

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2021**

The Mayor

Councillor Ballard, Councillor Bateman, Councillor Burgess, Councillor Chegwyn, Councillor Cully, Councillor Foster-Reed, Councillor Herridge, Councillor Hook, Councillor Mrs Hook, Councillor Hylands, Councillor Jessop, Councillor Murphy, Councillor Philpott, Councillor Mrs Prickett, Councillor Raffaelli.

42. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

There was none.

43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Hylands and Jessop declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 7. COVID-19 Government Help for Business Rate Payers and Council Tax Payers

44. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th November 2020 be approved subject to the amendment identified.

45. DEPUTATIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.4

There were none

46. PUBLIC QUESTIONS - STANDING ORDER 3.5

There were none

47. CORPORATE VOLUNTEER POLICY

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Corporate and Community Safety seeking approval of a Volunteer Policy.

The Head of Corporate Policy and community Safety advised that the Policy was for individuals, and that there were two references to organisations that volunteered at paragraph 2.1 and 12.2 and it was proposed that these be removed to prevent any confusion.

The Board was advised that the lack of formal appeal process has been queried but it was confirmed that it was not a contractual agreement with volunteers, but the Policy could be updated to reflect that the Council's corporate policy could be used as an appeal mechanism.

Members welcomed the report and recognised the importance of safeguarding volunteers and the Councils. Members also recognised the value of volunteers and the work they did.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board was advised that safeguarding was important, and that each volunteer post would have their role and responsibility analysed to determine whether they would require a DBS check and undertaken.

Members welcomed the clarification that the policy applied to individuals, and the opening up of the appeal mechanism and recognised the policy needed to be amended to reflect that the United Kingdom had left the European Union.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Board approved the Corporate Volunteer Policy subject to the amendments identified.
- ii) That the Board acknowledged that the policy be underpinned by guidance and templates for service areas.

48. URGENT DECISIONS FOR BUSINESS RATE RELIEF ,GRANTS AND COUNCIL TAX

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Council Tax updating members on business rates reliefs and council tax support payments.

The Board was advised that there was one amendment to the report at 2.5, that there was now an end date to the scheme for wet led pubs, which was the 28th February 2021.

Members thanked the Council Tax staff for all the work undertaken in supporting local businesses through government schemes and the work undertaken in interpreting the schemes and the help and advice given to businesses by staff.

It was acknowledged that there were still some businesses that did not qualify for the schemes and that this was not the fault of the Council.

In answer to a Member question the Board was advised there had been 2772 grants made at a total of just under £22million. Some businesses had qualified for more than one grant over the course of the year.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that over the course there had been fraudulent claims, businesses that did not meet the criteria of the Government and advised that where possible, if grants could be paid they would but they were constrained by the criteria set out by the Government.

Members paid tribute to the officers in the work undertaken to ensure if the Council could help with grants, they would. It was recognised that the lifeline offered by the Government was essential but acknowledged that it was the Local Authority that would be audited for the grants issued and the work undertaken to ensure they were correctly distributed. It was therefore important the right criteria would be used.

Members recognised that it was a monumental effort to support businesses in this situation and to have a scheme in place to do so.

Members also recognised the support to Local Council Tax Support claimants.

RESOLVED: That the report was noted.

49. ANY OTHER ITEMS

There were none.

50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded for the meeting as the report contains financial data which is identified as sensitive material.

51. HARDSHIP MARINA FITNESS

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Local Taxation asking the Board to consider an application for hardship relief from non-domestic rates by Marina Fitness Ltd.

RESOLVED: That the application by Marina Fitness Ltd for hardship relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 be refused.

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 6.54 pm