

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of  
Yarm Town Council (YTC) to be held at

**The Fellowship Hall (side entrance)**

**West Street, Yarm TS15 9BT.**

**Date: Wednesday 8th September 2021**

**7.00pm**

Members of the public are invited to  
attend the meeting,

**in line with current government guidance  
as regards COVID.**

**Juliet Johnson, Proper Officer to YTC**



Yarm Town Council  
Town Hall  
High Street  
Yarm  
TS15 9AH

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is permitted; the Chair will notify those present of this at the start of the meeting and ask whether they agree to be filmed, recorded or photograph

## **FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

**PRESENT:**

CLlr Alan Gallafant (Chair)

CLlr Peter Monck

CLlr Philip Addison

CLlr Patrick Morton

Proper Officer / Town Clerk - Juliet Johnson

**1. To appoint a Chairman in the absence of the Chair and/or Vice Chair - N/A**

**2. Apologies for Absence**

**2.1** Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Barbara Wegg, Cllr Majorie Simpson, Cllr John Coulson, Cllr Alan Moffitt.

**3. Code of Conduct | Declaration of Interest | Dispensation:**

- a) To record declarations of interest from members of any item to be discussed
- b) To consider, vote upon and record any requests for dispensation

**3.1** No declarations of interest were received nor any requests for dispensation.

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 – section 100A(4), members of the public (other than those prohibited from doing so) are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda

#### 4. Confirmation of Minutes

**4.1** The minutes of the previous Finance and Governance meeting 30.03.21 were noted (previously approved at Ordinary Council - 13.04.21)

**4.2** **Cllr Monck** noted that we had not yet received a bill from SBC for the recent Yarm by election. It is expected that, as previously, this will be a reduced amount as it was combined with other elections at the same time (e.g. ward councillor, police commissioner etc.).

#### 5. Governance

##### **5.1 To Consider & Propose the Update to Standing Orders - Cllr Gallafant - Clerk**

(following working group review of first draft -

Cllrs. A. Moffitt, P. Monck, J.Coulson, Proper Officer - J. Johnson)

(FINAL DRAFT UPDATE OF STANDING ORDERS REFERS)

**5.1.0** The Clerk introduced the Standing Orders (SOs) update and explained the 'Key' that is given on the first page with particular reference to sections from Model Standing Orders that are mandatory and commented that a) YTC current SOs do include a significant amount from Model but that b) there was also a significant amount missing. The Clerk stated that in comparing the 2015 YTC update with 2019 YTC update it would appear that the 2019 changes were simply to underline some key points. Therefore, this represented a major overhaul to the last update in 2015 (and given that the Model SOs were updated in 2018 with revisions added in 2020). Model SOs (non-mandatory sections) could be used to find 'best fit' wording for YTC needs, along with sections of YTC's own wording that had been developed over the years to address specific issues. Practical application over the next period may reveal the odd issue that could be revisited - annual review is necessary.

The Clerk requested that Councillors raise any issues / queries with the SOs circulated and that she would then draw the meeting's attention to particular sections (e.g. those in red type and working group suggestions - blue hi-light).

**5.1.1** **Cllr Morton** queried **section 3.k)** which specifies that members of the public should stand when speaking - i.e. during the public questions section of the meeting). The Clerk briefed the meeting that this wording was in the model but that the working group had debated this: on the one hand, this could be intimidating for some people and shouldn't YTC be encouraging members of the public to take part more and attend meetings ?; on the other hand, some felt there had been past issues previously re. disruption and that standing emphasised the importance and need for the Council to conduct business as required of a local authority.

**5.1.2** The discussion settled that the proposed wording of **3.k)** gave flexibility to the Chair of the meeting to judge the nature of business and, being consistent throughout a meeting, offering members of the public the opportunity to remain seated or, if needed, stating that speakers should stand in order to address the Council.

