

**Downham Market Town Council
Governance Committee Meeting
Tuesday 09 January 2024 at 10am**

This meeting was held at the Town Council Offices,
15 Paradise Road, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9HS

	<p>Present</p> <p>Committee Chair – Cllr Incorvaia</p> <p>Committee Members - Cllrs Brewer & Perkin</p> <p>Non-Committee Members – Cllr Hobbs Town Clerk – Claire Dornan</p> <p>There were no members of the public present</p>
	<p>The Chair advised the nearest fire exit in the event of the alarm sounding was the front door where members entered and explained that the meeting point was outside the Mind building on the opposite side of the car park.</p> <p>The Chair asked that phones be placed on silent.</p>
1	<p><u>To receive Members’ Apologies for Absence</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Pyatt who had a family commitment.</p>
2	<p><u>To receive Members’ Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>There were no declarations made.</p>
3	<p><u>Public Participation – 15 minutes allowed</u></p> <p>Cllr Hobbs did not wish to speak. The Chair welcomed Cllr Hobbs to speak during the meeting.</p> <p>The Town Clerk read an email from a member of the public:</p> <p>Agenda Item 7 review of Councillor attendance. I assume, and from reading past minutes of committee meetings and Full Council, that a few Members appear not to understand their role and responsibilities of being a Councillor.</p> <p>Becoming a Councillor is not joining a private club or being in a position to secure something specifically for yourself, that is quite clear in the code of conduct.</p>

	<p>Becoming a Councillor is because you want to support your local community, nothing more than that.</p> <p>If a Councillor has family commitments with caring needs, then why have they joined the Council?</p> <p>Family should come first, if you can't commit to regular meetings then walk away and let someone else take your place.</p> <p>It is highly unprofessional when Councillors can't be bothered to attend and then don't give their apologies, it is disrespectful to their colleagues and the public, who they are supposed to represent.</p> <p>There will of course be the very odd times someone is ill or has an emergency but they are not regular events.</p> <p>Would Members please take a hard line for this agenda item so that the people of this Town receive the representation they deserve and can believe that every member here is working on behalf of the Town as a whole.</p> <p>Those missing meetings currently appear to be not in the slightest bit interested in Downham Market or the Town Council so why bother to continue to remain a Member?</p>
4	<p><u>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 05 December 2023</u></p> <p>Proposed – Cllr Incorvaia Seconded –Cllr Brewer</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <p>'That the minutes of the meeting held on 05 December 2023 be accepted as a true record.'</p> <p>All In Favour</p>
5	<p><u>To receive draft Gifts Policy and make recommendations to Full Council</u></p> <p>Cllr Incorvaia gave an overview to the policy explaining that the Council keep getting accused of tasking 'back handers' on social media, which is untrue, but this policy would show that the Council has a firm position on receipt of gifts.</p> <p>Cllr Hobbs suggested an amendment to the wording under 'Legal Content.' He felt that the wording implied that a Councillor was guilty until proved innocent;</p> <p>'The onus is on each Councillor to disprove corruption in relation to a gift from a person holding or seeking to obtain a contract from the Council.'</p> <p>Members agreed that this wording should be removed.</p>

	<p>Cllr Brewer commented that this policy should be extended to employees as well as Cllrs. This amendment was agreed by members.</p> <p>It was noted that some companies had provided calendars and stationary to the Council over the Christmas Period such as Alpha Parking Limited & James Hallam Ltd who have either worked for the Council or still work with the Council. There were concerns raised about product placement. It was agreed that company products, which are donated, should not be used in public locations such as meeting rooms. A line is to be added to the policy regarding the same.</p> <p>Proposed – Cllr Incorvaia Seconded –Cllr Perkin</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <p>‘That the Gifts Policy be recommended to Full Council for adoption with the amendments discussed and agreed.’</p> <p>All In Favour</p>
6	<p><u>To form a Sustainability Policy and make recommendations to Full Council</u></p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that she had not received a reply to the email sent on 03 January 2024 to Extinction Rebellion King’s Lynn and West Norfolk asking for assistance in implementing alternative recycling options.</p> <p>Cllr Perkin suggested that the Council look to sign the ‘Covenant of Mayors.’ After reviewing the website www.globalcovenantofmayors.org within the meeting, it was felt that the Council would struggle at this stage to ‘Define ambitious climate mitigation, resilience and energy targets’ for Downham Market Town Council given the restrictions on the Town Hall being in a Conservation Area and budget limitations due to the recent increases in all areas of the Council’s outgoings. It was felt without the support of Central Government, the Council would struggle to afford the changes needed and therefore it would be inappropriate to be signing a covenant which the Council could not abide by.</p> <p>Cllr Brewer asked that the Council look to remove paper towels from use in Council facilities and introduce hand driers. The Town Clerk advised that this is something that the Property Committee were looking into.</p> <p>Cllr Incorvaia had drafted a policy for discussion and went through this with members.</p> <p>It was agreed that Cllr Incorvaia’s policy would be used as a basis to a revise the 2012 policy. It was felt it was important to add the inclusion of actively working with groups, organisations and individuals who can assist in supporting the sustainability aims.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Council would continue to promote electric vehicle charging points and the withdrawal by BP Pulse, without notice, from an active grant application was</p>

