

**Notes from a meeting of the Budget and Loan Working Group
Monday 2 September 2019 10:00 Hamilton House**

Present: Cllrs Neil Coleby, Alan Green, Graham Parker, Andy Pearce and Alice Taylor

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

It was agreed that Cllr Green would Chair the meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to review the 2019 – 20 budget and look ahead to what aspects may require adjustments for the 2020 – 21 budget. Election costs and the CCTV service will require close consideration.

An internal meeting with Waveney Norse regarding the CCTV service was held recently and an overview of this was given for the benefit of those who were not present. This will be discussed by the Finance and Governance Committee at their next meeting.

It was agreed that each of the budget headings would be discussed in turn, to analyse how accurate this year's budget calculation was and where adjustments may be required for next year.

Full Council and the Finance and Governance Committee are presented with budget monitoring papers, showing up to date expenditure.

Arts, Heritage and Museums – This budget was reduced from £28,000 last year to £10,000 this year, and it was agreed that it should remain the same for next year. Further information was requested regarding the utilities, such as which premises and which utilities this refers to.

Caravan and Camping – There is no change to the income at present.

CCTV – There were no changes to this budget, other than the assumption of a 3% RPI increase throughout.

Events, Grants and Civic – The Working Group agreed it would like to see more funds allocated to this area. There is no Lowestoft Summer Festival this year but there may well be another First Light Festival. It was agreed that funding for large events such as these should not come out of the grants budget, but there should be a separate line for major events. However, events should not be named individually, as organisations cannot assume they will automatically be awarded funds.

Commemorative events for VE and VJ Days and Holocaust Memorial Day will need to be considered. The current budget includes a line for Remembrance and Holocaust Memorial Day. It was agreed that the June and December budget awards are important for the Town Council to support the community and present a positive image to the public. It was queried whether the Town Council would be expected to provide funding towards the artwork at Ness Point. There would be no requirement for this and it would purely be a policy decision. A report is being provided to the Finance and Governance Committee on events being held for The Ness, which are mostly on Lowestoft Town Council land at the moment. The Finance and Governance Committee will be asked to consider whether it would like to see these events continue next year, based on the figures provided. It was suggested that an extra member of staff to cover events, if only on a part-time basis. It was agreed that an extra member of staff would be beneficial but not necessarily with a remit restricted to events.

There is a separate heading for markets. It may be that someone is required to assist with the Saturday markets. If the market is successful, the revenue should eventually cover staff costs. It was agreed that the 2020 – 21 budget should include provision for investment in the market. More frequent markets could be considered if it is successful. It was noted that the first market will be held on the day the Tesco Metro store closes, and this could be incorporated with the advertising. It

was suggested that paid advertising in the Lowestoft Journal could be considered. The Market Working Group will consider this at their next meeting.

It was agreed that there should be a temporary uplift of the Remembrance and Holocaust budget, to include commemorative events for VE and VJ Days. It will be assumed that the Remembrance and Holocaust budget will be doubled, pending advice from the Deputy Clerk.

The Working Group would like to see the grants budget increase to £50,000. Funding for major events, such as the First Light Festival, was taken from this budget previously. It was queried whether there should still be a separate line for Remembrance or just have a heading for events. It was agreed there should be inclusion of a line for £12,000 for major town events, such as the First Light Festival. It was agreed there should be no separate Remembrance and Holocaust budget, but one heading for events, with a separate breakdown and commentary. The Civic and Ceremonial budget will remain separate to this and it is understood that it was agreed to fund plaques from this budget. Replacement Mayoral robes would also be funded from this budget.

Marina Theatre – Potentially, a loan will cover urgent repair costs. The repairs and maintenance budget was inherited and has been increased. The sum of the subsidy given to the Theatre is due for review in April 2020. The Town Council will set up the review process and legal advice will be sought. It was queried whether there should just be one overall repairs and maintenance budget, not linked to specific assets, although it could still have separate budget headings within. The Marina Theatre obtains some of its own quotes for more specialist equipment, as it has access to contacts that the Town Council may not. The Council approved a ten year loan to spread the cost of capital works. The lender would need to be consulted if any extension were to be considered. A reserve for the Theatre is being built up as the Council is aware it could have potentially large financial liabilities attached to it.

Allotments, Open Spaces and The Ness – The Normanston Allotments Working Group is meeting tomorrow. Regarding The Ness, a standard construction contract is in place and East Suffolk Council will have a twelve year responsibility over any construction. The responsibility for routine repair and maintenance will remain with the Town Council. Waveney Norse currently do periodic grass cutting on the site. They will be given a concept plan and asked to quote for upkeep and maintenance. This will also include whatever is installed at Ness Point.

The Council has previously budgeted for the allotments administration fee, but not for maintenance. Most of this comes under the lease, but issues such as asbestos management require a policy decision. The Finance and Governance Committee will be considering this at their next meeting. The cost of asbestos removal could be up to £30,000. If approved, the work would likely be completed this financial year and would need to be taken from reserves, to be replenished in the next financial year. In that case, it was agreed to budget £30,000 for maintenance of allotments in 2020 – 21, then £10,000 in future years.

