**HALEWOOD TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee held on Thursday 25th March 2021 (6.05pm) via Zoom

**PRESENT**

Cllr K Dalton (Chair)

Cllr B Dunn Cllr T Lucock

Cllr S Harvey Cllr B Swann

Cllr Y Graves Cllr F Martin

Cllr A Hesford

**In attendance:**

G Allen - Town Manager

Before the meeting commenced, the Chair welcomed new Councillor Mr. Andrew Hesford to the meeting.

**26. Apologies**

Cllr D Samuels

Cllr C Rose

**27. Declarations of Interest**

None.

**28. Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on January 25th were agreed.

**29. Management of Remote Meetings**

Councillors considered the report of the Town Manager which provided an update on challenges that had occurred with the management of the most recent Town Council meeting held on 11th March 2021. The Town Manager advised that the meeting had been subject to sustained attempts at interference and that he was required to ‘manage’ this difficulty in addition to clerking the meeting.

A number of Councillors contributed to a discussion regarding this matter and the difficulties it presents for the council in trying to be transparent about its democratic processes whilst dealing with deliberate attempts of interference.

In seeking to move the process forward, **Cllr Y Graves** recommended that the public is not admitted to the next scheduled meetings aside from those persons who have registered to ask a question at Public Forum. After this, the public are removed from the meeting. To ensure transparency, the proposal is for the meeting to be recorded and a copy of that recording is then shared for the general public via the council’s website and social media feed. Support for the recommendation came from **Cllr Swann**, **Cllr Lucock** and **Cllr Hesford**.

**Cllr Dalton** and **Cllr Harvey** were not in favour of this proposal and spoke against the recommendation. The Town Manager advised he was not in favor of this proposal as the requirement for the next two meetings is to have sufficient support to manage the ‘challenges’ that might occur. He further advised that it was likely the council would be returning to physical meetings soon after the Annual Meeting, so the recommendation could be deemed unnecessary.

The recommendation from Cllr Graves was put to the vote of Councillors and it was approved by 4 votes to 3 with one abstention.

It was **moved by Cllr. Y Graves** and **seconded by Cllr. B Swann**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the public are advised they are not permitted to attend the next Zoom meetings of the council due to the interference that occurred on 11th March. However, they are further advised that a recording of the meeting will be shared for all to view within days of its conclusion.
3. Those members of the public who have registered to ask a question at the meeting are permitted to attend up to the conclusion of ‘Public Forum’.

**30. Committees Proposed for 2021/22**

Councillors considered the report of the Town Manager which outlined proposed committees for 2021/22. At the outset of the discussion, the Town Manager advised that a recommendation to create a Human Resources Committee was withdrawn following discussions with the leaders of the Majority and Minority Groups on the council who were not supportive of the proposal. The Town Manager therefore asked Councillors to approve an amended proposal to reduce the number of ‘Policy and Finance Committee’ meetings to four for 2021/22 but open those meetings up to all current Councillors.

**Cllr. B. Swann** thanked the Town Manager for the amended approach but further advised that no further approval is required to operate the ‘Policy and Finance Committee’ which should now remain in place until 2023.

It was **moved by Cllr. B. Swann** and **seconded by Cllr. S. Harvey** and,

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the proposals for creating a new ‘HR Committee’ are not approved.
3. The proposal to hold four meetings of the ‘Policy & Finance Committee’ in 2021-22 are approved.

**31. Town Council Payments**

Councillors considered the report of the Town Manager which provided an update on Town Council payments in recent months. Councillors queried several specific payments with the Town Manager who provided explanations for each item.

It was **moved by Cllr. Y Graves** and **seconded by Cllr. S. Harvey**

**UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the Town Council payments listed were approved.
3. That the format for sharing Town Council payments at the meeting today is used for future meetings.

**EXEMPT ITEMS**

*That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.*

**32. Finance Report**

Councillors considered the report of the Town Manager which provided Councillors with a closedown position for the 2020/21 Council budget, the proposed budget for 2021/22 and an update on the council’s Specific Reserves.

In addition, the Chair asked the Town Manager to provide an update on the insurance claim underway for business interruption in 2020/21. The Town Manager advised a claim has been logged and we are awaiting a response from the insurers.

It was **moved by Cllr. B Swann** and **seconded by Cllr. T Lucock**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted and,
2. The proposals for the 2021/22 budget were approved.
3. The minor amendments to the Specific Reserves as agreed by Councillors are undertaken by the Town Manager.
4. The 2020/21 allocation for the ‘Mayor’s Fund’ is to be carried over into 2021/22.

**33. Staffing Report**

Councillors considered the report of the Town Manager which provided details on the creation of a new ‘Community Projects Officer’ post in the Town Council and a proposal to create four temporary ‘adapted roles’ for current staff at Halewood Town Council to assist with recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.

**It was moved by Cllr. B Swann** and **seconded by Cllr. T Lucock**

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be noted.
2. Approve the recommendations in the report subject to the minor amendments discussed in the meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chair, **Cllr. K Dalton**, advised Councillors that this is the last committee meeting before the Annual Meeting of the Council on 13th May. He thanked Councillors for their support and participation over the past year

Meeting closed at 7.26 pm

Signed ………………………. Date…………………….