

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
18:00 on 14 March 2019

MINUTES

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

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

Public: There were no members of the public in attendance

444. Welcome

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

445. To receive and consider acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Allyson Barron. Cllr Nasima Alam had not provided apologies and was absent. Cllr Graham proposed acceptance of the apologies and noting of the absence; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

Cllr Parker advised he may need to leave the meeting early.

446. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

Cllr Coleby declared a local non-pecuniary interest in item 452.5a. Cllr Graham declared a local non-pecuniary interest in a grant application from the Waveney Wolves American Football Club, which was received after the agenda had been issued and was due to be discussed as part of item 452.5.

447. To consider the accuracy of the Minutes:

12 February 2019 – Accepted as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Coleby; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

448. Public Forum

There were no members of the public in attendance.

449. Consideration of risk management and compliance, including the following:

449.1 Compliance – Correspondence has been received from the Pensions Regulator, advising that in law the minimum level of contribution is to increase. It was noted that Lowestoft Town Council is already in compliance with this.

449.2 Condition Surveys – The draft condition survey for the Town Hall has been received. A meeting will be arranged for Cllrs Coleby, Taylor and the Clerk to review this, ahead of a meeting with Historic England and Purcell.

A spreadsheet of cyclical testing, surveys and costs has previously been presented. There are four required in the current financial year, with a maximum cost of £2,500 (+VAT). The cost of those required in 2019-20 is a maximum of £4,000 (+VAT). The Facilities and Contracts Manager (FCM) has recommended that the surveys required for both years are arranged at the same time. Further quotes are required. The FCM has suggested that he could complete the surveys himself as a cost saving to the Council. The Committee were appreciative of this suggestion but valued his time more and agreed this was not a significant expenditure in relation to the assets and felt the requirement for independence and a surveyor were important.

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Cllr Graham proposed approval of the expenditure for an independent surveyor to carry out the work; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

There is no specific budget for these works. Compliance costs have been included in the budget but quotes for this work are coming in higher than anticipated.

450. Noting any updates on banking

450.1 Confirming the arrangements for credit cards – Full Council previously approved a recommendation from the Finance and Governance Committee that two credit cards should be applied for; one with a £5,000 limit and delegated authority to the Clerk, one with a £500 limit and delegated authority to the Deputy Clerk. A meeting paper was circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting, with the following recommendation from the RFO:

- The Committee agrees to the progression of credit cards as per the original recommendation above and authorises the Clerk to progress payment of the set up charge, the monthly payment of £3 and the settling of the card from the current account on a monthly basis, along with the establishment of any associated direct debit.

Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the recommendation from the RFO regarding credit cards; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

451. Budget:

451.1 Monitoring the budget for 2018-19 and note any bank reconciliations – The bank reconciliation has been prepared and will be completed by Cllr Coleby shortly.

451.2 Consideration of any updates regarding the 2019-20 budget – There were no updates, other than the surveys as above.

451.3 Consideration of progress with the Council decision on a loan for capital works, including for the Marina Theatre, Town Hall and Denes Oval – A Working Group is being set up to progress this.

451.4 Noting the Order of Costs and Priority Table from the Marina Theatre Condition Survey Report – This was noted. Councillors were also requested to verify that the priorities identified and the accompanying notes from the FCM and the expenditure were agreed. It was agreed that the costs do not seem to deviate from the compliance spreadsheet. Enquiries will be made with the Marina Theatre as to their progress with obtaining costs and a Working Group meeting will then be arranged. Projects need to be determined ready for the new Council so community engagement can begin. The FCM is also obtaining quotes for the Marina Theatre and the Denes Oval wall. This may also include work required for the Belle Vue Park wall, but that will be dependent on the cost of other projects.

452. Payments:

452.1 Noting any payments made (schedule) – There have been no further payments since the Full Council meeting earlier this week.

