

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
Riverside, Waveney District Council Offices, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ
18:30 on 20 February 2018

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Allyson Barron, Neil Coleby, Ian Graham, Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker and Alice Taylor

In attendance: Shona Bendix (Clerk), James Cox (Communications Assistant), Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: None present

185. Welcome

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

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Houghton and Begum.

186. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

None.

187. To consider the accuracy of the Minutes:

a) 23 January 2018 – accepted as accurate.

188. Public Forum

None present.

189. Progress with the arrangement of safeguarding training and the development of related policies

The Clerk is liaising with the Head of Communities at Waveney District Council to arrange dates for this, which will include a morning or afternoon session and an evening session. She has also been in discussion with LCAS with regard to tailoring a safeguarding policy for the Council.

190. Progress with banking arrangements

The Unity Trust banking arrangement is ongoing. A handout was given to Councillors with recommendations about banking arrangements. Unity Trust will not issue a credit card until Lowestoft Town Council has completed a full year of financial existence; however arrangements are in place ready for an application to be made on 1st April, which will be the completion date of the first year for the Council.

A limit of £5,000 was recommended, with delegated authority to the Clerk, and the agreement that any balance on the card should be paid every month to avoid interest charges. Any expenditure would also be subject to the same authorisation procedures.

It was recommended that, should the Clerk be unavailable for any reason, the Deputy Clerk should also have delegated authority of the £5,000 limit, when she is covering the Clerk's role but a lower limit normally (WDC can administer this varying limit).

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Cllr Taylor proposed two credit cards to be applied for on 1st April, one with delegated authority to the Clerk and a limit of £5,000 and the other with delegated authority to the Deputy Clerk and a limit of £500 (uplifted to £5,000 when deputising for a significant period in the absence of the Clerk; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Bank signatories have been agreed as the Chair of Finance, the Mayor and Cllrs Taylor, Begum and Knight. It is understood that all have received the relevant banking information and the Clerk is in the process of arranging a support session with the Senior Accountant at Waveney District Council to ensure all signatories can progress authorisations.

The DMO short term banking arrangements are now in place. A discussion was held over how much money should be kept in the account and for what period, and whether a building society account should also be set up. A concern was raised about whether a bank or building society account would be insured in case the building society were to collapse. Clerk to seek clarification. Waveney District Council have produced a document on relative merits of banking and investment options which would be obtained.

It was suggested that £500,000 could be placed into the DMO account for a six month period, however the Council has not yet seen a full year of cash flow so it was agreed to proceed with caution and set this at a lower amount.

Cllr Taylor proposed the sum of £300,000 for four months (or if four months was not an option, whatever the closest period was under four months); seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

The Clerk will progress looking at alternative savings accounts and will report back at the next meeting.

It was noted that a query with regard to the Council's address may arise during the internal audit. It was noted that, for the purposes of banking, the Riverside address should be used, as the Council has no other permanent address. Proposed by Cllr Coleby; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

It was noted that the S.113 agreement with Waveney District Council means that District Council financial controls are in place, rather than the normal Lowestoft Town Council financial controls, but a process is underway of setting up a transition to full control by Lowestoft Town Council as of 1st April. Proposed by Cllr Coleby; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

A document was circulated detailing payments made and awaiting authorisation. It was recommended that rather than using cash, a prepaid credit card, similar to a gift card, could be obtained instead. It could be pre-loaded with a small balance and topped up as necessary and would be implemented with a separate accounting record for transactions. It would be tightly controlled through the Clerk, with an authorised maximum amount and an overall budget for the year. It was noted that this would be a much safer option than staff carrying cash. The amount to be kept low for safeguarding and staff safety reasons. It was noted that cards with a PIN protection could be obtained for extra security, and all receipts would be kept so activity could be monitored.

Cllr Graham proposed a limit to the available funds of £100, with an overall budget of £500 for the year, to be reviewed in three months to see what the usage has been and if any changes are required as a result; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

A discussion for agenda item 201 took place now

It was noted that expenditure in relation to office stationery supplies, such as toner cartridges for the printer and envelopes, were being covered by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk, but there was a delay in the funds being reimbursed due to awaiting authorisation from Full Council. It was

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therefore requested that a budget be set for stationery and office supplies, with delegated authority being given to the Clerk.

It was suggested that an account could be set up with a stationery supplier, but this would not offer the flexibility of being able to compare prices for some items with other retailers.