	<p>noted as the reason that the Council were now not proceeding with providing charging points as had been planned.</p>
7	<p><u>To review Cllr attendance at Committee meetings</u></p> <p>The Committee discussed non – attendance at Committee meetings by Cllrs.</p> <p>Today’s meeting was an example where a member had not given apologies and due to the absence of another member, the meeting was only just quorate.</p> <p>Proposed – Cllr Incorvaia Seconded –Cllr Perkin</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <p>‘That the following Policy Statement be recommended for adoption by Full Council:</p> <p>Where a Councillor does not attend two consecutives Committee meetings and apologies are not given or are not accepted by the Committee members, it will be assumed that the Councillor no longer wishes to remain on the Committee. A vacancy will therefore arise on the Committee. The vacancy will be filled by a Councillor able to attend the meetings on a regular basis, where possible.’</p> <p>All In Favour</p>
8	<p><u>To receive an update following Legionella Risk Assessment meeting on 14 December 2023</u></p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that the Legionella Risk Assessment had been successfully completed and all sites had received a ‘Very Low Risk’ rating.</p> <p>The inspector was confident in the testing regime and the evidential paperwork held by the Council.</p>
9	<p><u>To receive an update following Fire Risk Assessment meeting on 20 December 2023</u></p> <p>The Town Clerk advised that the Fire Risk Assessment had been successfully completed however the formal report had not been received.</p> <p>No major concerns had been verbally raised by the inspector. There was some signage required, a suggested change to the Town Hall door locks and some fire doors which needed review.</p> <p>The assessor was very pleased with the actions taken since his last visit in December 2022.</p> <p>The report would be provided to the Committee upon receipt and discussed at the next meeting.</p>

	<p>It was noted that at the start of every meeting, the fire procedures should be advised and minuted to show compliance for training purposes.</p>
10	<p><u>To receive correspondence from Internal Auditor and agree actions</u></p> <p>The Town Clerk advised members that on 14 December 2023 she had received the following email from the current Internal Auditor:</p> <p>‘Due to health issues I will only be able to offer a year end zoom/telephone meeting from now on and given the complexity of your Council I will quite understand if your Councillors do not feel that this is sufficient.’</p> <p>Members were advised that a number of auditors had been contacted since this email to look at other options should Council wish to change auditor.</p> <p>One auditor had advised that they do not audit Councils over £200,000; 2 auditors did not reply; 1 auditor was disregarded as it was felt that they would not be independent following their comments made in their quotation email; Norfolk Association of Local Councils (NALC) provided a quote of £1,340 + VAT which would include two site visits.</p> <p>NALC audit Swaffham Town Council. It was noted that NALC will provide cheaper audits to members.</p> <p>Members asked that the Town Clerk contact the Borough Council of King’s Lynn & West Norfolk and see if they could provide a recommendation for 2024/2025.</p> <p>Members agreed to continue with the current auditor as the company has been the Council’s internal auditor for 3+ years but asked that the Town Clerk look for a face-to-face audit for 2024/2025 as they would prefer a site visit. It was also noted that there had been a couple of queries raised by PKF Littlejohn regarding the auditors paperwork in 2022/2023.</p>
11	<p><u>To agree financial review schedule</u></p> <p>It was agreed that Cllr Incorvaia and Cllr Brewer would complete the January 2024 sample.</p> <p>It was agreed that Cllr Incorvaia and Cllr Perkin would complete the February 2024 sample.</p> <p>Cllr Incorvaia to advise of date of sample.</p>
12	<p><u>To review overspend requests from Committees (2023/2024)</u></p> <p>There were no overspend requests received from Town Council Committees.</p>

13	<p><u>To agree schedule of meetings until end of April 2024</u></p> <p>It was agreed that another meeting would be needed in February 2024 as the Sustainability Policy and the Fire Risk Assessment required further review.</p> <p>The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 06 February 2024 at 10am in the Town Council Offices.</p> <p>The Chair requested an update at the next meeting on the FOI Publicity Policy requested at the meeting on 07 November 2023.</p>
	Meeting closed: 11:04am
	SIGNED
	DATE