

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
Riverside, Waveney District Council Offices, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft NR33 0EQ
14:00 on 20 March 2018

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Allyson Barron, Neil Coleby, Ian Graham (arrived 14:09), Alan Green (Chair) and Alice Taylor

In attendance: John Parocki (Finance Manager – Waveney Norse), James Macey (Finance Business Partner – Waveney Norse), Shona Bendix (Clerk), Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

Public: None present

216. Welcome

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

217. To receive and consider acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Houghton and Parker.

218. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

None.

219. To consider the accuracy of the Minutes:

a) 20 February 2018 – accepted as accurate.

220. Public Forum

None present.

221. Speaker from Waveney Norse Finance Team

Cllr Graham arrived 14:09

John Parocki provided a report which he explained is typical of what they would provide to any joint venture partner.

It was noted that the Finance and Governance Committee meets fortnightly. Norse will endeavour to provide reports to synchronise with this timetable.

The Analysis of Monthly Partnership Fee began with the budget as set by Waveney District Council and detailed the adjustments made throughout the financial year as it was reviewed. Fees will be amended accordingly for any changes in service, and the increase or decrease in figures will be displayed.

A history of all invoices raised so far was provided and Mr Parocki confirmed that all invoices raised will be on headed paper, accompanied by a schedule.

With regard to the Statement of Assets, it was noted that some of the descriptions on the document may need to be amended, but the amounts should not be affected.

Clarification was sought as to the compliance costs and it was explained that there are departments within Norse which oversee different aspects of the assets, such as cleaning and grounds maintenance. It was queried whether legionella testing was included in the contract and Norse will seek to confirm this and provide a list of what is included.

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The costs relating to play areas was also queried and Norse will again clarify this; although it was noted that these are often large areas with several bins to empty and each site is assessed individually based on the environment. Some sites also incorporate sports facilities. A strategy for public conveniences is being developed; therefore a breakdown of costs relating to maintenance of public conveniences was requested, including work completed by the Grounds Maintenance Team. It was noted that Lowestoft Town Council are not aware of the schedule for locking and unlocking the public conveniences, but this can be provided. If an event is being held the Council can liaise with Norse about amending the schedule as appropriate and arranging extra litter-picks, etc.

Mr Parocki advised that Norse are happy to assist with any concerns or queries Lowestoft Town Council may have. He encouraged LTC to obtain the SLA, which can then be monitored to ensure work is being completed as it should, and to enable requests to be submitted as escalated if necessary.

A proposal was included in the report for the 2018/19 Partnership Fee and feedback was welcomed. It is anticipated that payments should be made on 19th of each month, to coincide with Norse's salary payments and an invoice will be issued.

A discussion was held as to whether these payments would have to be authorised by Full Council first, or whether delegated authority could be given to the Clerk as these are scheduled payments, unless there are any variances. This will be added to the next Full Council agenda as the amounts exceed the delegated limit for the Finance and Governance Committee. It was noted that it would be beneficial to receive a monthly schedule, detailing what is being paid for.

A breakdown of CCTV operational costs by category was provided and Norse are currently calculating a breakdown of costs per camera. It has been reported that Suffolk Police are potentially interested in taking ownership of CCTV across the county.

It appears that Lowestoft Town Council are paying the salaries of staff working the 'out of hours' service through the contract. The service is being provided to Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils so LTC will work with Norse to discuss the option of billing external authorities and apportioning costs. Norse can also provide details of the contributions made by Sentinel and Lowestoft Vision.

It was queried why costs for workers are being paid to an agency. It was explained that resources are drafted in to cover long term staff sickness, rather than training new staff. It was noted that the Council need to know if there are any conditions in place around relocating cameras or switching them off, and whether a breakdown of costs per camera can be provided under each of the sub-headings in the report.

Discussions are being held with a view to establishing KPIs. Information is required as to what is being delivered under the current contract, but there may not be the same degree of flexibility to deviate as with larger contracts.

This can be further discussed with Norse, although it may result in financial implications for both parties. Norse currently set their budget in October or November for the following financial year.

Mr Parocki reiterated that Lowestoft Town Council can approach them at any time with queries or concerns. A CCTV sub-committee is being set up to further investigate options for CCTV.

Mr Parocki and Mr Macey left the meeting at 15:04

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222. Introducing charges for CCTV use

It was noted that the Finance and Governance Committee would like the CCTV sub-committee to look at ensuring Lowestoft Town Council receives full recompense for the service it provides.

223. Visit to St Edmundsbury Borough Council to see their CCTV system, and how to prepare a budget for this

The budget would depend on how many people would like to be involved with the visit. It was suggested that £1,000 could cover the cost of a mini bus and lunch. It was suggested that £500 may be a more reasonable budget for this, but £1,000 was agreed as it would also cover the associated expenditure with regard to exploring CCTV options.

A date shall be arranged for the initial meeting first. Cllr Green expressed an interest in being involved.