There was a concern that the recommended budget of £5,000 seemed too much, but it was noted that this was to include items such as toner cartridges at nearly £80 for a set.

Cllr Parker proposed a budget of £3,000, to be reviewed if required, with delegated authority to the Clerk; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

191. Progress with insurance arrangements

A representative from Zurich will be at the conference which the Clerk and Deputy Clerk will be attending this week. Meetings have been arranged with CCLA and Came and Co. and will be held shortly.

192. Next steps on Key Performance Indicators

Mark Speller is reviewing the Service Level Agreement. A meeting should be arranged within the next couple of weeks to discuss the KPIs and Mr Speller will ensure Councillors have draft recommendations, which will be looked at in order of priority. All Councillors in the Finance and Governance Committee will be invited to attend and dates will be emailed round.

193. Updates on any funding streams affecting Council assets

There is a Heritage Action Zone meeting tomorrow and Cllr Taylor will report back on anything relevant to the Council.

Grants for Neighbourhood Planning can be applied for on 1st April and the Deputy Clerk is seeking expert advice.

194. Update on Community Infrastructure Levy and S.106 payments

The Council is required to have a full record of CIL and S.106 payments for the calendar year. A schedule is being put together.

195. Durrants valuation of the Lowestoft Collection

The valuation has been received and Cllrs Graham and Coleby have had a meeting with the Chair and another trustee. Cllr Graham requested further conversation around this item when the meeting moves into confidential session.

196. Options for a condition survey for the Town Hall

At last night's Implementation Committee a recommendation was made to the Finance and Governance Committee for a structural condition survey to be completed on the Town Hall. This would provide an independent report and any needed heritage survey could be progressed at a later stage through grant funding.

Mr Speller had produced a handout – following his site visit to the Town Hall - which was passed round to the Committee. It was reported that he has been through the existing condition survey, highlighted the issues raised, and added any issues that he has discovered, or that have been reported to him by Councillors. Norse have been asked to cover the broken window, which should be at a cost of about £70. Regular checks will be completed and a planned maintenance programme will be introduced. It was noted that there is currently no authorisation in place to fix problems as they arise and Mr Speller has suggested putting aside a

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contingency fund for repairs that can be made as they come about. His recommendation was that £3,000 should be sufficient. It was noted that a budget of £25,000 was originally set for the survey and any immediate repairs that were identified; and as the survey will now be costing less the funds could come out of that budget.

Cllr Taylor proposed a budget of £3,000 for repairs; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

197. Quote received for the condition survey on the Marina Theatre

Mr Speller has requested a more detailed breakdown of what the costings will be, as the quote covers more than just structural work, such as future financial investments. If it can all be done within the budget there is no issue, but the Council needs to be clear what it is paying for.

198. Appointment of an internal auditor for the year ending 31 March 2018

A specification is being put together and will be sent to the private internal audit company and Waveney District Council. Local accountancy firms can then be contacted, to see who can offer the best service, or alternatively a company who specialises in local councils. Councillors would need to agree the process and requirements.

199. Paper on the New External Audit Regime

A training session was organised by SALC as a webinar but all materials have been made available to the Committee.

200. Consider and approve a budget of £5000 and delegate authority for reimbursement of staff's mileage and other related expenditure

Currently staff are waiting up to a month for mileage and parking costs to be reimbursed. It was agreed this was too long to wait. Claims documentation and rules, including a maximum of 45p per mile, had been incorporated. If delegated authority were approved to the Clerk this would exclude the Clerk's expenses which would still be authorised by Councillors.

It was noted that the mileage allowance is 45p per mile due to the tax threshold.

Cllr Coleby proposed the budget of £5,000 and delegated authority to the Clerk; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

All delegation and associated budgets are being listed so Councillors can sign those off too.

201. Consider and approve a budget of £5000 for stationery and office supplies (including key safe) and delegate to the Clerk

This item was already discussed earlier in the meeting.

202. Consider and approve setting up a credit card

This cannot be done until April, as discussed above.

203. Progress a delegated budget for small works

It was suggested that each ward could have a delegated budget for minor works that could have immediate attention through an approved contractor, rather than having to go through the approval processes, such as reinstating the warning sign of ducks on Gainsborough Drive. A concern was raised that individual councillors could not have delegated authority, about perceptions of 'buying votes' and whether the Council could negotiate to have that type of work done through the existing contract anyway. It was suggested this could be something to consider in the future but there is not a large sum of money currently set aside for maintenance, so the Council would have to prioritise work corporately. It would also mean that

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special measures and training would need to be introduced to manage risks and ensure insurance was not affected. It was also noted that allocating specific budgets to each ward restricts the use of the funds and it may be more beneficial to delegate authority to the Asset Manager for works to be completed outside the contract. It was agreed that this could form part of the discussion in the meeting about KPIs.

