

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
Riverside, Waveney District Council Offices, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ
14:00 on 22 May 2018

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Nasima Alam, Ian Graham, Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker and Alice Taylor

In Attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: There was one member of the public present. Cllrs Houghton and Patience were in attendance as observers

269. Welcome

The fire evacuation procedure and public right to report were explained, and the meeting was welcomed.

270. To receive and consider acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Barron. Cllr Coleby had advised that he would be late. Cllr Houghton has resigned from this Committee.

271. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

None.

272. To consider the accuracy of the Minutes:

a) 24 April 2018 – Accepted as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Taylor; seconded by Cllr Graham; all in favour.

273. Public Forum

Cllr Patience addressed the Committee. He believes the grant application from Lowestoft and District Allotments Ltd (item 280.civ) should not be approved at this stage, as it is prior to the planning permission for the site being granted.

Cllr Houghton addressed the Committee. He spoke in favour of approving the grant application from The Lowestoft Players (item 280.cii), as they have a positive impact on the town and a lot of effort is being put in to making improvements to their facilities. Much of the work is being undertaken at their own expense.

274. Review and adopt delegated authority, committee and agency arrangements

274.a Election of a Vice Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee – Cllr Taylor proposed Cllr Alam for the position of Vice Chair; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

274.b The Terms of Reference including composition for the Finance and Governance Committee – All Councillors were happy with the Terms of Reference, including composition.

274.c Whether or not to change the start time of the Finance and Governance Committee – The current start time of 14:00 is not the most convenient time for all members of the Committee. Some Councillors would prefer an earlier start time, whereas others would prefer an evening meeting. It was suggested that the time slot could be swapped with the Planning and Environment Committee Meeting, as sometimes it is difficult to complete all business without the meeting overrunning, but the Planning Committee also have this issue, and a swap would impact the members of that Committee and Deputy Clerk also.

It was agreed to leave the start time as it is for now, as the new office space at Hamilton House should offer more flexibility with meeting schedules.

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It was queried whether the start time of the Full Council meetings could also be reviewed, as some Councillors find the start time too late in comparison to the length of the meetings. It was suggested that this be added to the agenda of the first Full Council meeting in the new office premises.

- 274.d Review of Lowestoft Town Council's policies and procedures – These will be reviewed again in detail and presented at a future meeting.
- 274.e Review of Sub-Committees and Working Groups, scope, composition and any delegations – This will be presented at a future meeting
- 274.f Review and adoption of delegated authority arrangements – This will be presented at a future meeting
- 274.g Section 113 arrangements for the provision of services by staff working for Waveney District Council – There is no update at present.
- 274.h Review of Lowestoft Town Council's Code of Conduct – This will be added to the next Full Council agenda.

275. To consider the following Governance issues:

- 275.a Safeguarding – A training session was held by Waveney District Council, which was attended by all members of staff and some Councillors. The Deputy Clerk will be putting a policy together.
- 275.b Lone working – The Deputy Clerk will be putting a policy together.

276. Progress with banking arrangements

There is no update at present

277. Risk management and compliance

- 277.a Insurance – There has been no update with the insurance arrangements.
- 277.b Condition Surveys – The Architect from Historic England should be providing the results from his survey of the Town Hall shortly.
- 277.c Compliance – The Facilities and Contracts Manager will be providing a presentation at the next meeting regarding condition surveys and Key Performance Indicators.

A minute's silence was observed in respect of those affected by the Manchester Arena bombing last year

278. To consider audit

- 278.a Internal controls – This was covered during the discussion of the next agenda item.
- 278.b Internal audit – The result of the internal audit has been received and will be added to the next agenda as well so Councillors have a chance to read it. It is a very positive report acknowledging all that has been achieved under great pressure. It also includes remarks about what Waveney District Council can do to help Lowestoft Town Council move forward in a risk-managed way. It was noted that Cllrs Coleby and Parker review the internal controls and Cllr Coleby completes the bank reconciliations.
- 278.c External audit – This will be added to June's Full Council Agenda for the papers to be signed and then sent to the External Auditor.

279. Monitor the budget for 2018-19 and note any bank reconciliations

This will be added to the next Full Council agenda.

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Cllr Green expressed congratulations to staff for work which led to the excellent internal audit report.

280. Payments – in related to associated schedules:

280.a Payments made under delegated authority – The Clerk has put together a table of payments under delegated authority. The Deputy Clerk has completed an SLCC GDPR Webinar on 15 May, at a cost of £30 from the training budget. It was noted that the Deputy Clerk does not need to be the Data Protection Officer, as Town and Parish Councils are not required to have one, but she will be taking the lead with data protection for Lowestoft Town Council.