224. Recommendation from Implementation Committee to approve an account to be set up with Binder to cover maintenance and annual servicing of the septic tank situated on the land of the Uplands Community Centre

This is retrospective as an urgent issue arose and had to be rectified.

Cllr Graham proposed approval of the account to be set up with Binder; seconded by Cllr Barron; all in favour.

The amount is not yet known but this is approval of the account being set up.

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

This is ongoing. There is a SALC conference being held shortly and enquiries are being made as to whether this would be beneficial.

226. Conference budget and attendees

It was noted that the NALC Annual Conference and the NALC Larger Councils Conference had been beneficial. It was suggested that the Mayor, the Chair of each Committee, the Clerk and at least two other Councillors should attend. A budget needs to be agreed for this.

Attendance at conferences is currently covered by the training budget of £8,500. It was queried whether this would be sufficient to cover the suggested number of delegates. It was noted that Full Council can authorise an increase in the training budget if required.

227. Consider grant applications, including the following:

227.a The Plaisir Twinning Association – It was understood from the grant application that the amount of £500 is being requested.

Cllr Coleby recommended authorising the sum of £500; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

If the amount is incorrect this can be reconsidered.

It was noted that a photograph should be taken of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor presenting the cheque.

The Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society have also submitted a grant application for the sum of £500. It was noted that this would be included in the current year's budget but there is no grant budget in place. In spite of this the amount requested does not pose an issue and Lowestoft Town Council looks forward to working with the Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society in future.

All Councillors voted in favour of authorising the amount of £500.

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Again it was noted that a photograph should be taken of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor presenting the cheque.

228. Financial risk assessment is in place

This was noted.

229. Increase in the national minimum wage

It was resolved that a recommendation should be made that no member of staff will be paid below real Living Wage this year and Lowestoft Town Council will become a real Living Wage employer.

230. Funding a centenary installation in Belle Vue Park

The Deputy Clerk and Cllr Coleby met with the Conservation Officer on 19 March. The paths and flowerbeds have permitted rights and the benches are also fine, the only issue is with the pergola. Advice has been given to contact Heritage England and the Parks Trust to notify them of the plans. Contact details have also been given for a Heritage Landscape Consultant who can offer assistance free of charge. It was noted that permission is not required for temporary artwork - including sculptures - only permanent structures.

It was noted that one of the artists working on the Flipside project is a local artist and has had involvement with the Chelsea Flower Show and is very keen on working with Lowestoft Town Council.

A budget of £10,000 should cover the costs of the plants, paving and the bench, with the work to be completed by Norse. Decisions need to be made regarding expenditure within the budget as the roses need to be planted shortly. It was suggested that delegated authority could be given to the Clerk or Facilities and Contracts Manager, however decisions regarding the design should not be made by an individual.

All Councillors voted in favour of recommending a budget of £10,000 to Full Council, with delegated authority to the Implementation Committee to decide how it is spent.

231. Delegating a budget for planned maintenance

The Facilities and Contracts Manager is developing a schedule, upon which a budget can then be agreed. It was queried how to deal with urgent matters which arise in the meantime, which is also covered by agenda item 232. It was noted that money is held in reserves and Lowestoft Town Council did receive a refund from Waveney Norse for a duplicate charge, which is also being held for any required maintenance work.

232. Urgent expenditure in relation to WDC assets and services

A budget is required for any urgent repairs. A budget of £3,000 has already been agreed for any urgent repair work to be carried out at the Town Hall and it was agreed that this should be used as it could be extended to cover all the assets, not just the Town Hall.

233. Developing a capital programme for assets

Planning for this needs to begin soon. A capital reserve is in place. Some of this will be dictated by condition surveys.

234. Expenditure on a microphone system up to £800

Cllr Knight was originally researching options, and now staff are continuing the investigations. The initial research has indicated a price of around £750 to meet requirements.

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All Councillors voted in favour of a budget of £800, with delegated authority to the Clerk, to purchase a microphone system.

235. Progress with banking arrangements

The Clerk and Deputy Clerk are progressing this.

236. Progress with insurance arrangements

This is ongoing. Delegated authority has already been granted to Cllrs Graham, Green and Knight.

237. Next steps on Key Performance Indicators

This was already covered during the discussion with Norse.

238. Any updates on any funding streams affecting Council assets

There were no matters for discussion at this stage.

239. Any update on Community Infrastructure Levy and S.106 payments

There were no updates at this stage.

240. Any update with the condition survey for the Town Hall

Arrangements are being made with Historic England for a specialist architect to visit the Town Hall and make recommendations as what work should be undertaken. The cost of this could be completely covered by Historic England, or at worst they would cover 80% of the cost, with Lowestoft Town Council covering the remaining 20%.

241. Any update with the condition survey on the Marina Theatre

The Facilities and Contracts Manager had a meeting with the surveyors on 16 March to set up the parameters. Options for sustaining the Marina Theatre are being explored. It was suggested that options to incorporate the Zenith building into one unit should be encouraged. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to Full Council that all options are considered with regard to the Zenith building, including ownership; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

242. Any progress with internal audit

This has been booked for May.