204. Note the record of delegated expenditure

This is currently in progress.

205. Payments – in related to associated schedules

201.a Note payments made – A handout was circulated to Councillors, listing income received. Clarification is being sought from Waveney District Council on three income payments to determine the original invoice and debtor.

VAT income to Sept 2017 £89618.80

VAT income to Dec 2017 £24197.64

Unknown source via WDC – Inv 100054 16/2/2018 – £7941.34

Unknown source via WDC – Inv 100054 16/2/2018 – £8259.49

Unknown source via WDC – Inv 100054 16/2/2018 – £12965.14

Payment of staff salaries was also noted and subject to monitoring by two . The payslips are prepared by SALC and forwarded to Waveney District Council, who make the payments.

November 2017 –£3237.71

December 2017 –£4236.98

January 2018 – £5827.75

A payments schedule was provided with associated receipts:

- a. 12/1/18, reimbursement for office supplies (laptop bag and pen drive) to Shona Bendix £39.98 (no VAT)
- b. 15/1/18, reimbursement for office supplies (notebooks, post-notes, stapler, pencil, pens etc) to Shona Bendix £72.61 (no VAT)
- c. 20/1/18, reimbursement for office calculator to Shona Bendix £7.99 (no VAT)
- d. 23/1/18, reimbursement for office supplies (envelopes and copier paper) to Sarah Foote £17.91 (+£3.58 VAT)
- e. 24/1/18, reimbursement for office supplies (card) to Sarah Foote £2.50 (no VAT)
- f. 25/1/18, reimbursement for office storage box to Sarah Foote £4.99 (no VAT)
- g. 25/1/18, reimbursement for office supplies (files, scissors and Blu-tack) to Sarah Foote £24.13 (+£4.83 VAT)
- h. 25/1/18, reimbursement for office supplies (envelopes) to Sarah Foote £6.07 (+£1.22)
- i. 30/1/18, reimbursement for postage stamps to Sarah Foote £7.80 (no VAT)
- j. 7/2/18, reimbursement fore recorded post to Debt Management Office to Shona Bendix £2.40 (no VAT)
- k. 14/2/18, to EFBS for Hamilton House office space to 31/3/18, SIN00069, £600 (no VAT), for mobile phones £60 (no VAT) and landline telephones, £100 (no VAT)
- l. 6/2/18, reimbursement for office toner cartridges, #205-4135145-5457954 to Shona Bendix £78.50 (no VAT)

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- m. 19/2/18, reimbursement for office toner cartridges #205-6673587-0353945 to Shona Bendix £78.50

Payments to consider authorising for recommendation to Full Council

- 1) 23/1/18 Waveney Norse Partnership Charges, 45IN-003220, £53,000 (+VAT £10,600)
- 2) 29/1/18 Waveney Norse Partnership Charges, 45IN-003256, £50,500 (+VAT £10,100)
- 3) 30/1/18 Waveney District Council LTC Elections, 0007277441, £18,618.05 (no VAT)

These were authorised, with the exception of an invoice for office provision at Hamilton House, an invoice for election expenses and invoices for Waveney Norse which were separately considered as above delegation limit and/or owing to clarifications being needed. All in favour.

Invoice SIN000069 EPBS - Included in the invoice from Hamilton House is a charge of £600 for lease of the office space, which is being queried, as the Council were under the impression this charge should not be payable, unless a lease is not progressed for floor 1. It was agreed that payment of the rest of the invoice totalling £160 be paid (whether through this invoice or a reissued separate invoice), with the £600 to be authorised only on the basis that, if payable, it is subsequently reimbursed in the event of a lease being agreed. All in favour.

Invoices have now been received directly from Norse, further to requests to send them to Lowestoft Town Council directly, rather than through Waveney District Council. However, they are being queried as they do not provide sufficient information as to what the charges are for and why there is a variation in monthly figures. Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to delay payment of the invoices until clarification has been provided; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

A bill has been received for election costs. It was noted that the figure seems larger than expected, but it goes above the delegation limit for the Finance and Governance Committee anyway. A recommendation is to be made from the Finance and Governance Committee to Full Council this is paid subject to receiving a breakdown of what is payable. All in favour.

