



FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of an extra-ordinary meeting of the Parish Council Finance, Employment & Risk Management Committee on Thursday 6th February 2014 commencing at 14:00 in The Parish Council Office Conference Room 4, The Lindos Centre, Saddlemakers Lane Melton IP12 1PP.

Present:

Cllr Mrs BK Abbott [Vice Chairman]
Cllr Mr GK Butterwick
Cllr Miss KS Martin

Cllr Mr CW Taylor
Cllr Thompson [Chairman]

Absent:

In Attendance:

Mr MJ Green Clerk to Melton Parish Council

14.14 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR AND CONSENT TO ABSENCE

There were no apologies as all councillors were present.

14.15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

14.15.01 To Receive Amendments to the Register

There were no amendments to the Register

14.15.02 To Receive Declarations of Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda

There were no declarations of Pecuniary Interest in respect of items on the agenda.

14.15.03 To Receive Declarations of Non Pecuniary Interest in Respect of Items on the Agenda

Cllr Butterwick declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to the proposal by his Vice Chairman of Planning and Transport Committee to provide office accommodation at her private residence.

14.15.04 To Consider Full/Partial Dispensations for Pecuniary Interests Declared

It was noted that there had been no requests for dispensations.

14.16 OPEN FORUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO TALK TO COUNCILLORS

As there were no members of the public present it was not necessary to lift standing orders.

14.17 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 13 JANUARY 2014

It was RESOLVED to receive, note and sign minutes FRM(14)M01 previously circulated as a correct record.

Proposed by: Cllr Thompson

Seconded by: Cllr Abbott.

TO CONSIDER AND AGREE THE REVISED PROVISION OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

A matrix had previously been circulated summarising the options of Relocation of MPC Accommodation. The Committee discussed the matrix, comments received from the Monitoring Officer and wider reputation risk associated with each offer. The Chair emphasised that the Committee had to make sure it followed a process that was fair to all parties, did not give additional advantage to a councillor and assessed each offer on the basis of the same criteria. The following comments were made during the ensuing discussion:

- Any move away from the Lindos would be disappointing as there would be a wider loss of a community asset
- Concerns about restrictions at SCDC of councillors accessing the council files outside of the office hours of 7.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.
- Concerns that the planning application for change of use of coach house would only provide for 3 days per week although it was noted that access outside of those days could be available to access council files
- Risk of coach house not being available for 1st April due to potential delays in planning consent being given approval but it was considered that, for a short period, this could be mitigated by staff working from home and the use of council provided mobile phones
- The Clerk confirmed that both offices on offer would meet the needs of the staff working and small meetings with 2 or 3 people possible in both locations
- Monitoring Officer has suggested that there would be a disclosable pecuniary interest should council decide to lease the coach house
- Concerns over formalising of agreements and protection for the council should the coach house subsequently become unavailable for whatever reason were considered by the committee to be manageable
- Reputation risk of council leasing from one of its own councillors was felt to be manageable by effective communication as were concerns about MPC no longer being seen as independent from the District Council
- Concerns over access for visitors to the coach house in an isolated location along narrow unlit roads, no public transport and limited parking
- Concerns over the use of office in Melton Hill as this was not in Melton
- The lack of meeting accommodation at the coach house was not considered an issue as other meeting space was available in Melton – similar concerns over the difficulties in booking meeting accommodation in an evening at Melton Hill could be mitigate by using available meeting space in Melton [the church, school, Burness and Lindos]
- The major risk of not having an office at all from 1 April required an appropriate decision to be taken even if this is only as a short term measure

A last minute note from the Lindos Centre offered to enter into discussions for the lease of the south complex at Lindos based on the without prejudice offer by the council in January 2014 was put on the table due to the sale of the property falling through. The risk in accepting this offer with the site still on the open market was considered by the committee to be too great for council to consider further especially taking into consideration the cost of the lease being discussed.

When all the various pros and cons of the two options were considered councillors agreed that whilst there were issues with both options the risks were manageable, although concern remained over visitor access to the coach house.

The major decision then became the cost benefit to the residents of Melton of the two options. With the SCDC offer being quoted at £2,700 subject to contract and the coach house offer being quoted at £5,500. The cost of leasing the current office at the Lindos Centre was £4,800.

It was RESOLVED unanimously that a lease with SCDC for the rental of an office at Melton Hill should be followed through.

Proposed by: Cllr Thompson

Seconded by: Cllr Abbott.

The clerk to advise both Cllr Barrington and SCDC of the decision taken and to move forward to expediting a move by the end of March.

The Clerk was also instructed to seek a decision from the Monitoring Officer as to whether or not the General Power of Competence could be used to reimburse the cost of the planning application by Cllr Barrington for a change of use of the coach house to business use. The offer to make the Coach House available had been made at a time when we had been served notice that the current lease would not be renewed and there were no other offers on the table. This had been welcomed by council and the Committee noted that in requiring Cllr Barrington to make a formal offer at short notice she may, in all good faith, have been inadvertently encouraged by the working group to proceed with the planning application believing that they would reimburse the cost should for any reason the matter not proceed.

14.19 TO CONSIDER THE PROGRESS WITH THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS

The Chairman advised that he had scheduled two meetings with the Clerk on 13th and 25th February 2014.

14.20 TO CONSIDER REVISED PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2014/2015 AND TO DELEGATE ANY FURTHER FINE TUNING TO THE CHAIRMAN OF FINANCE, EMPLOYMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Paper FRM(14)P20 previously circulated.

Discussion on this item was deferred to the next meeting to allow for the implications of the decision on office accommodation to be reflected in the proposed budget.

14.21 FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Chairman's urgent business.

14.21.01 To consider items for inclusion in the Melton Messenger

No items to be included.

14.21.02 To receive items for future meetings

No items received.

14.22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 13th March 2014 in conference room 4 of the Lindos Centre commencing at 19:00 in Conference Room 4 of the Lindos Centre.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16:15

Signed:

Date:

[Chairman]