

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee
First Floor, Hamilton House, Battery Green Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DE
17:00 on 5 March 2020

MINUTES

Present: Cllrs Amanda Frost, Alan Green (Chair), Graham Parker, Andy Pearce, Alice Taylor and David Youngman

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

Public: There was one member of the public in attendance

160. Welcome

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

161. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Jacqueline Hardie. Cllr Parker proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

162. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

163. Accuracy of the Minutes

20 February 2020 – Accepted as accurate. Proposed by Cllr Youngman; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

164. Public Forum

Cllr Sue Barnard addressed the Committee as a member of the public, regarding item 156.6b of the previous agenda. This Committee did not give approval to a recommendation from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee to plant further trees at the Gainsborough Drive pond, owing to potential issues at the site for which it requested further advice from East Suffolk Norse's arborist. Cllr Barnard explained that the proposal included three rowan trees, which would not be planted near the pond and would produce berries to benefit birds. The willow has been the more contentious issue amongst the local residents, so Cllr Barnard asked if this Committee or Full Council would consider approving a maximum budget for the purchase of three rowan trees instead, with the purchase of the willow to be considered following the site visit with East Suffolk Norse's Countryside Officer. The Clerk has received advice from East Suffolk Norse's arborist regarding the risk of disease being present in the ground. The advice is that the Council may not wish to re-plant immediately in the same position and should consider robust species. Provision will be included on the next Full Council agenda to consider tree planting at the Gainsborough Drive pond, up to a maximum of £500, as advice from the Countryside Officer regarding the willow should have been received by then.

Cllr Barnard left the meeting 17:11

165. Updates on banking

There were no matters to be considered at this meeting. There is a separate item to review bank signatories later on the agenda.

166. Budget:

166.1. Monitoring the budget for 2019-2020 – The budget monitoring paper was circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting, and had previously been reviewed by Full Council, and there were no issues. The Budget and Loan Working Group will meet quarterly to scrutinise the budget in detail.

166.2. Bank reconciliations – Cllr Green has checked and signed off the most recent bank

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reconciliation.

167. Payments:

167.1. Payments for authorisation, including the following:

167.1a. See schedule – The following schedule of payments for authorisation was presented to the Committee:

Payment to	Description	Amount
Great Yarmouth Heating	Gunton Residents Hall Annual Boiler Service	£62.50 + £12.50 VAT = £75.00
Great Yarmouth Heating	Whitton Hall Annual Boiler Service	£100.00 + £20.00 VAT = £120.00
Banana Print	Business Cards for Amanda, Alan, Jacqui, Graham and John	£24.75 + £4.95 postage = £29.70
East Suffolk Council	Pakefield St PC NNDR	£1222.55 (payable by monthly DD of £122 and one payment of £124.55)
East Suffolk Council	Links Rd Car Park NNDR	£1871.25 (payable by monthly DD of £187 and one payment of £188.25)
East Suffolk Council	Kensington Gardens PC NNDR	£2095.80 (payable by monthly DD of £210 and one payment of £205.80)
East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls Club NNDR	£1097.80 (payable by monthly DD of £110 and one payment of £107.80)
East Suffolk Council	Triangle Market PC NNDR	£1172.65 (payable by monthly DD of £117 and one payment of £119.65)

A template of the business cards was displayed, and included the name of the ward represented by the Councillor on them. It was queried whether this should be included, and it was agreed to allow each individual Councillor who would like business cards to let officers know their preference. It was suggested that delegated authority should be considered to enable officers to handle requests from Councillors for business cards in the future. Cllr Taylor proposed delegating authority to officers to handle requests from Councillors for business cards as required, with any expenditure for business cards to be made from the stationery budget; seconded by Cllr Frost; all in favour.

It was noted that business rates are still payable for public conveniences and provision has been included in the budget for this. Cllr Taylor proposed payment of the national non-domestic rate demands to East Suffolk Council, to be paid via direct debit, as detailed in the table; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. Cllr Pearce proposed approval of the two payments to Great Yarmouth Heating for the annual boiler services of the Gunton and Whitton Community Meeting Halls; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

167.2. Expenditure reports for February 2020 and March 2020 to date (schedule) – These were presented to the Committee as follows and noted:

February Expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
3 February 2020	Fatstickman Ltd	Banners for The Ness	£380 + £76 VAT = £456
3 February 2020	Broadland Security	Callout to TH alarm	£112 + £22.40 VAT =