280.b Payments for authorisation, including the following:

280.bi Suffolk Association of Local Councils subscription £3,365.04 (no VAT) – It was noted that £1,750 is for the subscription to NALC. Lowestoft Town Council cannot maintain its NALC membership without being a member of SALC, and cannot be a member of SALC without being a member of NALC.

Much of the guidance provided by SALC is available in the public domain. SALC are not able to assist with more complex legal enquiries, and Lowestoft Town Council now has its own solicitors for this purpose.

Conferences can be attended by non-SALC/NALC members at a cost of £50 extra per delegate. SALC currently provide the payroll service to Lowestoft Town Council at a cost of £7 per payslip, but other providers are available.

Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council that the subscription to the Suffolk Association of Local Councils is not renewed for the year 2018-19; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

Lowestoft Town Council would be able to subscribe again to SALC if needed.

280.bii A request from the Sparrows Nest Bowls Club for the following replacement equipment; six gatherers (£270), eight delivery mats (£80), one first aid kit (£20) – Cllr Graham proposed approval of the purchase of all of the items; seconded by Cllr Alam; all in favour.

Authorisation was also required to renew the Facilities and Contracts Manager's membership to the British Institute of Facilities Management, at a cost of £202. Cllr Graham proposed approval of renewal of the Facilities and Contracts Manager's membership to the BIFM at a cost of £202; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

A bill has been received from Waveney District Council for £180,000, relating to the Marina Theatre partnership fee of £150,000 plus VAT. Full Council requested further legal advice as Lowestoft Town Council's solicitors have asked why Waveney District Council's solicitors believe LTC has a legal obligation to pay this. A response from WDC's solicitors is pending. It was agreed that this bill will not be paid until the matter is settled.

Cllr Patience left the meeting at 14:49

A bill has been received relating to services provided to Lowestoft Town Council by Waveney District Council's Assets Management Team. This will be investigated to confirm whether it includes VAT and whether the work which was due to be completed during that period has been done.

A PAYE demand for payment has been received but is being charged at the incorrect time. The Clerk has delegated authority to resolve this.

A demand for payment has been received from a debt recovery agency, but the property it relates to does not belong to Lowestoft Town Council. They have suspended their processes by seven days to allow this to be resolved.

A demand has also been received from Waveney Norse but they have received the payment in question since issuing the demand.

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The Befriending Scheme have submitted a bill of £275 but they have been contacted to advise that Lowestoft Town Council has no contract in place with them.

280.c Grant applications, including the following:

280.ci St Andrews Roman Hill Church Council – This relates to a parents’ and toddlers’ group within the Church which serves the community. The application was very detailed, listing all of the toys and equipment which the money would be spent on. Cllr Graham proposed approval of the Grant Application of £498.93 for St Andrews Roman Hill Church Council; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour with one abstention.

280.cii The Lowestoft Players – It was queried what amount of unallocated funds remain under the grants budget. The running totals for grants can be provided. This application was considered as a detailed application from a community group who have a positive impact on the area. Cllr Graham proposed approval of the Grant Application from the Lowestoft Players for the total of £730; seconded by Cllr Alam; all in favour.

280.ciii Lowestoft in Bloom – Although this application is for money to fund a project at The Hollies Garden Centre in Blundeston, the plants will be planted in Sparrows Nest. Cllr Graham proposed approving the Grant Application from Lowestoft in Bloom for £500; seconded by Cllr Alam; all in favour.

A more detailed costing could be provided at a later date if more money is required, which Lowestoft Town Council would be prepared to consider.

280.civ Lowestoft and District Allotments Ltd – No planning permission has been granted yet so this Grant Application was considered premature. Also, no permission has been sought from Lowestoft Town Council as landowners for this work to be carried out.

The Clerk will be writing to Lowestoft and District Allotments Ltd at the request of the AID Committee, and this will include the decision regarding the Grant Application and reasoning behind it.

Cllr Taylor proposed refusal of the Grant Application of £500 from Lowestoft and District Allotments Ltd; seconded by Cllr Graham; all in favour.

Cllr Houghton left the meeting 15:06

280.d Payments processed – There were no payments presented for noting.

281. The following items relating to income were considered:

281.a Receipts – There have been no further payments received subsequent to the Full Council meeting on 8 May.

281.b Community Infrastructure Levy, including consideration of the consultation proposals, and S.106 payments – This will be discussed at the next meeting, and a response will need to be submitted to the CIL Consultation with appropriate costings.

281.c Any updates on any funding streams affecting Council assets – There are no updates at present.