Sparrows Nest – A review of leisure fees is on the Finance and Governance Committee agenda. Some of the clubs reinvested the funds saved, but not all. There was a discussion as to whether the facilities should be free to use for clubs and members of the public again in the next financial year. There have been concerns that the Council could be subsidising clubs and players from other areas, but this does not generate a lot of income for the Council and created positive communication between the Council and the clubs. There was an agreement to recommend to the Finance and Governance Committee to make the leisure facilities free to use again for clubs and members of the public in 2020-21.

Belle Vue Park – The Working Group did not identify any changes.

Kensington Gardens – Meetings will be arranged with the tenants regarding the boating lake. The water treatment cost to prevent algal bloom is relatively low. There is currently a small budget for building maintenance, but this can be removed if there will be one overall general maintenance budget. It was suggested that, under the Parks Development Budget, the Council should consider installing bicycle racks in its parks and possibly its play areas too, depending on the cost. Over the next year, the Council could consider a consultation about all of its parks, to decide what projects to prioritise the following year.

Play Areas – Nightingale Road and Stoven Close are currently under development. The annual play report assesses the quality of each site and identifies any issues. It was suggested the Council could look to focus on one or two play areas per year. CIL and S106 are still available but are being reduced. Equipment has been removed from the Parklands. This play area was not available to the wider public. The Council needs to consider the future of this land. Adult gym equipment also needs to be considered.

Fen Park – It is hoped that CIL and S106 funding can be used for renovation of the public conveniences. The Toilet Strategy Working Group will make recommendations to the Finance and Governance Committee and Full Council. There was previously a decision to prioritise Fen Park and Sparrows Nest. Cllr Pearce offered to attend meetings of the Toilet Strategy Working Group if required for quorum. It was requested that the Facilities and Contracts Manager research internal cladding options. The Budget and Loan Working Group will meet fortnightly when possible, or even weekly if necessary, especially once some of the other working groups have met.

Denes Oval – There are known issues with the wall, which will be incorporated into the loan application. The refurbishment of the pavilion's ceiling was completed this year. The £249 in the building maintenance budget will not cover this and it will be funded from another budget.

Normanston Park – There was a discussion as to whether to provide showers and changing facilities at Normanston Park, if the Council is aspiring for this to become a destination sports park, with adult gym equipment, etc. Providing public showers could pose its own security risk and ideally public conveniences should be located closer to the play area. This could be a big project and it was agreed that the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee should consider this in more detail.

Triangle Market – The income from the monthly Saturday market will be recorded here, alongside the income from the Friday market. It is understood that the Council will not be required to pay towards the attendance of the PCSO. There are currently no arrangements to provide the stalls with electricity, but if the market becomes a more permanent feature, the Council may wish to consider this. The Market Working Group will consider this in more detail, as well as advertising options. There was a discussion about the Sails. It is understood that funding for this area may be available through the HAZ project. Cllr Taylor will take this forward.

Pakefield Street PC – A public consultation was held as to the future of these public conveniences. The result showed more support for maintaining the Kirkley Cliff Road toilets. The Toilet Strategy Working Group will consider this in more detail and make recommendations.

Kirkley Cliff Road PC – Same as above. The budgets for both sets of public conveniences will need to remain as this may not affect the overall sum paid to Waveney Norse and it could be expensive to close and remove these facilities.

Lowestoft Cemetery PC – Waveney Norse should be able to advise whether closure of any of the public conveniences would result in a commensurate saving on the Norse contract. These public conveniences were not included in the public consultation.

Fen Park PC – This had been moved into the Fen Park budget.

Miscellaneous – (Cllr Parker left the meeting 12:24) – Some of the headings within this budget have moved across to other budgets. The Clerk has submitted an enquiry regarding the payment of business rates for the Links Road car park, but it is likely that this will remain payable. Compliance costs need to be considered in more detail. The spreadsheet previously compiled by the Facilities and Contracts Manager shows the cyclical costs, but does not cover the issues arising. The contingency around the community halls and allotments also needs further consideration. Christmas lights for London Road South in 2020 will require further discussion.

It was agreed to close the meeting and continue discussions at the next meeting. The date of the next meeting was set as Monday 16 September at 10:00.

Proposed amendments to the budget from the Budget and Loan Working Group:

Budget Heading	2019 – 20 Budget	2020 – 21 Projected Figure	Proposal for 2020 – 21 by the Working Group
Grants	£30,000	£40,000	£50,000
Remembrance and Holocaust	£4,000	£4,000	£8,000
Major Town Events (new heading)	-	-	£12,000
Allotments Maintenance (new heading)	-	-	£30,000 (reducing to £10,000 in future years)
Leisure Activities Fees	£7,214	£7,430	£0 (no charge to be applied to clubs or the general public)