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		23/8/19	£134.40
3 February 2020	Broadland Security Alarms	Callout to TH alarm 24/7/19	£123.75 + £24.75 VAT = £148.50
3 February 2020	Suffolk Pension Fund	Pensions January 2020	£4,210.42
7 February 2020	NPower	Triangle Market elec Jan 2020	£102.07 + £5.10 VAT = £107.17
7 February 2020	NPower	CCTV electric Jan 2020	£170.36 + £34.07 VAT = £204.43
7 February 2020	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall gas Jan 2020	£44.21 + £2.21 VAT = £46.42
7 February 2020	Lauren Elliott	Mileage reimbursement	£41.49
13 February 2020	First Light Festival	First Light Festival 2020	£5,000
13 February 2020	SLCC	Reducing Energy webinar	£60 + £12 VAT = £72
13 February 2020	Trevor Brown	Internal Audit January 2020	£250
17 February 2020	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership charge February	£60,400 + £12,080 VAT = £72,480
17 February 2020	Lloyds Bank Account	Credit card payments	£310.24
21 February 2020	ECCH	CRT, PSLW and E&D training	£600 + £120 VAT = £720
21 February 2020	Salaries	Salaries February 2020	£8,319.39
24 February 2020	ETS	Audio equipment Marina Theatre	£7,129 + £1,425.80 VAT = £8,554.80
24 February 2020	Need2Store	Civic artefact storage Jan 2020	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
24 February 2020	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership charge March 2020	£61,500 + £12,300 VAT = £73,800
24 February 2020	NPower	Town Hall electric Jan 2020	£282.38 + £14.12 VAT = £296.50
24 February 2020	NPower	Sparrows Nest elec Nov 19 – Jan 20	£569.90 + £28.50 VAT = £598.40
24 February 2020	NPower	Sparrows Nest elec Nov 19 – Jan 20	£94.52 + £4.73 VAT = £99.25
24 February 2020	SLCC	Deputy Clerk membership	£309
24 February 2020	Broadland Security Alarms	Annual TH alarm charge	£612.50 + £122.50 VAT = £735
24 February 2020	NPower	Sparrows Nest elec Nov 19 – Jan 20	£696.28 + £34.81 VAT = £731.09

March Expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
28 February 2020	Rialtas Business Suite	Omega Finance System and Software Support 2020-2021	£943.00 + 188.60 VAT = £1,131.60
28 February 2020	Rialtas Business Suite	Making Tax Digital Support Fee	£59.00 + £11.80 VAT = £70.80
28 February 2020	SLCC	Website Accessibility Webinar	£30.00 + £6.00 VAT = £36.00
28 February 2020	Lowestoft Museum	Boxes x20	£100.00
28 February 2020	ID Asbestos	Belle Vue Park Asbestos Work	£550.00 + £110.00 VAT = £660.00

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4 March 2020	HMRC	January HMRC Payment	£3,716.75
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167.3. The petty cash log (schedule) – There had been no new transactions since the last meeting.

168. Income:

168.1. The income reports for February 2020 and March 2020 to date (schedule) – These were presented to the Committee as follows and noted:

February Income

Date	Payment from	Description	Amount
11 February 2020	HMRC	VAT reclaim Q3 19-20	£149,913.11
11 February 2020	Tenant	Rental income from tenant	£456
24 February 2020	Tenant	Rental income from tenant	£213.16
26 February 2020	Brome and Oakley	Deputy Clerk SLCC membership	£101
26 February 2020	Market income	Weekly market income	£202

March income

There have been no receipts in March so far

169. Audit and annual review of finance administration

169.1. The internal audit report and any recommendations – This was displayed at the previous meeting of this Committee and the recommendations reviewed. Subsequently, the report was circulated to all Councillors and the recommendations reviewed at February's Full Council meeting. The report had also been circulated to the Finance and Governance Committee ahead of this meeting and was noted.

169.2. The audit report/action plan from the Responsible Financial Officer – The action plan had already been considered at the previous meeting of this Committee and by Full Council, but it was previously agreed that the report would be circulated to this Committee ahead of this meeting for the sake of completion. A recommendation from the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer regarding the provision of payroll services will be considered by this Committee as a standalone item at a later date.

169.3. Review of internal controls – Cllrs Coleby and Parker were appointed as the Internal Controllers during May 2019's Annual Meeting. This will be reviewed again at May 2020's Annual Meeting.

169.4. Submission of the precept – This was noted. There was a query as to Lowestoft Town Council compares nationally to other local Councils. The Clerk will make enquiries for the next meeting.

169.5. Review and adoption of Financial Regulations – Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Financial Regulations; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

169.6. Review and adoption of the Financial Risk Assessment and Management – This requires some updating, such as references to Waveney District Council and leisure fees. The Clerk will review this ahead of the next Full Council meeting but broadly, this Committee was happy with the format and content. It was queried whether the Financial Risk Assessment should include reference to the recommendations arising from the internal audit about the current payroll arrangements. The Financial Risk Assessment covers safeguarding of salary payments and the current decision of the Council as a measure of safeguarding is for the use of an external payroll provider. The Financial Risk Assessment will be updated should the Council decide to review this decision. A specific concern raised in the internal audit report was how the current payroll provider was handling and protecting the Council's sensitive data. The

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same would need to be considered of all the Council's contractors and the Clerk will review data controls in respect of all of the Council's business. If payroll were to be processed internally, a different system of checking and safeguarding would be required. Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Financial Risk Assessment and Management, subject to officer review and the consideration of Full Council of any amendments; seconded by Cllr Youngman; all in favour.

