

**MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
ON 19TH. FEBRUARY 2024**

Present : Cllr. K Williams (Chair)
Cllrs. G Edwards Etheridge, C Clark, C Erasmus & K Etheridge

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies or Absence were received from Cllr. D Box

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this point

3. To Receive the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Committee Meeting held on 29th. January 2024

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 29th. January 2024 were received and **agreed** as a true record

4. Matters arising

Cllr. K. Etheridge asked if there was any news from Barclays Bank. The Clerk stated he had been informed that a decision would be taken this week on the three options - Blackwood Miners Institute, Libanus Lifestyle Centre & our Offices .

Cllr. K Williams asked the Clerk had he sought advice on the Job Advertisement from OVW or CCBC and he responded by saying he had anticipated doing so once we had made some firm decisions

5. Applications for Financial Assistance

The Clerk and Mayor had intimated at last Town Council that requests had been received from Mrs. Jessica Ennis (via Cllr. Teresa Heron, Armed Forces Champion) and Oasis Centre, Blackwood.

Cllr K Williams declared an interest in the Jessica Ennis application, knowing the family quite well and played no part in the discussion or decision making.

The Clerk read through the letter in support of the Jessica Ennis application which had been forwarded to all Town & Community Councils in Caerphilly Borough. After much discussion which sympathised with the Ennis family plight, it was agreed not to grant any monies as this family lives in the Gelligaer area, and it was felt this might become a precedent leading to future requests from outside our Town boundary.

The application from the Oasis Centre identified a request for £10,000 towards the cost of a new Boiler. As there was no financial information in support of the application, it was agreed the Clerk contact the organisation pointing out that such an amount could not be considered as normal grants are up to £250 albeit larger grants will be considered where special circumstances are deemed to apply. However, such a large grant could never be considered, and no application considered without the required latest set of financial accounts.

The Clerk also informed members that he had been approached by Blackwood Little Theatre regarding possible sponsorship, but had advised a formal approach with much more information would be required before any application could be considered.

6. *Verbal Update on New Offices*

The Clerk & Mayor reported on the quotations received in respect of -

(a) The fitting out of the designated small kitchen area

Having sought 3 quotations from GT Kitchens & Bathrooms, Howdens & Wren Kitchens, only Howdens had provided a quotation in the sum of £2,705 (excluding VAT & Fitting). Delivery of constructed units available within 2 weeks of order

GT Kitchens had apologised that they would not be in a position to quote until July, due to high demand, and delivery early October, whilst Wren similarly apologised stating June being the earliest to provide a quote and November the earliest for fitting.

Members were disappointed that only one quote had actually been received, and given the urgency of the situation, after some discussion it was ***unanimously agreed*** to recommended to Town Council that Standing Orders/ Financial Regulations be suspended and that the quote from Howdens be accepted and an order placed.

(b) The furniture required at the Offices

Again 3 quotations were sought for Office furniture from Office Visions, Bridgend Furniture & Notetop Office Solutions

Office Visions had quoted £9,704 + VAT as the starting price, with significant additional add – ons, and an approx 8/12 week delivery

Bridgend Office Furniture had quoted £19,686 + VAT, again with an approx 8/12 week delivery

Notetop (based in Caerphilly) who had visited the Office on 2 separate occasions quoted £11,175 + VAT, which would include fitting and available within approx 2 weeks, as the majority in their showroom /warehouse

The Clerk raised the issue of the furniture currently stored at the Institute, that will hopefully be transported down to our offices over the next week or so, and dependent on state of repair and suitability should be utilised.

Furthermore, if Barclays were to utilise our office as their bank hub they had intimated they would be bringing their own furniture with them.

The Mayor responded by saying as each room had been individually quoted, it shouldn't be too difficult to request a revised quotation, once the outcome of the existing furniture and Barclays potential move issues are resolved.

After some lengthy discussion, it was unanimously agreed to recommend to Town Council that we accept the quotation from Notetop Office Solutions up to a value of £11,000 + VAT, in line with revised Standing Orders/ Financial Regulations

7. *Initial discussion on Potential Job Advertisement/ Job Description /Employee Specification*

The Clerk presented a potential Job Advertisement together with Job Description & Employee Specification, which closely matches those recommended by One Voice Wales & Society of Clerks, whilst also customised from other local town/ community councils websites.

The Clerk pointed out that until a firm decision had been made by Barclays, it was difficult to identify the actual number of hours required.

Members agreed, but were adamant the Barclays timescale should not necessarily force an early advertisement as they wished to ensure everything was in place to ensure the right candidate gets appointed. They were adamant the initial advertisement properly identifies the role, as some peoples view of a Clerk's job might be typing/ answering phone calls etc.

It was agreed members read through the papers and we meet again as a working party to work through same, prior to recommending Advertisement/ Job Description & Employee Specification to Town Council.