452.2 Consideration of any payments for authorisation (schedule), including the following:
An invoice has been received from RICOH for £190.48 plus £38.10 VAT (£228.58 in total) for the cost of ink for the multi-functional device between 1 October 2018 – 31 December 2018. Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the expenditure of £228.58; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

An invoice for £24.13 has been received from Railway Paths Ltd, for payment of rent for the pathway underneath the former railway bridge. As this is no longer a railway it was queried whether this payment should be made.

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Cllr Taylor proposed granting delegated authority to the Clerk to make enquiries regarding this, then make the payment of £24.13 if required; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

452.2a A recommendation from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee for maximum expenditure of £250 from 2018-19 Parks budget to purchase two rowans, two hazels and one silver birch to plant in between the existing trees of the Commonwealth Canopy at Clarkes Lane – Cllr Green proposed approval of the maximum expenditure of £250; seconded by Cllr Graham; all in favour.

452.2b Maximum expenditure of £210 for the purchase of seven traffic cones for Hamilton House – This is for the policing of the five designated Lowestoft Town Council parking spaces at Hamilton House. Councillors agreed for the cones to be embossed with the Town Council's branding, if it can be done within the maximum budget of £210.

Cllr Graham approved the expenditure of up to £210 for seven traffic cones; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

At the Full Council meeting earlier this week a proposed event to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the D Day landings was discussed. The Finance and Governance Committee agreed the date as 6 June due to the availability of the swing band who have been invited. A start time of 17:30 was previously suggested and there were no objections to this. It was agreed the expenditure would come from the events budget.

452.3 Any other payments (schedule) – There were no other payments for consideration.

452.4 Noting the petty cash log (schedule) – It was noted that since the Full Council meeting earlier this week there was a reimbursement payment of £16.18 for a Land Registry search relating to Arnold's Bequest.

452.5 Consideration of any grant applications, including:

452.5a Lowestoft in Bloom for £216.95 – Cllr Taylor proposed approval of the grant application from Lowestoft in Bloom for £216.95; seconded by Cllr Parker; four Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

There was a grant application from the Lowestoft Photographic Club for £500. The club will be taking photographs of projects in the town and will be documenting progress with The Ness. Cllr Taylor proposed approval of the grant application from the Lowestoft Photographic Club of £500; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

There was a grant application from Realise Futures for up to £971.40 for a custom made 'Time to Talk' bench and installation costs. It is understood the location of the bench would be in Sparrows Nest. There was a discussion regarding VAT arrangements and it was suggested that Lowestoft Town Council could commission the bench from Realise Futures and be invoiced for the sum due, to a maximum of £971.40 (+VAT). If there were any issues with this, it was agreed to instead pay the sum of £971.40 to Realise Futures. It was clarified that if the Council commissions the bench, Realise Futures would still be in control of the project, with support from the Town Council.

Cllr Coleby proposed approval of Lowestoft Town Council commissioning a custom bench from Realise Futures within a budget of £971.40 (+VAT). If this is not feasible, it was proposed to grant £971.40 to Realise Futures instead. It was further proposed to grant delegated authority to Cllrs Coleby, Green and the Clerk to progress this; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

There was a grant application from the Waveney Wolves American Football Club for £350.

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Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the grant of £350 to the Waveney Wolves American Football Club and a request for receipts for the items purchased; seconded by Cllr Taylor; four Councillors voted in favour; one Councillor abstained from the vote.

Following approval of these grant applications, it was noted that there is now £6,133 remaining in the 2018-19 grants budget.

- 452.6 Consideration of a review of the Grant Awarding Policy – The wording relating to eligibility criteria has been amended to clarify that grant applications from groups with political or religious affiliations can be considered, so long as it can be demonstrated there is no exclusivity or negative discrimination.

Cllr Parker left the meeting 18:46

The amended policy was displayed to Councillors at the meeting.

Cllr Green proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the amended Grant Awarding Policy; seconded by Cllr Coleby; all in favour.

This will be considered following the elections in May.

