

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 11 October 2016 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors McNeill (Chairman), Banks, Bartrum, Brown, Corby (6.16pm), Jones & Slade.
In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk.

109 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

110 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McNeill declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No 113 as his wife is a property lawyer who has submitted a quotation for works in relation to the 'Transfer of Title' documents for the public toilets in Cowes.

Councillors Bartrum & Slade declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 117 as Cowes Town Council's representatives on the Supporters of Cowes Library.

Councillor Brown declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 119 as Cowes Town Council's representative on Northwood Park Sub Committee.

111 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 August 2016 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

112 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the second quarter of the financial year giving details of income and expenditure. The balances in the Town Council bank accounts and petty cash as at 30 September 2016 are £455,640.35 of which £199,656.20 is 'ring fenced'. The balance of the budget for 2016 / 2017 is £123,706.62; Reserves are £132,277.53.

There is a 'ring fenced' balance of £7,286.00 for new projects; Councillors may consider transferring this amount at the next meeting to support new projects in the current financial year.

Councillors requested details of the costs of ongoing projects, against 'ring fenced' monies allocated to the projects and any S106 monies allocated to those projects.

ACTION

The Town Clerk will prepare a spreadsheet itemising the cost of ongoing projects, ring fenced monies available and S106 monies allocated to the projects.

Councillor McNeill withdrew from the meeting for this item.

113 TRANSFER OF TITLE FOR THE PUBLIC TOILETS IN COWES

The Isle of Wight Council have issued 'Transfer of Title' documents for the public conveniences at The Cut & Mornington Road. 'Transfer of Title' documents for Medina Road and The Parade have not yet been received. It was agreed that a qualified Property Lawyer should be engaged to work on behalf of Cowes Town Council, to negotiate a suitable agreement with the Isle of Wight Council, for full ownership of the toilet blocks and possibly the surrounding areas. The Town Clerk obtained three quotes from property lawyers which Councillors reviewed and considered. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Property Lawyer A be engaged to work on behalf of Cowes Town Council, in relation to the 'Transfer of Title' documents, to negotiate a suitable agreement with the Isle of Wight Council for full ownership of the four toilet blocks and possibly surrounding areas, for the sum of £800.00 plus disbursements.

- 114 PROVISION OF THE TOILET CLEANING CONTRACTOR IN COWES FROM 1/4/17 – 31/3/18**
The current toilet cleaning contractor for the four public toilets in Cowes, plus Northwood Recreation Ground & Northwood Park has confirmed that there will not be an increase in charges for the next financial year; the total for all six toilets will remain at £28,878.24. This information will enable Cowes Town Council to budget plan for the next financial year.
ACTION
The Town Clerk will investigate whether any progress has been made in NALC’s negotiations with the Government to remove business rates from public toilets.
- 115 PUBLIC TOILETS ELECTRICAL INSPECTION**
An annual electrical inspection is due to be undertaken at the four public toilets in Cowes plus the toilets at Northwood Recreation Ground and Northwood Park. The Town Clerk asked three contractors to quote for the inspection works and Councillors discussed the quotations received. It was:
RECOMMENDED
That Contractor C be awarded the contract for the annual electrical inspection at the four public toilets in Cowes plus the toilets at Northwood Recreation Ground and Northwood Park for the sum of £697.12.
- 116 ENVIRONMENT OFFICER SUPPORT & GROUNDS MAINTENANCE WORK IN COWES - 2016 - 2019**
The Isle of Wight Council have presented an agreement for consideration that Cowes Town Council continue to financially support, for the years 2016 – 2019, the provision of Environment Officer Support for 5 hours per week for the annual sum of £2,600 and grounds maintenance work in Cowes for the annual sum of £11,306 (incl of annual inflation and set for three years if the Town Council wishes to continue). The Town Council can end the agreement at any time during the period giving the Isle of Wight Council 3 months’ notice. This information will enable Cowes Town Council to budget plan for the next financial year.
ACTION
The Town Clerk will write to the Isle of Wight Council to seek clarification about how they will calculate annual inflation on the cost of grounds maintenance.
- 117 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR COWES LIBRARY**
Cowes Town Council, for the financial year 2016 / 2017, have financially supported the running costs and salary costs of a second member of staff from 1/10/16 – 31/3/17 at Cowes Library. The Isle of Wight Council have presented an agreement for consideration that Cowes Town Council, for the financial year 2017 / 2018 continue to pay for the running costs of the Library and pay for a second member of staff for the full financial year; the annual sum being £22,400 (estimated). The Town Council can end the agreement at any time during the period giving the Isle of Wight Council 3 months’ notice. This information will enable Cowes Town Council to budget plan for the next financial year.
- 118 MAINTENANCE WORK AT MOORGREEN RESERVOIR**
Cowes Town Council have received complaints from residents local to Moorgreen Reservoir about the lack of maintenance in the area and the length of the grass. Cowes Town Council have asked for a quotation to undertake this work but this has not yet been received. Councillors discussed whose responsibility it is to cut the grass and keep the area tidy as this work had formerly been undertaken by Moorgreen Road Allotment Society; Councillors also queried who actually owns this land. The Town Clerk wrote to the Isle of Wight Council who have responded by saying that the Moorgreen Road Allotment Society currently have a licence issued by the Isle of Wight Council which is being terminated. The Isle of Wight Council have offered to undertake the works, as asked by Cowes Town Council, to clear the banks and centre area so that the site can return to a maintainable state. The Isle of Wight Council have offered to provide a revised annual specification and cost for grounds maintenance in this area which could be added to the current agreement.
ACTION
1. The Town Clerk will ask the Isle of Wight Council to undertake the works necessary to return the site to a maintainable state.
2. The Town Clerk will ask for a revised annual specification and cost to include the site on the current agreement, to include a request for a detailed plan showing the areas where the works will be undertaken.

119 PROVISION OF THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR AT NORTHWOOD PARK 1/4/17 – 31/3/18
The current grounds maintenance contractor for Northwood Park has confirmed that there will not be an increase in charges for the next financial year; the cost will remain at £9,810. This information will enable Cowes Town Council to budget plan for the next financial year.

120 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S INTERNAL AUDIT
To ensure best value the Town Clerk contacted three independent auditors asking for quotations to undertake the Internal Audit for the year ending 31 March 2017. The three quotations were reviewed and considered. It was:
RECOMMENDED
That Accountant A is engaged as the Town Council's Internal Auditor for the sum of £760.00 per year, for the next three financial years.

121 EXIT INTERVIEW – MRS SUE WATERS
Mrs Sue Waters retired from the employment of Cowes Town Council on 29 September 2016. Before leaving she completed an exit interview form and met with the Town Clerk to discuss the contents. Sue explained that due to a change in her personal circumstances she had decided to retire from her role at Cowes Town Council and retain her post of Parish Clerk at Gurnard Parish Council as this position offered her more flexible working hours. Councillors acknowledged that conditions of employment for employees at Cowes Town Council have improved recently by offering improved contracts of employment and the opportunity to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

122 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Grant funding opportunities
- The Cowes Big Lunch – 4 June 2017

The proceedings terminated at 7.43pm.

CHAIRMAN