CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Held at Epping Hall, St. John's Road, Epping on **Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 6pm (revised time from 8.15pm).**

**PRESENT:** Cllr M Wright (Chairman & Deputy Town Mayor)  
Cllr G Scruton (Town Mayor & Key Member Finance)  
Cllr N Avey (Key member Administration)

**OFFICER:** Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

**438 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**439 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**440 DISPENSATIONS**

There were no dispensations.

**441 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions or comments.

**442 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**443 STATUS OF PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations of the CGAC from their meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 (Minutes #265–387 of 19/20) were adopted by Council at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (Minute #302 of 19/20):

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 internal audit programme will be considered at the next Corporate Governance meeting in February 2020;
- (iii) No further action was required regarding internal audit reports at that time;
- (iv) No further action was required regarding external audits at that time;
- (v) The Statement of Internal Control and Risk Management Statement, with the Town Clerk's revisions was **APPROVED** by Council.
- (vi) The Employee Handbook with no revisions was **APPROVED** by Council;
- (vii) No further action was required regarding the half-year financial position at that time;

- (viii) The Data Protection Officer/GDPR support package should be monitored and reviewed at point of need;
- (ix) Taking card payments was not deemed necessary or beneficial at that current time;
- (x) No action was necessary regarding the financial systems at the that time as limited BACS/online payments are made. Should BACS/online payments be made, the process of dual authorisation should be revisited;
- (xi) Details of investment funds would be brought to Council once more information was available;
- (xii) From September 2020, Town Council website's would need to meet accessibility requirements and this would be brought back to Council if additional external support was needed, which is likely;
- (xiii) No further action was required regarding staffing terms, conditions & pay scales at that time;
- (xiv) The Jack Silley casual caretaker position was made into a permanent contract (on the existing terms) due to the additional workload at the Pavilion and café regarding public toilets (~~Attached at the end of November agenda as Attachment V in Exclusion of the Press and Public~~);
- (xv) Town councillors could continue to use their own email addresses, but the Town Clerk should issue email use tips in relation to Council business. This was provided as per ~~Attachment M1~~ of that agenda.

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

#### 444 **CORPORATE GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT REVIEW**

Council **APPROVED** a review of policy and governance documents at the Ordinary Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 2020** & October 2020 (Dealt with under items 10 & 11)

Internal Audit Programme: October 2020

Statement on Internal Control: October 2020

Insurance Inventory: **February 2020** (Dealt with under agenda item 24)

Asset Register: **February 2020** (Dealt with under agenda item 12)

Internal Risk Register: **February 2020** (Dealt with under agenda item 9)

Staffing Terms and Conditions: **February 2020** & October 2020 (Dealt with under item 26)

Standing Orders & Financial Regulations: **February 2020** (Dealt with under agenda item 8)

Employee Handbook: October 2020

Risk management statement: October 2020

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 **NOTED** the above information.

#### 445 **STANDING ORDERS & FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

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

There have been no 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 no amendments to our Standing Orders or Financial Regulations (which are based on the models).

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Standing Orders (with no amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council.

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

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Standing Orders (with no amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council;
- (ii) The Financial Regulations (with no amendments) should be RECOMMENDED for ADOPTION by Council;

#### 446 **INTERNAL RISK REGISTER**

**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.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The revised Internal Risk Register should be recommended for ADOPTION by Council.

#### 447 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS**

**Statutory Basis:** Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

Committee is requested to **NOTE** the first visit of the internal auditor was on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The second visit of the internal auditor will be on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, with a final visit later in the year.

The internal audit report (first interim) was **NOTED** at the Ordinary Council meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (Minute #427 of 2019/20). No recommendations were made. The internal audit report (second) for the 2019/20 financial year will be reported to Council later in the year once the second audit and report has been completed.

Committee **NOTED** the above information.

#### 448 **EXTERNAL AUDITS**

**Statutory Basis:** Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> 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 **NOTED** this information.

#### 449 **ASSET REGISTER**

**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 29<sup>th</sup> March 2010. It was reviewed by Council in October 2012 (Minutes #201 & #222 of 2012/13).

At the Ordinary Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019, Council **RESOLVED** to record individual items equal to or greater than £1000 in the Asset Register (Minute #587 (v) of 2018/19).

**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 been a number of acquisitions and disposals during 2019/20 which were reflected in the Asset Register 2020, as per **Attachment F**.

Committee considered the following **RECOMMENDATIONS**.

- (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 2020, as per **Attachment F**, 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.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The three RECOMMENDATIONS above would be RECOMMENDED for APPROVAL by Council.

#### 450 **DATA PROTECTION POLICY & COMPLIANCE FAILURE POLICY**

Committee discussed the Data Protection Policy, as per **Attachment G1** and Compliance Failure Policy, as per **Attachment G2**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Data Protection Policy (CGAC **Attachment G1**) should be recommended for **APPROVAL** as a Policy of Epping Town Council;
- (ii) Epping Town Council's Compliance Failure Policy, (CGAC **Attachment G2**) should be recommended **APPROVAL** as a Policy of Epping Town Council.