- 169.7. Review of banking arrangements and bank signatories – The appointment of bank signatories and Internal Controllers will be considered at the Annual Meeting in May. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk currently administer the bank accounts and Cllrs Frost, Green, Knight, Lang and Taylor are the current signatories. Cllr Taylor proposed maintaining the current arrangements until they are reviewed at the Annual Meeting; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.
- 169.8. Review of the register of land and assets, including building and office equipment – CCTV will be removed at the end of this financial year, and the register of land and assets will be reviewed again following this. Provision is included in the budget for the Town Council to consider future security arrangements.
- 169.9. Arrangements for insurance cover – The Town Council is in its second year of a three year agreement with Zurich. A review meeting with Zurich will be arranged. The civic artefacts currently in storage, as transferred from East Suffolk Council, are not well organised, and there are several items which have not been located. This will be raised at the next liaison meeting with the District Council. East Suffolk Council is not prepared to take back ownership of the Town Council's section of the Jubilee Bridge. This will be discussed further at the next liaison meeting. Insurance arrangements for the Town Council's section of the bridge were discussed. Once the Town Council has greater clarity on the District Council's expectation, it will have a clearer position on what it can and cannot insure. The assets on the Town Council's register are all covered by insurance. The Town Council has implored the District Council to obtain quotes for a survey of the bridge. It may be that a survey is already being progressed, but there has been no consultation with the Town Council over the cost of this. The extent of the Town Council's liabilities on its larger areas of land will be addressed and managed over time, and the Council's risk management will form an important part of this.
- 169.10. Determining earmarked reserves and review of the General Reserves Policy – Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the General Reserves Policy; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.
- 169.11. Review and adoption of the Grant Awarding Policy – It was queried whether the policy includes measures for the Council to take action should a party awarded a grant not fulfil its obligations. It is understood that there is provision in the terms and conditions for the Council to reclaim the grant or to refuse future applications on that basis. This will be checked, and going forward, the Committee Clerk will monitor grants awarded to ensure that obligations are fulfilled. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Grant Awarding Policy; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.
- 169.12. Review of market and events fees – The events fees makes reference to 'large big circuses' and it was agreed that the word 'big' should be removed. There was a concern that the table of events fees seemed to suggest that a community group could hire Town Council land for a commercial circus free of charge. It was agreed that a caveat should be included that the table represents the general fee scales but the Council reserves the right to charge differently and ultimately the Council makes decisions about the terms in the document. The market fees were reviewed and it was queried how these would apply to seasonal markets in Sparrows Nest. It was clarified that these would be treated as events; the market fees only apply to the monthly markets at the Triangle. Cllr Pearce proposed continuing with the current events and market fees; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.
- 169.13. Progress with preparations for the External Audit – The Council has not yet been contacted by the external auditor, but the internal auditor has provided a comprehensive checklist of required material for the end of year internal audit.

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170. Policies and Procedures

170.1. Review and adoption of the following policies and procedures:

- 170.1a. Complaints Procedure – The document still contains references to Waveney District Council. Some Councillors had not been able to review the procedure ahead of the meeting and it was agreed that this would be carried forward to the next meeting.
- 170.1b. Freedom of Information Publication Scheme – Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 170.1c. Data Retention Policy – Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Data Retention Policy; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 170.1d. Data Protection Policy – It was requested that the policy be reviewed by officers to ensure that the terminology and legislation being referred to is the most current. Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Data Protection Policy, subject to officer review; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.
- 170.1e. Risk Assessment and Management Policy – Cllr Youngman proposed a recommendation to Full Council to adopt the Risk Assessment and Management Policy; seconded by Cllr Parker; all in favour.

171. Other financial matters, including:

- 171.1. Planned and urgent works on assets – The proposed defibrillator for the Gunton Estate Residents Meeting Hall will be considered by Full Council. The current lease arrangements mean the Council would need to take responsibility of the electricity cost, the maintenance and servicing of the defibrillator, but as part of the revised lease the Council would expect the Hall's Management Committee to have responsibility over the Hall and anything attached to it. A defibrillator policy is being prepared but it was agreed for this request to be considered as a standalone item, as it is dependent on a District Councillor's locality funding, which must be committed by the end of March. Repairs to the Belle Vue Park wall have not yet been completed. Officers will make enquiries to see if the work is still ongoing.
- 171.2. The sale and change of use of a Council building (confidential) – To be discussed during the confidential session.

172. Date of the next meeting

16 April 2020 17:00

173. Items for the next agenda and close

There were no requests for the inclusion of items on the next agenda.

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

174. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

174.1. Any employment matters – There was a confidential discussion regarding the funding of ongoing training being undertaken by a member of staff.

Cllr Frost left the meeting 18:16

Cllr Taylor made a confidential proposal; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

174.2. Any legal matters, including those at item 171.2 above as required:

171.2 The sale and change of use of a Council building (confidential) – The Clerk will be seeking advice, which will be fed back to this Committee and the relevant Working Groups.

The Chair closed the meeting 18:26.

Signed: 16 April 2020