



Minutes of the proceedings of the **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held at

Hutton House, Chilton on Tuesday 28th January 2025 commencing at 6.00pm

Present:-- Chair - Cllr. S. Reece

Cllrs:- E. Bruce, D. English, P. Herbert, J. Houlihan, P. Malpas & S. Sutherland (Mayor)

Town Clerk:- Mrs. Joanne Dickinson (JD)

110. Apologies for Absence – None

111. Declarations of Interest- Cllr English and Cllr Herbert for agenda item 11, Allotment Inspection Policy, minute number 121.

112. Member Dispensations – None received

113. Public Participation- None present

114. Approve and accept the recommendations therein-

a. Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 26th November 2024

RESOLVED- Cllr Malpas proposed the minutes were accepted as a true record. Seconded by Cllr English. All agreed.

115. Review the Resolution Log- JD highlighted the following issues – Safeguarding Training in February which can be open to any Member and the date and time will be circulated; Meeting carried out with Windlestone Parish Council and DCC and a letter has been circulated by Windlestone to the Highways Officers following on from the meeting. JD will circulate to councilors once confirmed with Windlestone Parish Council; Letter for Morrisons to be delivered asked for at last meeting; Starting work on a funding log to identify needs. Funding log would allow a quicker turnaround of the identified needs when funding pots are released then they can be matched quickly to what is required. JD to set up this log; Durham Police and Crime Commissioner awaiting information on the funding options; Google analytics will be looked into when the website developer attends a meeting on 29.1.25; Welcome spaces funding- JD to apply for funding if still available; JD is currently exploring future funding utilising the outdoor space at the Miners Welfare grounds; A member asked if the option of investigating the purchase of a barbecue could be looked into for the community garden; Members asked JD to circulate on Facebook page if funding is available but not relevant to the Town Council/Miners Welfare Trust to let the community know; JD has applied for AAP funding for the locks and gate on Joes Field.; Awaiting quote for damp work; emailed about the energy audit and awaiting further information; Quotation received for the alarm system at Hutton House which was raised by the P&R committee based on the Lone Working Policy.

Members accepted the report

116. Approve the financial transactions for December 2024 & January 2025 – Appendix 1. Members were provided with a list of payments to be made and payments made in December 2024 and January 2025. JD informed Members that the payment for the recruitment of the town clerk which hadn't been budgeted for when the 24/25 budget was set as not aware of the circumstances will take the cost centre of 4272 staffing over budget.

RESOLVED- Cllr Sutherland proposed the payment to Durham County Council of £1350 be paid from cost centre staffing, Professional fees and that the amount will exceed the budgeted amount for this cost centre as the requirement to budget for this was not known at the time the budget was set. Seconded by Cllr Malpas. All agreed.

Members accepted the report

117. Receive the year to date Financial Report and budget spend year to date- JD had previously circulated to Members and advised the insurance has exceeded budget as when budgeted in 24/25 the premium increased more than anticipated when received in August 2024. Income and expenditure for each event to be provided as a breakdown in a formal format from 1st April 2025. The information would be helpful at the next Events Working Group before JD goes on holiday.

Members accepted the report

118. Review the information added to the External Funding Log- Mayor of Durham has sent the grants available on a regular basis which has been really helpful. The Chair informed Members about the Mayors Fund which is not available for councils but potentially could be applied through the Trust. Heritage Lottery could be a potential fund to explore and the Chair is awaiting information back from them on the best way to apply for it. A Thank you letter was asked to be sent to the Mayor of Durham for her assistance in sending through the information.

119. Receive an update on the Neighbourhood Plan- Cllr Reece informed Members that the public meeting took place the week before and there were just over 30 people in attendance. The sessions from Brian Harris about heritage and Kate Ward and Rachel Tyndall about open spaces and ASB were popular. Thanks were noted to Brian, Kate, Rachel and the School. Residents survey closes on Friday and up to 97 surveys received so far but more hard copies are due to be brought in. More informal feedback from spider diagrams and polls on Facebook will be carried out. Carried out an assembly at Chilton Academy with the 225 children and spot diagrams have been collated by the children on what is important to them; Leadership Team at Elemore School were met with. Follow up activities to be arranged with both schools; launch of Chilton Heritage Calendar Competition. First entry has been received; The children and young people survey is ongoing until March; Cllr Reece will ask members if they would like to help with facilitating further sessions at the schools. Following on from the article in the Chapter about the update regarding lack of dentist availability for Chilton residents. A member asked for information to be circulated prior to being put in the Chapter to keep members updated if a resident asks any questions which was agreed for future articles.

RESOLVED- Cllr Sutherland proposed the council will continue to continue campaigning for dentist services to be in Chilton. Seconded by Cllr Bruce. All agreed.

120. Website Governance- JD advised that the council website was down after a software update from an external company used by the developer. There had been no back up by the external company and the website had to be built from the beginning. There are a lot of areas that need updating/adding in as it was important to put it live so that it was accessible. This will be a work in progress to add in and update the website. Members asked for clarification that this issue won't arise again and for information on the protections in place to be asked to the website developer.