**ALL AGREED**

**5.1.3 The Clerk & Cllr Monck** drew the meeting's attention to **14.d)** . The Clerk has consulted the Monitoring officer (SBC) regarding this as the wording (taken from Model Standing Orders) implies that all complaints (upheld or otherwise) should be reported to the Council. Previously, such matters have been confidential unless upheld (and then the Council considers a course of action). Response from the Monitoring officer regarding this matter is still awaited.

**5.1.4 Cllr Addison** proposed the following wording:

"Any complaints that are notified by the Monitoring Officer shall be received and be held by the Proper Officer."

**PROPOSED: Cllr Addison                      SECONDED: Cllr Monck                      ALL AGREED**

**ACTION:**                      The above wording is the proposed amend to **14. d)** to take to Ordinary Council; the Clerk will continue to seek Monitoring Officer understanding of the Model Standing Orders wording and will report to Ordinary YTC (NB the Model wording for this section is not mandatory).

**5.1.5 Cllr Monck** noted the use of / reference to 'him' in **14. g)** and felt that this gender bias was inappropriate and possibly an error?

**The Clerk** confirmed that she had noticed this throughout the Model Standing Orders (whilst she tended to refer to 'The Chair', his/her etc. etc.) and also in other key documents published through NALC and had concluded that, for some reason, this was still standard (possibly linked to legal practice) in the industry. **Cllr Monck** remarked that in the past, when there had been a female Chair, she had been referred to as 'Madam Chairman', which he felt didn't make sense.

**5.1.6 Cllr Morton** proposed that the gender bias throughout the document should be corrected.

**PROPOSED: Cllr Morton                      SECONDED: Cllr Monck                      ALL AGREED**

**5.1.7 Cllr Morton** proposed that the continued use of the male gender being the default in policy and procedure documents should be raised with NALC as something YTC finds inappropriate.

**PROPOSED: Cllr Morton                      SECONDED: Cllr Monck                      ALL AGREED**

**5.1.8 The Clerk** drew the meeting's attention to changes in financial thresholds and stated that all included had been consulted upon with the Internal Auditor who approved of the proposals (the Clerk and Auditor had discussed which thresholds seemed appropriate in terms of proportion within our overall turnover, including (e.g.) what sums constituted our largest contracts, informing a suitable tender threshold).

At **18.1.d)**, it is proposed that £1,000 is now the threshold above which 3 quotations are obtained whereas at **18.1.e)**, £8,000 is now the threshold above which a formal tender process will be applied. In addition, at **18.1.c)**, committees can now spend up to £500 (as long as it is budgeted for) without pre-reference to the Full / Ordinary YTC meeting.

At **10 a) xxi**. It was agreed that the threshold should remain as £500 and that this point in SOs should clarify that this is linked directly to the discussion of an agenda item but the 'not requiring written notice' refers to not having to specify the exact sum in the agenda item (motion) in advance.

**5.1.9 The Clerk** stated that at the time of drafting the first update of SOs, NALC were awaiting an update (February 2021) as regards references to European thresholds (i.e. **18.1 b., i. and j.**). The Clerk will check if this has arrived (prior to Tuesday's meeting) , Currently the red type and blue type should remain in place and the clauses left in as these are mandatory.

**ACTION:** Clerk to check again if update is available.

**5.1.10** At the working group meeting, it had been suggested (by Cllr. Moffitt) and agreed that all of section 19 (after the first three a), b), c) bullet points) should simply be moved to a HR policy update.

**ALL AGREED**

**5.1.11 The Clerk** drew attention to section **26.b.** i.e. the proposal is that there are four councillors who are required to propose a motion to change a non mandatory Standing Order. Discussion around this debated as to whether it should be four or two. The Clerk suggested that ideally there needed to be a balance between usefulness for councillors to propose a change if absolutely necessary but at the same to have a substantial number to ensure any proposals were robust and made for the right reasons - a third of the council feeling proportionate with other similar items (number that is quorate, proposal to reverse a resolution - **7.a.** , which had previously been 2).