453. Consideration of the following items relating to income:

- 453.1 Receipts – There were no payments for consideration.

- 453.2 CiL and S.106 payments – Updated information regarding available S.106 funding has been received today. In Harbour ward there is £2,028 worth of funding due to expire on 7 May 2019. It was suggested this could be used either for one of the noticeboards on the list for the Council to progress or repairs required at Arnold's Bequest. It was suggested funding available for Pakefield ward could be used for improvement work to the Nightingale Road play area. A meeting will be arranged between Cllrs Coleby, Graham, Green, Taylor and the Clerk to progress this and advice will be sought regarding whether S.106 funding can be used for the noticeboards in the interim.

It may be possible for S.106 and CIL funding to be considered for the plans for an extra piece of play equipment at Stoven Close play area and replacement equipment for Nightingale Road play area. Waveney Norse have provided images of equipment which could be sourced for Nightingale Road within the maximum agreed budget. It was however clarified that the agreement was for Waveney Norse to contact four or five different companies and ask them to present proposals for the site based on the agreed budget.

Cllr Graham proposed granting delegated authority to Cllrs Coleby, Graham, Green, Taylor and the Clerk to progress this; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

- 453.3 Any updates on any financial funding streams affecting Council assets – The Planning and Environment Committee discussed Waveney District Council's proposed bid for the Future High Street Fund at their meeting earlier this week and were happy to support Waveney District Council's expression of interest for the grant. It was clarified this relates to London Road North and not the High Street itself. Waveney District Council has requested a meeting with Lowestoft Town Council, to discuss how its emerging vision sits with the Neighbourhood Plan. It was agreed for the Clerk to formally contact Waveney District Council to support their expression of interest for the grant.

- 453.4 Capital programme – The Committee were asked to consider approval for writing to the Maritime Museum to authorise the installation of solar panels. A planning application has previously been approved and the AID Committee have recommended approval for the installation of the solar panels.

Cllr Coleby proposed approval to write to the Maritime Museum authorising the installation of solar panels; seconded by Cllr Graham; all in favour.

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A proposal has been received from the tenant of Martello Coffee House and Giardino Restaurant regarding payment of rent for 2019-20. The Committee were asked to consider whether to pay to enlist a surveyor to conduct the rent review, or accept the proposal of £18,900 for Martello (increased from £18,000 in 2018-19) and £6,300 for Giardino (increased from £6,000 in 2018-19).

Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the proposal from the tenant regarding the payment of rent for Giardino and Martello Coffee House, which will apply to the 2019-20 year only; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

The Marina Theatre Trust will shortly be issuing an invoice to Lowestoft Town Council for payment of the Management Fee, and have asked whether the Town Council will be paying the fee quarterly or annually.

Cllr Green proposed payment of the Marina Theatre Management Fee quarterly, if this is permitted under the agreement; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

A quote has been received for three elements of the work required to the rear wall of the Marina Theatre. This is in preparation for the loan application and three quotes would still be required. The cost will be met by Lowestoft Town Council as it relates to a structural matter.

Cllr Coleby proposed delegating authority to the Clerk to source more quotes within a maximum budget of £4,500 and to make a selection from the quotes; seconded by Cllr Graham; all in favour.

- 453.5 Management of the Historic England grant for the Town Hall – An application for a feasibility study grant has been issued.

An issue with a concrete tank at Sparrows Nest was discussed. The installation of a pipe to connect to the drainage system near the bowling green has been suggested, to prevent the tank overflowing. Waveney Norse are seeking advice. It was suggested at the meeting that the amount of water the tank holds could be beneficial to the park, rather than being drained away. It will be requested that Waveney Norse consider this as part of their enquiries.

There was a report that trees around Arnold's Bequest have been pruned. It is understood these are the trees surrounding the lighthouse which are being reduced in height due to interference with the light.

