

Lowestoft Town Council

Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee

Via Video Meeting
16:30 on 10 September 2020

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard, Alan Green, Andy Pearce (Chair) and Alice Taylor

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

60. Welcome

The application of the video meeting protocol was noted and the meeting was welcomed.

61. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Neil Coleby, Paul Page, Graham Parker, Keith Patience, John Pitts and David Youngman. Cllr Green proposed acceptance of the apologies; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.

62. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

63. Noting that the minutes of the meeting of 13 August 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The minutes were noted and there were no comments.

64. Any advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

There were none.

65. Budget:

65.1. Monitoring the budget for 2020 – 2021 – This had been circulated to the Committee in advance of the meeting and was noted. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee has also been monitoring the budget.

65.2. Any bank reconciliations – Bank reconciliations have been completed up until the end of July. The August bank reconciliation will be sent to the bank reconciliation signatories shortly.

65.3. Noting that a 2.75% agreement on salary increases has been made and applies to all staff backdated to 1 April 2020 – This was noted. The Budget and Loan Sub-Committee will be given the exact figures to be incorporated appropriately into the budget.

66. Payments:

66.1. Income and expenditure reports for August 2020 and September 2020 to date – These had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were noted as follows:

Table 1 August Income

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
3 August 2020	Lamarti	Hire of Links Road Car Park for sale of ice cream	£120 + £24 VAT = £144
3 August 2020	Market Income	Market Income 3 August 2020	£54.50
10 August 2020	Market Income	Market Income 10 August 2020	£18.50
10 August 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
14 August 2020	HMRC	VAT Return Q1 2020-2021	£49,832.09

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Date	Received from	Description	Amount
17 August 2020	Market Income	Market Income 17 August 2020	£42.50
21 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Grant to refurbish project of The Green	£5,287
24 August 2020	Market income	Market income 24 August	£42.50
26 August 2020	Market income	Market income 26 August	£24
28 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Pocket Parks grant	£3,000

Table 2 August Expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
3 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Triangle Market PC NNDR August 2020	£117
3 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park NNDR August 2020	£187
3 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls NNDR August 2020	£110
3 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Kensington Gardens PC NNDR August 2020	£210
3 August 2020	East Suffolk Council	Pakefield Street PC NNDR August 2020	£122
6 August 2020	NPower	Electricity Charges	£290.48 + £14.52 VAT = £305
6 August 2020	Nicholsons Solicitors	North Denes Legal Advice	£1260 + £237.60 VAT = £1497.60
6 August 2020	Nicholsons Solicitors	Hamilton House Legal Advice	£215.50 + £43.10 VAT = £258.60
6 August 2020	SCC Pension Fund	Pensions	£3860.90
6 August 2020	Nicholsons Solicitors	General Legal Advice	£495 + £99 VAT = £594
6 August 2020	Archant	Lowestoft Journal Adverts	£145 + £29 VAT = £174
6 August 2020	Urban Vision	Draft non-planning section of the Neighbourhood Plan	£525 + £105 VAT = £630
6 August 2020	Need2Store	Civic Artefact Storage August 2020	£200 + £40 VAT = £240
6 August 2020	Sandy Lane Nursery	2x Cherry Trees	£39 + £7.80 VAT = £46.80
6 August 2020	Nicholsons Solicitors	North Denes Legal Advice	£930.60 + £186.12 VAT = £1,116.72
7 August 2020	NPower	Town Hall electricity charges	£95.23 + £4.76 VAT = £99.99
17 August 2020	Gazprom Energy	Town Hall Gas	£43.52 + £2.18 VAT = £45.70
17 August 2020	Lloyds Bank	Credit Card Payments	£92.39
19 August 2020	Marina Theatre Trust	Covid-19 Grant	£1,880

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Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
20 August 2020	NPower	Electricity Charges	£27.54 + £1.38 VAT = £28.92
21 August 2020	Salaries	Salaries August 2020	£7,842.02
21 August 2020	HMRC	HMRC July 2020	£3750.59
24 August 2020	NPower	Sparrows Nest Electricity Charges	£96.68 + £4.83 VAT = £101.51
24 August 2020	NPower	Sparrows Nest Electricity Charges	£171.72 + £8.59 VAT = £180.31
26 August 2020	Great Yarmouth Heating	Whitton Hall radiator work	£289.73 + £57.95 VAT = £347.68
26 August 2020	BSA Security	Town Hall alarm service	£170 + £34 VAT = £204
26 August 2020	East Suffolk Norse	Partnership Charge Sept 2020	£36,525 + £7,305 VAT = £43,830
26 August 2020	SLCC	National Conference webinar x3	£75 + £15 VAT = £90
26 August 2020	RSF Support Services Ltd	Giardino asbestos survey	£365

