



FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes for the meeting held on **Wednesday, 7 February 2024**
At 7.00pm in Sandbach Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs J Arnold (Chair), S Corcoran (Vice Chair), G Lindop, N Cook, K England, D Hegarty, M Mitchel, A Nevitt, T Wheatcroft.
Officers Ceri Lloyd (Chief Officer and Meeting Clerk), Agnieszka Obrochta (Senior Finance Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received by Cllr Deakin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests were declared.

The Chair adjourned the meeting to allow questions or comments relating to items on this Agenda from members of the public.

Mandy Roscoe attended on behalf of Minerva Arts and Anne-Marie Robinson attended on behalf of the Sandbach partnership. Both were present to support their grant applications and responded to a number of questions from Councillors.

The Chair reconvened the meeting.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by s.100 of the Local Government Act 1972), press representatives and public be excluded from the meeting for any of the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

Lead: Chair

Resolved: *No items were excluded from press and public.*

4. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE POLICY AND GOVERNANCE MEETING

[Attached: Minutes of the meeting held 22 November 2023]

Lead: Chair

Resolved: *the minutes of the 22 November 2023 meeting were approved.*

5. FINANCE, POLICY & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2023-24 BUDGET

[Attached: RBS 2023-24 Budget & Actuals December Summary]

Lead: Chair

Resolved: *the actuals against budget position for FPG Committee activities were noted.*

6. GRANTS APPLICATIONS (OVER £500 and UNDER £5,000)

6.1 Grant Applications (over £500 and under £5,000)

[Attached: Grant Applications received in Quarter 3]

6.1a Minerva Arts – requested amount £1,500;

6.1b Sandbach Partnership – requested amount £1,500]

[Links: <https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Minerva-Arts-redacted.pdf>;

<https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Minerva-Arts-Accounts-redacted.pdf>]

Lead: Chair

The Committee thanked the grant applicants for their attendance and provision of additional information.

- i) Minerva Arts: this application was welcomed and supported unanimously as it supports the Council's strategic objective to help develop and support the wellbeing of young people. Links were made with the Council's forthcoming youth provision consultation, Schools Lead Cllr Richards, and the Sandbach Partnership plans for a Youth Showcase event in the town
- ii) Sandbach Partnership Spooky Saturday; This application had a mixed reception with some members doubting the popularity of the event in the town and others fully supporting its value as a free event for families for Halloween.

Resolved: *i) to award a grant of £1,500 for Minerva Arts to run youth drama weekly workshops at relatively low cost;
ii) to award a grant of £1,500 to Sandbach Partnership for Spooky Saturday, to be funded by the current year community grant budget which is underspent. [named vote Cllr Corcoran; Against Cllr Nevitt Abstein; all other members present For – Carried 7F; 1 Ag; 1 Ab].*

6.2 Grants Feedback

[Attached: Completed Grant Feedback Forms]

Lead: Chair

Feedback forms were welcomed as a useful mechanism to ensure that the grants awarded had represented value for money for Sandbach residents. Members requested that the forms were reviewed by the Chief Officer to ensure that feedback was consistent and focused on outcomes relevant to the Council's Strategic Objectives.

Resolved:

- i) *the feedback for previous grant allocations was noted;*
- ii) *the Chief Officer to draft a revised feedback form for consideration at the next Committee.*

7. POLICY REVIEW – DIVERSITY POLICY

[Attached: STC Equality Statement / Policy]

In line with the Policy Review Timetable agreed by Council, the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy is due for review. This policy was last updated in 2021 but may benefit from some revision.

Lead: Chair

The Committee felt that this policy should be reviewed by the Diversity lead before further consideration, as previously requested by the Chief Officer and Committee Chair.

Resolved: *To ensure the Diversity lead reviews the existing policy and make recommendations for inclusion for the next Finance, Policy and Governance Committee and subsequent Full Council.*

8. POLICY REVIEW – INVESTMENT POLICY

[Attached: Draft Policy]

Lead: Chair

The Chief Officer and Senior Finance Officer provided the background to this policy and the current investment activities of the Council, which were in line with the proposed policy. The Chief Officer clarified that the Council, in line with all local authorities, invested any available reserves in the Government managed CCLA account (the Public Sector Deposit Scheme) which was currently paying 5.3% low risk interest and providing significant additional interest for the Council, following a Council decision in 2021.

Cllr Cook proposed that a paragraph was inserted within the draft policy to commit the Council to act ethically in its investment activities. This received mixed views and the Chief Officer advised that, although it was the Council's intention always to act ethically, making a statement in this policy could complicate its current strategy – basically to use a reputable high street bank for its current account (per the standard vetting within the policy) and invest reserves in the CCLA, as this was a Government recommended scheme presenting low risk and high interest with public funds and the Council would have little or no control over how these national organisations would invest. The Committee resolved to ask the Chief Officer to find a suitable ethics statement for consideration before Council.

Resolved: *the updated policy was approved for recommendation to Full Council, subject to a statement being added to endorse an ethical approach to investments. [4 For; 2 Ag; 3 Ab - carried].*

9. QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORTS

[Attached: 9a Q3 2023-24 BACS & DD Payments made;
9b Q3 2023-24 CREDIT CARD Payments made;
9c Q3 2023-24 Payments made Current Acc;
9d Q3 2023-24 PETTY CASH Payments made]

Lead: Chair

Actions: *the Q3 financial reports were approved.*

10. ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Lead: Chair

Resolved: *Next Meeting; Diversity Policy; other policies per policy review timetable; Revised Grant Feedback Form.*

11. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 7pm in Sandbach Town Hall.

Meeting Closed 8.32pm

Cllr J Arnold / CL

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