

**Minutes of a Meeting of Middleham Town Council held as a virtual meeting through Zoom, 26 August 2020 at 7.00 pm. (SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT NEXT COUNCIL MEETING)**

**Present**

Chairman Cllr Mrs S Fairhurst, Cllr Mrs H Byford, Cllr Mr M Cade, Cllr Mr G Fortune, Cllr Mrs L Skelton,.

Clerk, Mr D Keep, County Councillor Mrs K Sedgwick

**Action**

**1. Open Forum.**

No members of the public were present.

KS raised the ongoing central government consultation on local government reorganisation, suggesting that whilst the closing date for comments to RDC was currently unknown, it was preferable to submit feedback as soon as possible. KS outlined her own views regarding an appropriate structure. She would submit additional information from NYCC to the Clerk for circulation.

HB reported upon her recent attendance at an online briefing and her view on the likely impact of a unitary authority upon service provision and democratic accountability as a consequence of a significant reduction in the number of councillors. Much of the detail for either RDC or NYCC's proposals were currently unclear.

**2. Apologies.**

Apologies received from Cllr Mr S Wheeler and Cllr Mr N Hopper. All other Councillors were present.

**3. Declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda.**

No other interests other than those previously notified were declared in matters on the agenda.

**3.1 Annual Accounts for Year Ended 31 March 2020.**

A copy of the draft annual return (officially known as Annual Governance & Accountability Return' or 'AGAR') and various other documents referred to below had been circulated prior to the meeting. Also distributed were summary sheets showing the transactions for TC that supported the AGAR.

The Clerk drew attention to the following matters:

- This year's timetable for completion of the AGAR had officially been put back by 2 months because of Covid19; the accounts needed to be published by no later than 1 September 2020.
- Council was eligible to be exempt from the requirements for external audit (officially referred to as a 'limited assurance review') as it fulfilled the criteria set out within the exemption certificate (Part 2 on page 3) of the AGAR, principally that neither its gross income nor expenditure exceeded £25k. Accordingly it was not required to submit its AGAR to the external auditor but must make certain disclosures on its website in compliance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.

Action

- There was a prescribed order for consideration of the accounts set out in Instructions relating to AGAR.

**3.2 Certificate of Exemption from External Audit.** Noting that the Council satisfied the requirements for exemption, **IT WAS RESOLVED to sign the Certificate of Exemption.**

**3.3 Report of the Internal Auditor.** A 'clean' report had been received and the Internal Auditor had signed page 4 of the return.

**3.4 Annual Governance Statement.** It was noted that an internal review of controls had been undertaken by Councillors Cade and Fortune during the year and that an updated risk review document had been circulated by the Clerk. Having considered each individual assertion, a 'yes' response was agreed in each case. The annual governance statement (Section 1 on page 5) was approved.

**3.5 Bank Reconciliation Statement.** The Clerk confirmed that this document reconciled with the Cash Book as at 31 March 2020, adjusted to exclude transactions on behalf of IH.

**3.6 Accounting Statements for 2019-20.** The meeting considered the Accounting Statements as a whole.

Clerk

**3.7 Approval of Accounting Statements and Annual Return.** After careful consideration **IT WAS RESOLVED** to approve the Accounting Statements and that they be signed and dated by the Mayor presiding at the meeting and by the Responsible Financial Officer.

Clerk

**3.8 Dates for exercise of public rights (inspection period).** These had been drafted by the Clerk and were noted and approved.

**3.9 Explanation of variances.** The explanations were noted and approved.

**3.10** The Chairman and Clerk were authorised to sign off the relevant paperwork and the Clerk was instructed to make the necessary arrangements for submitting the Exemption Certificate electronically to the external auditor and to place the required documents onto the Council's website for public inspection.

Clerk

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman thanked the Clerk for his oversight of the annual return process

**3.11 Asset register as at 31 March 2020.** A copy of the asset register was received for information and is attached to these minutes.

**3.12 Internal Audit Fee.** The payment of the agreed sum of £150 to Kim Duke Accounting Services had been approved at a previous meeting. It was further agreed to pay an additional fee of £37.50 to the Ms Duke for assistance reconciling the year end balances.

The Clerk would seek agreement with Ms Duke that she would continue for a further year.

**Date and time of the next meetings: The next monthly meeting would be the Council meeting on 30 September2020.**

**There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed.**

Signed.....Date.....