**AGREED:** four is the number for **26.b.** .and also re **7.a.**

**5.1.12** As regards section **28**, the Clerk is to add the other committees to this list, with a single sentence of explanation.

**ACTION:** Clerk to amend **28**.

**5.1.13** The numbers required at **9.b.** should be 5 days (and also a note to explain that Sunday is not counted). This would also make the number at **9.d.** 4 days.

**5.1.14** At **13.1.e.** and **g.**, there are options for YTC to choose - the last bracketed option in each of e. and g. was chosen.

**ACTION:** Clerk to remove unwanted option.

**5.1.15** At **15 a.** a suggestion has been made as regards business continuity in the absence of the Proper Officer. Discussion followed re. the distinction between Clerk duties and Proper Officer and the legal context that applied to this.

**ALL AGREED:** wording at 15.a.

**5.1.16** It was proposed that the Standing Orders presented were accepted by the meeting and would be proposed for final approval at Ordinary Council.

**PROPOSED: Cllr. Gallafant      SECONDED: Cllr Monck      AGREED.**

## 6. Finance

### 6.1 Update: Overhaul of Cost Centre Headings & Coding - The Clerk

(DOCUMENT REFERS - as proposed & agreed - Finance & Governance 5.01.21 & Ordinary Council 12.01.21)

**6.1.1 The Clerk** re-stated (following the first presentation of this paper at Finance & Governance) the purpose of having proper cost centre headings. Grouping expenditure headings against the Council's key areas of work and duties achieves the following (e.g.):

- a) helps transparency - the public can more easily see what we spend money on and in what proportion to our overall budget/ the precept;
- b) is a simple way of showing forward planning for general budget and expenditure against any reserves held, especially in the context of audit questions regarding this;
- c) linked to b) above, can help respond to queries and challenges;
- d) meets a suggestion made by the Internal Auditor (ref b) above);
- e) is best practice in terms of aligning expenditure with committees, working groups and major projects - governance and accountability;
- f) is an appropriate framework for any unanticipated but necessary or useful spend that occurs throughout the year.

**6.1.2 The Clerk** explained that the new cost centre headings (and additional new codes to accompany these) had now been loaded onto the Rialtas system with every item of income and expenditure re-aligned for the financial year to date (the Rialtas 'Detailed Income & Expenditure' for the item below, demonstrates this in practice).

### 6.2 Financial Overview: April - August 2021 - Cllr. Addison

(DOCUMENT REFERS - Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Headings)

**6.2.1 Cllr Addison** gave an overview of income and expenditure to date detailed in the document circulated with examples of where expenditure, in particular, was higher or lower than forecast for this time of year. Examples of expenditure above forecast included: paying for both 20/21 and 21/22 floral displays in this financial year; extended development work at the Allotments (e.g. plots being subdivided as they become available in order to accommodate increasing numbers of residents on the waiting list more quickly incurs increased materials costs - income this Autumn from allotment tenants is expected to cover this). Cllr Addison stated that these examples did not negatively affect the bottom line and that the Council was well within budget.

**6.2.2** Cllr Addison stated that quarterly reports as per this example (DOCUMENT REFERS) would be presented at Full/Ordinary Council now that the cost centres and codes had been overhauled.

**7. To receive items for information and consideration for the next agenda.**

**7.1** No items were received at this point.

**8. To confirm the date and time of the next Finance & Governance Committee.**

**8.1** Next date to be confirmed (this will follow an informal meeting of the various committee chairs to look at creating a draft budget for 2022/2023).

**8.2** The meeting closed at 8.11pm.

**Signed (Chair):.....Date:.....**

**Signed (Clerk):.....Date:.....**

In accordance with the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960, press and the public shall be excluded for this item due to its confidential nature.  
LGA Act 1972 schedule 12 paragraph 10(2)(e)