

HORWICH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held in the Council Chamber, Public Hall, Lee Lane, Horwich on Monday 11 December 2023 commencing at 7.15 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: D. Grant (in the Chair) I. Aldcroft, R. Bamforth, S. Burke, G. Campbell, S. Chadwick, K. McKeon, V. Rigby, C. Rotheram, J. Scoble, J. Walton, S. Williamson, P. Wright
C. Hutchinson, Town Clerk
Caleb Cottam, Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer, Bolton Council
1 member of the public

CHAIR TO OUTLINE FIRE SAFETY EVACUATION PROCEDURE:

FG 7634 Councillor Grant outlined the procedure from the information provided.

TO ACCEPT APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

FG 7635 Apologies were accepted from Councillor Rock. An apology for lateness was accepted from Councillor McKeon.

TO REMIND MEMBERS TO MAKE A DECLARATION CONCERNING ANY MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE MEETING OF WHICH THEY HAVE AN INTEREST:

FG 7636 Councillor Grant declared an interest in agenda item 14 due to having been involved in discussions about this matter and Councillor Chadwick in relation to the same item in his role as an associate, non-voting member of the club.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT MAY PUT QUESTIONS OR MAKE OBSERVATIONS REGARDING MATTERS IN RELATION TO WHICH THE TOWN COUNCIL HAS POWERS OR DUTIES OR WHICH AFFECT THE PARISH. MAXIMUM PERIOD 15 MINUTES. *Questions/matters raised do not require any response from Members, nor should matters not on the agenda be debated since no lawful decision can be made during this period, but may be added to the next available agenda if considered relevant by the Town Clerk/Chair*

FG 7637 None.

TO WELCOME CALEB COTTAM, SENIOR ENVIROMENTAL ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, BOLTON COUNCIL AND RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON HIS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

FG 7638 Caleb introduced himself as the new Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer for Bolton West, dealing with environmental offences such as fly tipping and littering in the Horwich, Blackrod and Westhoughton area. It was a post that had been vacant for some time resulting in little or no enforcement for the past 18 – 24 months and it was intended that this would now be properly addressed.

Councillor McKeon joined the meeting at this point.

Members raised various questions and were advised on issues including overgrown gardens, abandoned buildings and the responsibilities of private land and homeowners, missing rubbish bins and households permanently leaving bins outside their properties. Caleb would provide his contact details to all Councillors via the Town Clerk as well as details of the remit of his role and responsibilities, including relevant legislation and advised to also email Neighbourhood Services inbox with any issues.

On behalf of the Council, Councillor Grant thanked him for his attendance and updating Council.

TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2023:

FG 7639 Resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 13 November 2023.

TO APPROVE THE DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024 – 2025 AND THE MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023:

FG 7640 The draft budget and accompanying explanatory notes had been circulated to all Members. The Town Clerk responded to the following points raised:

- Allocation for new flagpoles not had been included as this project is currently on hold and would be re-visited at a later date
- Green Spaces Initiative include preliminary costs for transfer of management of allotments from Bolton Council
- Costs for possible employment of Lengthsman/Town Ranger in relation to the allotment proposal had been included in salaries, N.I. and PAYE
- Funding for Telford Street green space project not allocated as been removed from SAMP
- As there has been no activity on Neighbourhood Plan for some time due to lack of members, no allocation included for the next financial year. The former Greater Manchester Spatial Framework had developed into Places for Everyone, and there had been a lot of changes in Horwich since the Neighbourhood Plan was first developed so agreed advisable to wait until Places for Everyone is signed off and can then be used as a starting point
- Allocation for Christmas lights in Regeneration budget reduced due to expected future savings and attempt to scale back increase in precept to a reasonable level
- As in the past 3 – 4 years there is no specific allocation for twinning activities, however there is provision via applications to the grants scheme
- In response to queries about no increase in the CBT since last year, Councillor Grant confirmed that this was a matter that had been raised with Bolton Council who had confirmed that the figure was correct. It was noted that the CBT was based on the number of households eligible to pay council tax, which included exemptions and was based on the number of new houses built in the previous year

Resolved to approve the draft budget proposals for 2024 – 2025 as presented as per the minutes and recommendations of the Finance Review Sub Committee held on 16 November 2023.

TO UNDERTAKE AND REVIEW THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL RISK ASSESSMENT AND ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY FOR 2023 – 2024.

FG 7641 It was noted that this task was carried out by the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk on behalf of the Council. Resolved to review and accept the Council's annual risk assessment and annual health and safety policy for 2023 – 2024.