#### 451 **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Complaints Procedure.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Complaints Procedure should be **APPROVED** as the Complaints Procedure for Epping Town Council with the deletion of the first Paragraph 7 from **Attachment H**, which was included in error.

#### 452 **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Health & Safety Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Health & Safety Policy should be **APPROVED** as the Health & Safety Policy, for Epping Town Council, with the amendments detailed, as per **Attachment I**.

#### 453 **GRANT AWARDING POLICY**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Grant Awarding Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Grant Awarding Policy should be **APPROVED** as the Grant Awarding Policy for Epping Town Council, with no amendments, apart from submission dates, as per **Attachment J**.

**454 PROCUREMENT POLICY**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Procurement Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Procurement Policy should be **APPROVED** as the Procurement Policy for Epping Town Council, with no amendments, as per **Attachment K**.

**455 RECRUITMENT POLICY**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Recruitment Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Recruitment Policy should be **APPROVED** as the Recruitment Policy for Epping Town Council, with the amendments detailed, as per **Attachment L**.

**456 TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT STATEMENT**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Training & Development Statement.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Training & Development Statement should be **APPROVED** as the Training & Development Statement for Epping Town Council, with no amendments, as per **Attachment M**.

**457 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Social Media Policy.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The revised Social Media Policy, as per **Attachment N**, should be redrafted to reflect the aims of Council;
- (ii) This would be brought to Council for consideration.

**458 WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY**

Committee discussed Epping Town Council's Website Accessibility and whether a revised website should be considered.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Town Clerk would gather more information about the forthcoming accessibility requirements and website redesign costs and bring this information back to Council once more comprehensive information was available.

#### 459 INVESTMENT FUNDS

Committee discussed the Investment Funds, as per **Attachment P**. They also discussed the Santander Business Bond and Nationwide 95 Day Saver.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following RECOMMENDATIONS should be presented to Council for APPROVAL:

- (i) The investment funds as per **Attachment P** should not be pursued for Epping Town Council at the current time;
- (ii) The Santander Business Bond should be closed on its expiry and the balance transferred to the Nationwide 95 Day Business Saver account (adding to the existing money deposited in that Saver).

#### 460 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** 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.

#### 461 INSURANCE POLICIES (CONTRACTS) & RECONCILIATION

Council awarded a three-year contract to WPS Brokers (RSA Insurance Group PLC and ERS Motor Insurance) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 (Minute #520 of 2017/18). Council were given an extra three months cover with this policy (review 1<sup>st</sup> July of each year). This enables the insurance providers to divert some of their business from the traditional 1<sup>st</sup> 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, so the figures are not ready at the current time.

Insurance Premium Tax is currently 12% (this could change during the coming months as it is set by Government). The insurance premium for 2019/20 was £10,320.02, plus £500 for inspections. This includes the main insurance policy, motor fleet insurance and cyber insurance.

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.

The Town Clerk will provide an insurance reconciliation and annual review figures at the June Council meeting, in preparation for the 1<sup>st</sup> July review date.

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

Please note: the total approved budget for insurance 2020/21 is £11,680.

Committee **NOTED** this information.

#### 462 **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 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

The Town Clerk is pleased to report that to date, Epping Town Council, have not been the subject of any known data breaches. Council should note that Council's former Data Protection (GDPR) Officers have dealt with a number of data breaches elsewhere and they can be complex and time consuming, as well as very problematic.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) Epping Town Council should continue to monitor the situation and the Town Clerk recommend an independent person to undertake this role should it be necessary;
- (ii) The Town Clerk should reiterate best practice regarding Data Protection and GDPR to councillors and staff;
- (iii) A basket should be provided at Council meetings for councilors to leave any paperwork they wish for shredding, and particularly for sensitive information.

#### 463 **STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS/PAYSCALES**

**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 Q**.



Staff received a salary review in April 2018 for 2018/19 and 2019/20. These arrived after the budget setting process for 2018/19 but in time for the 2019/20 budgets, so more accurate calculations were possible for 2019/20. 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 is 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 2020 onwards have, to date, not been received. This is quite common and when they are received after the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, salaries are backdated accordingly. The Town Clerk has built similar increases to those above into the 2020-21 budget.

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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 of 23.3%. This was 21.8% in 2019 and the Town Clerk had factored 22.8% into the 2020 budget.

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 6<sup>th</sup> April 2019 onwards). The Town Clerk is awaiting details of contribution rates for 2020 onwards.

Committee **NOTED** this information.

#### 464 **STAFFING MATTERS**

**Statutory Basis:** Local Government Act 1972, s112

Committee **CONSIDERED** the staffing update as per **Attachment R**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) This be **NOTED**, particularly the market team.

#### 465 **TOWN CLERK APPRAISAL**

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

The Town Clerk's Review and Development is now due and will be undertaken in February/March 2020.

The Review and Development process for the Town Clerk will be completed by the Chairman of Council (Cllr Grahame Scruton: 2019-20) and the Chairman of the Task & Finish Personnel Committee (Cllr Mrs B Scruton).

Committee **NOTED** this information.

The Chairman closed the meeting at **7.13pm**.

**(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.)**

---

**Signature of Chairman**

**Date**