243. Payments – in related to associated schedules:

243.a Payments made under delegated authority – The list was noted; Two signatories would sign the payments list.

A credit note has been received confirming that the £600 charge on the invoice from Hamilton House for rental of the office space is not payable.

Security passes for Councillors and the 'gov.uk' email address are being progressed.

A meeting will be held shortly to discuss costs for the office space on the first floor of Hamilton House.

243.b Payments for authorisation, including:

A payments schedule was provided with associated receipts:

- a. 01/03/18, reimbursement for Mourning Protocol expenditure, a key cabinet and associated keyrings, to Shona Bendix £55.87 (no VAT)

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- b. 01/03/18, reimbursement for Mourning Protocol expenditure (black armbands) to Shona Bendix £79.80 (no VAT)
- c. 15/03/18, reimbursement for office supplies (A1 paper for the Facilities and Contracts Manager asset planning), to Shona Bendix £9.89 (no VAT)
- d. 13/03/18, sales invoice for IOSH Managing Safely (training course as specified in the Facilities and Contracts Manager's contract), to East Coast College £495 (+£99 VAT)
- e. 26/02/18, sales invoice for Law of Allotments and Law of Parks and Open Spaces textbooks, to SLCC £58.40 (no VAT)
- f. 19/03/18, invoice received for donation to the Lowestoft Summer Festival, to Lowestoft Summer Festival £5000 (no VAT)
- g. 15/03/18, reimbursement for deposit to open bank account, to WDC £500 (no VAT)
- h. SLCC membership upgrade for Sarah Foote £50
- i. SLCC membership upgrade for Shona Bendix £75
- j. LCAS Foundation assessment fee, to SALC £50
- k. LCAS Foundation registration fee, to NALC £50

All Councillors voted in favour to authorise all of the above payments

243.bi Revised Norse invoices – It was noted that the previous invoices are being disposed of as the following replacement invoices have now been received:

45IN-003220 £53,000 (+ £10,600 VAT)

45IN-003396 £50,500 (+ £10,100 VAT)

45IN-003398 £52,500 (+ £10,500 VAT)

The invoice from Waveney District Council for election costs has been received as follows:
7277441 £18,618.05

This figure was previously queried but the Head of Waveney District Council Electoral Services has confirmed that a flat rate of £6,000 is charged for any election, but the costs of the polling stations has been halved, and the other costs calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Cllr Coleby proposed recommending these payments for authorisation to Full Council; seconded by Cllr Barron; all in favour.

243.c Payments processed – There were no payments to be noted.

244. Income schedule

It has been confirmed that the income received from three invoices with no associated schedules is from leisure activities. The breakdown per period for each of the income streams has been received, which matches the invoices; but the schedules have not been received yet. An Independent accountant certificate from Tingdene for 2017 (£94,033.17) has been received which would now be invoiced through WDC.

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

The bank reconciliation has been received. A total of £554,133.89 is being processed through the account, which will leave the balance at £1,065,599.08, as at 28 February 2018.

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

Eight to ten Councillors have given apologies for the Extraordinary Meeting on 22 March, therefore raising the question as to whether the meeting should still proceed.

Figures for the costs of the office lease at Hamilton House have not yet been received, but a meeting is being held between ECCH and the Clerk, the Facilities and Contracts Manager and Cllrs Graham, Green, Coleby and Taylor on 22 March, which should provide more information.

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It was agreed to cancel the Extraordinary Meeting and discuss this at the next scheduled Full Council meeting instead. Another Extraordinary Meeting can be called if necessary.

247. Progress with technical support and funding for neighbourhood planning

This is still ongoing, no further updates at present.

248. Refurbishment of the safe in the Town Hall

It has been suggested that the safe in the Town Hall could be used to store items. The associated refurbishment cost would be up to £120 to open the safe, install a new lock and produce new keys.

It was agreed to proceed with this.

With regard to the fee waiver for leisure facilities for this year, the question was raised whether any associated equipment would be free to hire as well. It was recommended that a deposit system be introduced, or remain in place, to prevent theft.

It was noted that private operators who run football clubs, boot camps, etc, currently pay to use the facilities and it has been queried whether these fees would still be applicable. It was noted that if they are running a business, evidence would need to be produced for the relevant risk assessments, safeguarding and insurance. The introduction of a cancellation fee was also suggested to prevent block-booking of pitches.

It was noted that football clubs who currently use the fields situated at the former Jeld-Wen site are looking to relocate to Normanston Park, now that the site is being developed. The only way to accommodate this would be through additional use on Sundays, but this would have to be staffed, at an additional cost for their pay. A proposal of costs would be requested from Norse first and additional pitches may need to be drawn up, although there could be a limitation as to the number of matches which can be played simultaneously.

249. Date of the next meeting

24th April 2018 14:00

250. Items for the next Agenda

No items were raised.

251. 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.

251.a To consider terms of employment – No further matters were raised for discussion.

The Chair closed meeting 16:11

Signed:.....

24 April 2018