Members agreed for the website contract to be reviewed before the end date of the contract

121. Policy Review-

- **Cemetery Regulations Policy** – previously circulated to members. Members asked that on page 6 where it is stated 'all good practice guidelines are followed' – that the source of the good practice guidelines be stated. A sentence had been added in on page 4- 'Under no circumstances will the internment of metal or metal – lined coffins be allowed in any grave'

RESOLVED- Cllr Malpas proposed the policy be recommended for adoption at the next full council meeting with the aforementioned addition for page 6. Seconded by Cllr Herbert. All agreed.

- **Headstone Inspection Policy-** previously circulated to members

RESOLVED- Cllr Malpas proposed the policy be recommended for adoption at the next full council meeting. Seconded by Cllr Sutherland. All agreed.

- **Transfer and Ownership Policy-** previously circulated to members. Members asked JD to check the Fees section on page 7 to ascertain if it has been previously agreed, check what it is for, if the £25 still covers the cost and who receives the payment.

RECOMMENDATION- the policy be recommended for adoption at the next full council meeting subject to the aforementioned clarifications being ascertained.

- **Allotment Inspection Policy** – This had been discussed at the recent Allotment Committee Meeting. When Officers are reviewing the drone pictures it would be good to highlight the positive achievements by allotment tenants. The time a new tenant should be inspected should be considered by the Officers.
Cllr Sutherland proposed that the policy be recommended for adoption at the next full council meeting subject to the addition of the following sentence under the section for new tenants- ‘when taking up an allotment plot there will be an agreement on a timescale for improvement prior to being included in the allotment inspections that are undertaken.’
Seconded by Cllr Houlihan. All agreed.

- **Whistleblowing Policy** – standard policy from NALC
RESOLVED- Cllr Sutherland proposed the policy be recommended for adoption at the next full council meeting. Seconded by Cllr English. All agreed.

122. **Consider the option of a Ground Maintenance App for inspection of works carried out**- main issues for the contract has been the regular monitoring of the work. Cllr English has identified an app- outsource which has been looked at by JD and Cllr English. Information about the pros and cons of the app were discussed by members. The cost would be £30 per user and 2 would be required. The annual cost would be approx. £720. The contractor currently has apps with other contracts. JD to ask the contractor which apps they currently use with other organisations. The method of monitoring to be included within the contract.

RESOLVED- Cllr Sutherland proposed that the app and the cost of approx. £720 is a good idea in principle and a reasonable cost for monitoring but for further investigation on what is being used elsewhere prior to purchasing the app.
Seconded by Cllr English. All agreed.

123. **Local Council Quality Award Scheme- consider if a working group should be set up**- Members would like to be part of this working group – Chair of the P&R Committee should be included and all members will be emailed with the date and time of the meeting as several members were interested in attending. The meetings will take place during the working day.

124. **Items to be taken to next council meeting**- Cemetery Regulations, Headstone Inspection, Transfer and Ownership. Allotment Inspection and Whistleblowing policies. Website contract and update on grounds maintenance app.

125. **Date of next meeting** – 18th March 2025, if any matter needs to be discussed before this date then the matter can be added to Full Council on 11th February 2025 or 11th March 2025.

Exclusion of Press and Public- No public present.

126. **Street Lighting**- The DCC officer has no further update since the last meeting. If an update is received before the next P&R meeting then it could be included at the full council meeting.

127. **FOI Requests**- None received as at 26.1.25

128. **School Playground**- Issues raised to the ASB Officers were identified by them as not ASB by the children. No follow up required but Cllr Reece could feedback into the Residents’ Association meeting as part of the Neighbourhood Plan update on what was discussed. Residents must report any issues to the relevant organisations for the full picture to be provided.

JD asked to look into options for residents to report online with a tablet if they come into Hutton House.

The following matters were added to the agenda after publication and there were no objections from Members-

129. **To consider a request from a resident for Hydrum to cut back trees on their land border.**

JD informed members that a resident had been into Hutton House asking about a historic claim that the Town Council would not give permission for trees to be cut back on the border line on land between Denebridge Row and Hydrum. JD contacted Hydrum Operations Director who had advised that Hydrum had been undertaking tree cutting a couple of

years ago and were informed they must stop the work as the Town Council would not allow it to go ahead. JD was unable to see any information about this in any previous minutes or was aware of any power for the council to be allowed to state this information. Hydrum advised that if the Town Council has no objection then they would be able to look into what work was required. Members agreed that this was a civil matter and that there is no awareness of it being a tree protection area. A statement is to be prepared to state that this was not in our purview to agree and it is a civil matter.

RECOMMENDATION- This matter is a civil matter and it is not within the purview of the town council to become involved in this matter.

JD to update resident and Hydrum with the information agreed.

130. To receive an update regarding the annual playground inspections- JD gave an update to Members after a member queried the actions taken on receipt of the annual inspections. JD is working with DCC on the repairs that are required for the 3 moderate risks identified. Members asked how they can be assured that the moderate risks are being monitored and followed through. JD advised this is being carried out and is on the agenda as a standing agenda item at the full council meetings.

Meeting Closed at 7.33pm

Cllr Sue Reece,
Chair of the Committee,
18th March 2025