All payments are approved.

201.b Note payments made under delegated authority – No further comments were made in addition to the discussion held around the last item.

201.c Payments to be considered for authorisation – No further comments were made.

206. Approving/noting any other payments received

No other payments to be noted or approved.

207. Monitor the budget for 2017-18 and note any bank reconciliations

A recent bank reconciliation dated up to 31 January 2018 has been completed and signed off.

The process will be reviewed as the Council transitions to managing its own finances.

The bank statement has been received, with outstanding invoices and payments through Waveney as follows:

- WDC Invoice 0007272860 £63,600
- WDC Invoice 0007272873 £67,200
- WDC Invoice 0007272886 £44,400
- WDC Invoice 0007272899 £79,200
- WDC Invoice 0007272857 £81,600

The balance of the account once these have been processed will be £862,525.03.

It was noted that the monitoring process is being reviewed for the purposes of reporting back to the Finance and Governance Committee.

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Negotiations are being made with Waveney District Council to secure a secondee to assist with finance; however, if this not possible enquiries will be made with local accountancy firms. By the date of the next Finance and Governance Committee a decision regarding this will have been reached, then a recommendation can be made to Full Council.

208. Note the income schedule

This has already been covered in the discussions around previous agenda items.

209. Progress with the plan and costings for office provision for the Council

A meeting was held this morning but this is still ongoing. Furniture and lighting options have been explored but costings still need to be calculated.

210. Progress with technical support and funding for neighbourhood planning

The form for this has been completed and sent off.

211. National mourning protocol and the recommended budget to fulfil civic duties of £2000, with recommendation to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk

It was queried as to whether black armbands are required, but all the items specified form part of the defined protocol set nationally and through the Lord Lieutenants Office.

At yesterday's Implementation Committee meeting two changes were recommended to the Finance and Governance Committee; to increase the amount of black ties and rosettes to twenty each, as the gender split of the Council in future is not known, and also the budget for the microphone, as Cllr Knight is looking into the cost of a microphone and speaker which can be used at all events - including outdoor events – with an anticipated cost between £300-£500. The site options for the condolence books were discussed, and it was suggested that this could be at the Marina Theatre, or in the town centre if the Council has its gazebo, depending on the weather and the time of year.

The Deputy Clerk is preparing the statement for the Mayor to read.

Cllr Coleby proposed an overall budget of £2,000; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

212. Remembrance Service event planning for 2018 and consideration of the recommended budget, with delegation to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk

At yesterday's Implementation Committee a budget of £5,000 was recommended as this will be a major event and will require all staff to be involved. Various events will be happening throughout the day, such as the service at 11am and the lighting of the beacon in the evening. It was noted that this is a previously unbudgeted event.

All voted in favour of the £5,000 budget. It was noted that grants could be considered if further expenditure above this amount is required.

Dismay was expressed at Waveney District Council passing over the costings and funding of the event to Lowestoft Town Council without prior consultation and agreement.

213. Date of the next meeting

20th March 2018 14:00

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214. Items for the next Agenda

To consider recharging Waveney District Council for CCTV in car parks - and other stakeholders who benefit - and to consider recharging for staff whose wages are covered by Lowestoft Town Council working for other organisations (out of hours work and monitoring, etc.)

It was noted that Norse have proposed to fund and progress Kensington Garden's 'In Bloom' application, which was welcomed.

With regard to an unauthorised trespass on Town Council land, there is currently no specific budget. The police have not been supporting and liaison is taking place with Waveney District Council. It was noted that there is a budget reserve of £50,000 for legal matters. Cllr Coleby proposed permitting use of the legal budget if necessary with delegated authority for the Clerk including to progress any evictions; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

At yesterday's Implementation Committee the possibility of a visit to St Edmundsbury Borough Council was considered, to see their CCTV system. It was queried how a budget for this could be prepared, but it would be dependent on the number of Councillors who wanted to take part. The Clerk would be able to drive a car full and it might be incorporated in meeting costs.

215. To resolve that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the Meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

All voted in favour to move into confidential session. No members of the public present.

The Durrants valuation of the Lowestoft Collection has been received and was discussed.

The whereabouts of some items has not been established and Waveney District Council and the Museum will be liaised with as required. The Council has committed to support the housing and enhancement of the Collection.

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:20

Signed:

20th March 2018