- 453.6 Any updates regarding leisure fees for 2019 – 20, following the consideration of Full Council – This was discussed at the Full Council meeting on 12 March. The steer from Full Council was for charges for sports clubs to be re-introduced, alongside a grant scheme to assist the clubs which have engaged with the Council and reinvested the money saved to make improvements. Additionally, the steer from Full Council was for the facilities to remain free of charge for members of the public.

A meeting paper was circulated ahead of the meeting with the following recommendations:

- That the grants budget of £23,615 is ring-fenced and is treated as a maximum total payable to sports clubs which use Lowestoft Town Council facilities.
- That the grants are only applied where there is a track-record of an established club attracting new members/users and/or investing in improvements to facilities, from the opportunity provided through the savings in fees in 18-19
- That the proportion of the grant will be informed by the respective proportion of the fee income but will also take into account the degree to which opportunities were

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taken as per 2 above. For example, a club that has a track-record of particularly positive delivery on new members/users (a major priority for the Council) and has a particularly good plan for further work, might well take a high proportion of the ring-fenced grant budget.

- That grants are unlikely to be paid to any club that treated the withdrawal of fees as a windfall and/or whose resultant activities had a negligible positive impact on membership, use or facilities.
- That grants will not be paid to private individuals; an established club with appropriate policies and governance arrangements is required for access to a grant.
- That clubs are written to explaining the new policy, made within the context of challenging budgetary decisions for the Council, and advising of the grant application process.

Cllr Coleby proposed approval of the recommendations; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. It was agreed that the Clerk will formally write to the sports clubs to advise them.

A review of the fees charged will take place as part of the budget-setting process.

Cllr Graham proposed that members of the public continue to use the facilities free of charge; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

It was suggested that monitoring of the facilities for usage could be improved. A suggested method was to install counters on the gates of the tennis courts and this will be looked into.

455. Audit

455.1 Noting progress with preparations for the external audit – Arrangements will be made with Cllrs Coleby and Parker to complete internal control checks. At the same time, Cllr Coleby will be asked to complete bank reconciliations for the main bank account and for petty cash.

456. Legal:

456.1 Update on any relevant legal issues (confidential) – There were no updates to consider, following the Full Council meeting earlier this week.

456.2 Consideration of the budgetary implications of the 2019/20 Waveney Norse contract (confidential) - There were no updates to consider, following the Full Council meeting earlier this week.

456.3 Consideration of the CCTV contract with Waveney Norse (confidential) - There were no updates to consider, following the Full Council meeting earlier this week.

456.4 Consideration of a lease for the Lowestoft Tennis Association and other clubs (confidential) - There were no updates to consider, following the Full Council meeting earlier this week.

456.5 Consideration of any progress with the lease for the first floor of Hamilton House (confidential) - There were no updates to consider, following the Full Council meeting earlier this week.

457. Consideration of other financial matters including

457.1 Planned and urgent works on assets – Enquiries are being made as to whether the storage building in Kensington Gardens could be converted to a pop-up venue. This will be considered further by the Planning and Environment Committee.

Cllr Coleby proposed delegating authority to the Clerk to progress this, with guidance from the Planning and Environment Committee and any associated expenditure regarding planning

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applications or change of use to come from the legal budget; seconded by Cllr Graham; all in favour.

- 457.2 Commemorative plaques – It was agreed that following the elections in May, the new Council can look at replacing some of the existing plaques now that a budget has been agreed for this.
- 457.3 A policy for tablets for Councillors – This was discussed at this week’s Full Council meeting. A specification is being put together to considered by the new Council following the elections.
- 457.4 Rent reviews and costs of surveyors – There were no further matters for consideration.

458. Date of the next meeting

There were no further scheduled meetings of the Finance and Governance Committee until after the elections. Thanks were offered to Councillors and staff for their support.

459. Items for the next Agenda

There were no matters raised.

460. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

- 460.1 Any employment matters – There were no matters for consideration.
- 460.2 Any legal matters, including those listed with item **456** above – There were no matters for consideration.

The Chair closed the meeting 19:32.

Signed:

Date: 2019