281.d Capital Programme – The Deputy Clerk’s application for a grant relating to the Neighbourhood Plan has been successful. The sum will be about £5,350 and will be used to pay the consultant for work completed so far. The money will be received in tranches.

282. Any progress with plans and lease for the first floor of Hamilton House, including the Heads of Terms and any additional items which may be required

This is progressing well. Further discussion will be held during the confidential session.

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283. Other financial matters

- 283.a A delegated budget for additional staff hours – The specific amount will be disclosed in the confidential session. This is for the Deputy Clerk to work additional hours, which will be necessary especially if the Clerk is away, or workloads are particularly high.
- 283.b Cost of repair work at Denes Oval Tennis Court – The fence posts have perished and the Facilities and Contracts Manager is obtaining quotes for the cost of the repair work. In the interim, Waveney Norse have been instructed to remove the green mesh fencing, in the interest of public safety.
- 283.c Update on business rates – The Billing Authority have been consulted and the business rates charged for the Sparrows Next Bowling Green and Links Road Car Park are payable, although they were not able to confirm what else should be billed and what should not.
- 283.d Planned maintenance – This will be on the agenda for the next meeting. The Facilities and Contracts Manager is putting together a full maintenance schedule.
- 283.e CCTV – Full Council decided on a policy position for CCTV during the Extraordinary Meeting on 21 May, which will aid progress. An internal meeting is being held on 25 May with Waveney Norse and Waveney District Council.
- 283.f Sale of land at Uplands – Full Council have agreed for the residents to be formally approached to propose the sale of the land. It first needs to be agreed how much land Lowestoft Town Council would like to sell.
- 283.g Commemorative plaques – The Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society should be suggesting a programme of plaques – four to five per year. This could be advertised in the local press, with the eventual aim of creating a plaque trail. Relevant permission from landowners will need to be sought for plaques to go on buildings.
- 283.h Arnold's Bequest – The Clerk will be approaching Waveney District Council with conditions to be met before the land is transferred to Lowestoft Town Council's ownership.
- 283.i Cotman Close Play Area – Awaiting a proposal from Waveney District Council.
- 283.j Draft Proposal regarding the Normanston Park Play Area – The recommendation from the AID Committee is that the play equipment should be relocated and the fencing reinstated due to the nature of the park. The Clerk is checking that the equipment has been signed off. This will be considered by Full Council if necessary.
- 283.k Normanston Park Allotments – This has already been covered during earlier discussions in the meeting.
- 283.l Centenary Installation at Belle Vue Park – There are no further updates at present.

284. Date of the next meeting

26 June 2018 14:00 Riverside

285. Items for the next Agenda

No matters were raised.

286. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Cllr Graham proposed moving the meeting into confidential session; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

The member of the public left 15:23

Cllr Coleby has been assessing whether for the money for the lease of Hamilton House can be taken from Lowestoft Town Council's reserves without the need for a loan. The current agreement is to progress a loan application.

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If the loan application for the Marina Theatre 'Zenith' building is successful it could negate the need for a loan for the lease of Hamilton House. The current agreement is that the purchase of the 'Zenith' building should be progressed regardless of whether the loan application is successful.

This will be added to the next Full Council agenda.

Cllr Knight arrived as an observer at 15:27. Cllr Graham proposed allowing him to be present during the confidential session; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour

There were discussions about the funding for Hamilton House and the benefits of tailoring the specification and with the opportunity to sub-let. East Coast Community Healthcare are also not passing on the full cost of the renovation. The long-term aim is to renovate the Town Hall but the most appropriate use for it would then need to be decided.

It is still thought that the new office space will be ready early July.

Item 283.a was discussed in more detail. All Councillors voted in favour of a delegated budget to the Clerk of £10,000 in 2018-19 for additional staff hours.

The Pensions Regulator has confirmed that Lowestoft Town Council is compliant with its auto-enrolment duties.

A discussion was held regarding the financial reports. These are now being created using the new RBS software, but these could not be produced in time for today's meeting owing to time constraints due to the internal audit. These can be presented at the Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council meetings.

The Communications Assistant has now received training on invoices.

The migration to 'gov.uk' email addresses is being progressed. All Councillors will be supported to process any necessary changes.

It was queried whether Waveney Norse are providing the necessary information in their invoices. A bill has not been received from them yet but payments can be processed in they are in line with the contract, which should equate to twelve equal monthly payments.

A meeting is being arranged to discuss Key Performance Indicators and what data can be used to help monitor performance. The Service Level Agreement can also be reviewed in more detail.

It was queried whether Councillors' security passes for Hamilton House can be upgraded to allow access to the secure bicycle storage. Enquiries can be made.

The Chair closed the meeting at 15:40

Signed:.....

26 June 2018