

At a meeting of the Policy and Establishment Committee held at the Town Hall, Higham Ferrers on Tuesday 01 December 2009.

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Mrs. A M Sauntson) (Chairman)
 The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mrs. V M Newbery)
 Councillor D E Drage Councillor Mrs. M Knott
 Councillor D C Lawson MBE Councillor G L Moore
 Councillor Mrs. G M Murdin BEM Councillor Mrs. M E Tuffnail
 Councillor. Mrs. P H Whiting

09/385 **APOLOGIES**

The Town Clerk reported that there was full attendance,

09/386 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following Declarations of Interest were made.

Councillor D C Lawson MBE – Land at Stanwick Road

09/387 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Establishment Committee held on 06 October 2009 (copies of which being Folios 3739 – 3744 had previously been circulated) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman .

09/388 **COUNCIL PROJECTS LIST**

The report of the Town Clerk updating the List of Council Projects (copies of which had been previously circulated) and showing the current position with respect to each project was considered. A discussion took place and the following actions were agreed:

Castle Fields: The Town Clerk advised that in order to progress the matter of the inner moat area it was necessary to commission a topographical survey of the area which would accurately show all the levels and trees. A specialist contractor had been approached, Kempston Surveys Ltd, who had quoted £895.00 exclusive of VAT, with a second contractor quoting a minimum of £1200. There would be a need in addition for a full tree survey to be carried out by a qualified arboriculturalist and the Town Clerk requested a budget of £750 be allocated for this purpose. Following a short discussion it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Kempston Surveys Ltd., be commissioned to carry out a topographical survey of the Inner Moat Area at Castle Fields at a cost of £895.00 exclusive of VAT, and that the Town Clerk be allocated a budget of £750 for the provision of a full tree condition survey of the Inner Moat Area..

New Play Equipment: The Town Clerk advised that several items had been selected as suitable from the Wicksteed Leisure Ltd catalogue following a site

visit and that these would be circulated to all Members for the December Council Meeting.

Town Signs and Market Square Improvements: The Chairman advised that due to personal circumstances the Working Party was yet to meet.

Exchange Land in Stanwick Road: The Town Clerk advised that discussions with a third party were still ongoing.

Kingsmeadow Lane/Riverside Park Link: The Town Clerk advised as funding had now been confirmed the tenders should be on the Agenda for the next Meeting of the Council so as to permit work to commence.

09/389 **COMMUNITY FACILITY**

Councillor Mrs. M E Tuffnail produced a Report (copies of which were circulated at the Meeting) giving several ideas to promote the use of the Tennis Courts, quoting an example a facility in another parish. The Town Clerk gave a presentation of a fact finding exercise related to the facility in another parish, outlined the problems with utilising an external agent for lettings, and made a proposal to employ someone to be present on site for the weekends May to August inclusive for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. The salary for this could be found from the existing budget.

An extended discussion took place at the conclusion of which it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that scheme for person be employed on a Saturday and Sunday for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon May to September inclusive for the purpose of taking bookings and supervising the tennis courts be approved in principle subject to the exact hours and lettings rates for the scheme being approved by a future Council Meeting,

And further it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that £1000 be allocated so as to provide a suitable building to be used at the tennis courts by employees for the taking of bookings.

09/390 **PERSONNEL SUB COMMITTEE**

The Chairman (Councillor D C Lawson MBE) moved the receipt of the Report and Recommendations of the Meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 29 October 2009 (copies of which had been previously circulated) Following a brief discussion it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes and Recommendations of the Meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 29 October 2009 (copies of which being Folios 3885-3886) be approved and adopted subject to Minute 09/355 being amended to an hourly rate of £7.50 per hour, and that the figure for the Park Ranger being amended to £7685 and £7800 respectively.

09/391 **ANNUAL ESTIMATES**

The Town Treasurer presented a Report (copies of which had been previously circulated) showing current levels of spending and projected levels of spending for the Financial Year ending 31 March 2011. An extended discussion took place to establish the spending priorities for the new Financial Year which included:

- Further Work on the Castle Fields Renovation Scheme
- The devolving of responsibility for public conveniences from East Northamptonshire Council to the Council

and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Annual Estimates for the Financial Year ending 31 March 2011 be contained in the following schedule set on Folios 3899– 3902

09/392 **RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO PRECEPT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2011**

The Committee bearing in mind the Annual Estimates

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Town Council do precept upon East Northamptonshire Council for the sum of £194,000 (one hundred and ninety-four thousand pounds) payable half yearly in advance in two equal payments during the year ending 31 March 2011

09/393 **PLAY AREA ADJACENT TO FITZWILLIAM LEYS**

The Town Clerk presented a Report (copies of which had been previously circulated) regarding the Play Area Adjacent to Fitzwilliam Leys. The Play Area had been installed by the developer, George Wimpey Southern Ltd., who had never properly finished the installation and despite all efforts to obtain enforcement action via East Northamptonshire Council no action had been taken. The land had in the meantime been transferred to the Council and there appeared little option but to assume responsibility for the Play Area. A discussion ensued and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Council take responsibility for the Play Area adjacent to Fitzwilliam Leys, Higham Ferrers, with immediate effect.

09/394 **CONCLUSION OF EXTERNAL AUDIT 2008/9**

The Town Treasurer presented a Report (copies of which had been previously circulated) regarding the conclusion of the External Audit of the Accounts for the Financial Year 2008/9. The External Auditor had issued a qualified audit with respect to the review of Internal Controls and Internal Audit Process which had been carried out, which review was felt not be sufficiently robust or in the appropriate form. One effect of this was that the Council could not achieve Quality Status until at least the second half of 2010. A discussion ensued and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Council in future when carrying out

the Review of Internal Controls and Internal Audit to do so in the format required by the External Auditor, this being dealt with at the same time as the Annual Review of Risk Assessments in February of each year, and that a small Working Party be set up to discuss the issues in detail.

09/395 **COUNCIL BANKING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Town Treasurer presented a Report (copies of which had been previously circulated) regarding the Provision of Electronic Banking Arrangements. A possible system existed operated by the Councils' Bankers, HSBCnet, which would enable payments still to be authorised at a Council Meeting so as to comply with legislation, the payments being made via the internet, giving significant saving in staff time and resources. A discussion ensued and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Council enters into an HSBCnet Customer Agreement subject to the External Auditors approval being given for the proposed arrangement.

09/396 **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVISOR**

The Town Treasurer presented a Report (copies of which had been previously circulated) regarding the necessity, given the Council's current levels of available funding to invest in the near future legislation required the Council to appoint an Independent Financial Advisor. Advice had been sought and it was possible to appoint an Independent Financial Advisor on a commission basis at no cost to the Council, a suitable person being employed by the Council's Bankers. A discussion ensued and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that Mr. Terry Lawson be engaged by the Council as an Independent Financial Advisor on a commission basis.

09/397 **VICTIM SUPPORT**

The Town Clerk advised that a request for funding had been received from Victim Support, an organisation that the Council had previously supported. A brief discussion ensued and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that a donation of £300 be made to Victim Support.

09/398 **ADOPTION OF MODEL DISCIPLINARY AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

The Town Clerk advised that following changes to employment legislation earlier in 2009 it was necessary to adopt the new Model of Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure (copies of which had been previously circulated).. A discussion ensued and it was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the Model Code of Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure be adopted.

It was further agreed that the latest Policy Documents on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure operated by East Northamptonshire Council be circulated with a view to adding where necessary to the Model Code.

09/399

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

02 February 2010 at 7.30 p.m.

Mayor
22 December 2009

Chairman
02 February 2010