Table 3 September Income

Date	Received from	Description	Amount
1 September 2020	Mr Lamarti	Use of Links Road Car Park	£120 + £24 VAT = £144
1 September 2020	Tingdene	Rental Income	£47,713.07
1 September 2020	Market Income	Market Income 1 September 2020	£30.50
7 September 2020	Market Income	Market Income 7 September 2020	£18.50
7 September 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£213.16
9 September 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£1,562.50
9 September 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£775
9 September 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£625
9 September 2020	Tenant	Rental Income from Tenant	£583

Table 4 September Expenditure

Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
1 September 2020	East Suffolk Council	Triangle Market PC NNDR August 2020	£117
1 September 2020	East Suffolk Council	Links Road Car Park NNDR August 2020	£187
1 September 2020	East Suffolk Council	Sparrows Nest Bowls NNDR August 2020	£110
1 September 2020	East Suffolk Council	Kensington Gardens PC NNDR August 2020	£210

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Date	Payment to	Description	Amount
1 September 2020	East Suffolk Council	Pakefield Street PC NNDR August 2020	£122
1 September 2020	Lowestoft Mens Shed	Covid-19 Grant	£600
1 September 2020	Nicholsons Solicitors	Legal Advice	£138.60 + £27.72 VAT = £166.32
1 September 2020	Lowestoft & District Allotments Association	Allotments Lease	£1,000
4 September 2020	SCC Pension Fund	August Pensions	£3,431.87
8 September 2020	Archant	Lowestoft Journal Adverts	£993.50 + £198.66 VAT = £1,192.16

66.2. Payments made under delegated authority (see schedule) – All the payments on the above schedules were made under delegated authority. The extent of the emergency delegated authority to the Clerk will be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

66.3. Any payments for approval (see schedule) – There were none.

66.4. Any applications made under the COVID-19 Grant Awarding Policy and any payments made – Further information is still pending from three applications made previously, and a prompt will be sent to the applicants. No new applications have been received recently. It was suggested that a deadline should be imposed for the funds to be claimed, for budget monitoring purposes and to ensure other applicants are not detrimentally affected. Cllr Taylor proposed a recommendation to Full Council to amend the COVID-19 Grant Awarding Policy to stipulate that applicants must comply with any conditions of acceptance of the grant and receive the funds within 90 days of the offer being made; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

67. Events and Communications Sub-Committee

67.1. Receiving the draft minutes from the Events and Communications Sub-Committee meeting on 27 August 2020 – These were received and noted but have not yet been considered by the Sub-Committee.

68. Budget and Loan Sub-Committee

68.1. Receiving the draft minutes from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee meeting on 24 August 2020 – These were received and noted but have not yet been considered by the Sub-Committee.

68.2. Consideration of the following recommendations from the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee:

68.2a. Adopting the Terms of Reference of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee – Cllr Green proposed adoption of the Terms of Reference of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

68.2b. Appointing substitute members of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee – Some of the Terms of Reference for other Committees and Sub-Committees say that substitutes may or should be appointed, and some say must or will. These Terms of Reference say ‘can’. This Sub-Committee only has four members currently. Cllr Barnard put herself forward as a substitute member. Cllr Pearce proposed accepting Cllr Barnard as a substitute member of the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour. An email will be circulated to all Councillors requesting expressions of interest for membership or substitute membership to this Sub-Committee. In the interim, meetings will continue to be scheduled in line with the availability of the Sub-Committee’s members.

68.2c. An annual budget provision of £10,000 for defibrillators – The cost of training sessions still needs to be determined. Having considered the figures provided for the other aspects of defibrillator provision, the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee is confident that £10,000 would be an appropriate budget provision. Cllr Barnard proposed approval of an annual budget provision of £10,000 for defibrillators; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in

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favour.