TO UNDERTAKE THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT FOR 2023 – 2024:

FG 7642 It was noted that this was carried out by the Town Clerk/RFO on behalf of the Council and included some areas for improvement as per the recommendations of the internal auditor. Resolved to review and accept the Council's annual review of internal audit for 2023 – 2024, including areas for improvement

TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR GRANT ON VARIOUS MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AT THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

FG 7643 Town Centre Regeneration:

Most of the team at the town centre regeneration have since left the council this has caused a significant delay in bringing forward future plans. It has been agreed that going forward Councillors who sit on the Town Council would steer the group with Council officers and interested groups. Since May £800k has been secured back into the pot and has been paid over from the PSP monies. Schemes under consideration include:

- Part pedestrianisation of Winter Hey Lane in order to create a public realm space for residents and shoppers.
- Pump park/amphitheatre on disused part of Old Station Park
- Improvements to goods entrance to make a craft / market area
- Regulation of filter lane off Chorley New Road turning right onto Winter Hey Lane

Green Lane / Pickups Field:

Following election, Ward Members were made aware of significant damage causing severe flooding on Pickups Field. Officers and engineers concluded that to raise the footpath at this time would cause significant back wash onto the sports pitches making them unplayable with the footpath surface lifting and breaking up due to winter freezing. It was agreed that before commencement of any works in this area, Bolton at Home have an obligation to repair the drainage and flooding. Officers and Ward Members are currently in discussions with Bolton at Home.

Section 106 Audit:

An audit of all section 106 funding is taking place which includes the ringfenced sum of £100k from Bolton at Home from the sale of Pickups Field, with an additional sum of approximately £134k available from the Victoria Road site. Further details of all monies and its intended uses will be released once the audit has concluded which was also part of the agreement that Ward Members agreed with the current Labour leadership.

Other Proposals in Horwich North:

Other works mentioned by previous Councillors such as railings/hand rails and road markings had not been passed over to the newly elected Ward Members. Officers confirmed that no costings had been issued for these as there were no monies remaining within the Area Forums funds at the time due to the planned works on Pickups Field. However as this has currently been cancelled Members are looking into the schemes mentioned.

Future Schemes not part of Town Regeneration for information:

- The joint TROs for both wards have finally been signed off and should be implemented soon.
- With the change in road layout to the link road this has opened up the old tip which is in a stable condition (methane drained etc). Whilst it cannot be developed for homes it has opened up the possibility for a sports village (subject to funding) centred around rugby and football. For clarity Bolton Council have a long-standing commitment to find a home for Lostock Rugby Club, whilst they did play at Lostock Cricket ground, they have since been removed from the facility. It is intended to create a facility for both rugby and increase football capacity for local teams, particularly in the winter months.

It was hoped that this update answers any questions raised by the public who were welcome to contact the Council for further clarification on any of the issues addressed.

TO APPROVE ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT – SCHEDULE ATTACHED

FG 7644 Resolved to approve the accounts for payment as follows and amounting to £10,787.03

Pixelcreated (Website updates to 30.11.23)	£41.00
Horwich Community Centre (VAT refund to 30.09.23)	£746.03
Transfer to Salaries & Wages account	£10,000.00

Payments to Pixelcreated were made in accordance with LGA 1972 s142

TOWN CLERKS REPORT (EMAILED TO MEMBERS) – FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

- FG 7645
- a. Record of outstanding motions
 - b. Bolton Council: consultation on schools' admission arrangements for Bolton primary and secondary schools for the academic year September 2025 to August 2026
 - c. National Highways: M61 – ash dieback and woodland management works

The Town Clerk's report was noted.

REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES – FOR INFORMATION ONLY:

- FG 7646
- a. Town Mayor of Horwich
Councillor Grant informed Members that he had been kept busy attending a variety of events recently, including:
 - Meeting with representatives from Crewe Town Council, Crewe Heritage and Horwich Heritage
 - Children in Need/Vernon Kaye event at St Joseph's
 - St Catherine's Christmas Market
 - Veterans' Army evening event
 - Blackrod and Horwich Christmas Tree Lighting services

- Opening of RAMP facility with Rock it
- Ridgmont Christmas Market

b. Horwich Ward Councillors

Councillor Wright: reported flooding recently near Aldi following heavy rain, with fire service attending to assist nearby residents

Councillor Rotheram:

- Assistance given to residents in Corranstone Close area with provision of sandbags to protect homes from flooding. Awaiting confirmation from Bolton Council that blockage of 2 culverts had caused the flooding problem. All run off had been cleared from Mason Street by the Drainage Team.
- Liaising with St Catherine's Primary School and Highways regarding road safety issues and precautions following unprecedented number of accidents on Mason Street in the past two years
- Salt/grit bins in Horwich North have been checked and any issues will be reported
- Drivers needed for Christmas Day to transport food from the Bridge to Christmas Together where volunteers from St Elizabeth's would be providing Christmas dinner free of charge to people who would otherwise be alone.

Councillor Williamson: update on two-year pilot scheme on interventions to address vaping issue following a meeting at St Joseph's High School.

Councillor Rigby: none.

Councillor Bamforth:

- Update on various armed forces functions and initiatives including housing for veterans and supporting cadets
- Recent PACT meeting
- Austins Lane flooding and path issues now appear to be resolved
- Gulleys cleaned out on Chorley New Road as drains had been blocked with leaves

Councillor Grant:

- Bolton Council finally signed off on TROs
- PDG on district town centre parking issues

c. Representatives on Outside Bodies:

None

IN VIEW OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS ABOUT TO BE TRANSACTED, IT IS ADVISABLE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST THAT THE PRESS AND PUBLIC SHOULD BE TEMPORARILY EXCLUDED, AND IF PRESENT SHOULD BE ASKED TO LEAVE.