69. Other financial matters, including:

- 69.1. A review of the Town Council's Financial Regulations, including procurement, contracts, preferred supplier arrangements and climate emergency issues – This is also being considered by the Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee. The storing of back-up records off-site at point 6.13 was queried, but it was explained that electronic records are stored off-site by their nature. Professional advice has been sought regarding the thresholds for quotes and estimates. With the number of transactions the Town Council completes, it has been difficult to obtain three quotes in all cases. Given the size of the Council, the advice was that the thresholds should be reconsidered, to £5,000 and above for seeking quotations (rather than £3,000), and £1,000 and above for obtaining estimates (rather than £100). The Council will still have a responsibility to behave in a proper and safeguarding way, and will still be held to account, and transactions will still be open and transparent. The Council will also continue to review all transactions through this Committee and others. It was clarified that the professional advice suggested £500 - £1,000 for obtaining estimates and the Clerk as Responsible Financial Officer selected £1,000 based on her experience and the steer she had been given by the Council. The current figures had remained unchanged since 2017 and were generic figures based on much smaller councils. Cllr Taylor proposed proceeding with the amendments to the Financial Regulations as per the advice received; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. The Standing Orders and Policies Sub-Committee will see the draft with tracked changes reflecting this decision.
- 69.2. Further information regarding East Suffolk Council's Government funding for unexpected expenditure incurred due to COVID-19, following this Committee's decision in principle to submit an application – Staff have been looking into this, and there is not a considerable amount for which an application could be submitted. This could include funding awarded under the Town Council's COVID-19 grant fund, the working-from-home allowance being paid to staff and advertisements placed on the front page of the Lowestoft Journal relating to the pandemic. This Committee has indicated that it would like an application to be submitted, and it was suggested that staff could draft an application. The importance of resolving the outstanding grant applications was reiterated, and it was queried whether an additional application for funding could be submitted should this Council award more funding under its COVID-19 grant awarding policy. This will be checked. Cllr Pearce proposed that staff put together a draft application for East Suffolk Council's Government funding for unexpected expenditure incurred due to COVID-19, to be checked and signed by the Mayor and Chair of the Finance and Governance Committee; seconded by Cllr Taylor; all in favour.
- 69.3. The financial implications associated with the declaration of a health emergency – This will need to be considered by the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee as and when it progresses. That Sub-Committee is concerned about the possibility of the Council Tax base shrinking and the wider impact of the pandemic on the community. The Clerk is seeking more advice on this from the District Council. The Climate Emergency has started to consider how to implement the health emergency declaration, but has identified that it covers a broad range of matters, which will need to be apportioned to other Committees and Sub-Committees, and cannot be implemented as a whole. It was suggested that the items should be grouped and added to the agendas of the relevant Committees and Sub-Committees.
- 69.4. Additional costs for the installation of Christmas lights in 2020 – As per the decision of Full Council, the Finance and Governance Committee's £10,000 limit was set aside for the consideration of this item only. Suffolk County Council has advised that a licence will be required, at a cost of £100 per street, but it now appears that there is not a requirement for them to structurally test each street light. In that case, the additional expenditure would be £300, to purchase licences for Bevan Street East, the High Street and London Road South. The licence applications are being completed and it is understood that the Town Council can instruct installation of the lights, subject to the granting of the licences. Cllr Taylor proposed

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approval for the purchase of the licences for the High Street, Bevan Street East and London Road South, the expenditure to install the necessary infrastructure onto the London Road South street lights and approval of the contract with Blachere for the London Road South Christmas lights; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

- 69.5. Whether to request the assistance of seasonal workers for an extended period, to help progress the Town Council's biodiversity projects and autumn planting, including to consider any recommendations from the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee – Staff are checking the cost with East Suffolk Norse. The Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee would like to extend the contract of the seasonal workers to at least mid-October, or even into November, to assist with the autumn planting and the tree planting, but requested that staff request information from Norse about which of their staff are suitably qualified to do the work and what the cost would be. There may be leeway within the cost of contract, as the seasonal workers were not appointed in the Spring as they have been previously. Cllr Pearce proposed approval for the assistance of the seasonal workers to be requested for an extended period, within the existing budget provision for seasonal workers in the Norse contract; seconded by Cllr Barnard; all in favour.
- 69.6. Additional costs for promoting and holding the Triangle Market – A site visit has taken place to look at changes which could take place at the site to help facilitate the market. A barrier to prevent unauthorised vehicular access and advertising 'A' boards have been discussed by the Markets Working Group, and the costs will need to be considered by the Budget and Loan Sub-Committee. The site visit mainly focussed on traffic control measures. Temporary planters are currently in place as an interim measure but these are being moved and not put back. A member of the public has submitted a formal request for a bollard to their local County Councillor, who has in turn submitted the request to Suffolk Highways. This will be at no cost to the Town Council. Wider issues with the Triangle Market will be considered by Full Council.

70. Date of the next meeting

8 October 2020 16:30

71. Items for the next agenda and close

Some items were identified during the meeting and there were no requests for additional items.

There were no confidential items for consideration. The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the meeting via live stream and closed the meeting.

72. Resolution to close the meeting to the public:

- 72.1. Any legal matters, including those above as required – There were no confidential matters for consideration.



Signed:

20 May 2021