

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 10 November 2015 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors McNeill (Chairman), Banks, Brown, Corby (6.18pm), Ellis, Hammond & Jones.

In attendance: Five members of the public.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Hammond & Ellis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute Nos 17c(ii) & 17d(i) as they are members of Cowes Carnival Committee.

Councillor Banks declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute Nos 17c(ii) & 17d(i) as he is a sponsor of Cowes Carnival.

Councillor Banks declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 17d(ii) as he is a Director of Cowes Town Waterfront Trust who are sponsors of Cowes Fireworks Committee.

Councillor McNeill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 17d(ii) as he is Vice Chairman of Cowes Business Association who are sponsors of Cowes Fireworks Committee.

Councillor Ellis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No 17c(iv) as he has children who attend Lanesend Primary School.

16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee held on 8 September 2015 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 FINANCE

a) Financial Statement as at 30 September 2015

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the second quarter of the financial year giving details of income and expenditure. Details of balances in the Town Council bank accounts, including petty cash, were also given; as at 30 September 2015 this figure totals £411,958, the Town Council has 'ring fenced' £201,483, the remaining budget for 2015/2016 is £120,261 which leaves reserves of £90,214. The Town Clerk reminded Councillors that they had agreed, at recent Town Council meetings, to fund the supply and installation of festive lights in Cowes High Street (Min Nos 7112b2, 7139 & 7155d1) and that a budget heading needed to be identified to meet this financial commitment.

RECOMMENDED

That £21,000 is transferred from the 'Discretionary Services' budget heading to the budget heading 'Civic – Christmas Trees and Festive Lights' to fund the supply and installation of festive lights in Cowes High Street.

b) Draft Budget 2016/2017

A draft budget had been prepared by Councillors McNeill & Jones and the Town Clerk and was circulated to all Town Councillors. It is acknowledged that Cowes Town Council are being asked by the Isle of Wight Council to take on additional discretionary services including Cowes Library and the four public toilets in Cowes. Some costings for the Library have been received but up to date costings for the public toilets are not yet to hand. These additional responsibilities will mean an inevitable increase in the precept but until exact figures are received the exact increase is unknown. Based on the tax base for 2015/2016 each £1,000 increase in precept would result in an increase of 25p per Band D Council Tax property. Councillor McNeill asked Councillors to consider the draft proposals; an additional meeting will be called when further information is received.

c) Applications for Grants

The Town Clerk reported that £6,550 remains in budget for 2015 / 2016 for grants & special events. The Town Council has been asked to consider the following applications for grants:

- (i) **Cowes Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society** – Defibrillator & training - £1,295
- (ii) **Cowes Carnival** - Rebuild of new chassis for float - £3,000
- (iii) **Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival** – Running costs of 2016 Festival - £100
- (iv) **Lanesend Primary School** – Pond / science area - £1,000
- (v) **Moorgreen Road Allotment Society** – Solar tunnel - £1,479.85

RECOMMENDED

1. That grants be made to the following organisations in accordance with the amounts shown:

- a) **Cowes Carnival** £3,000
- b) **Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival** £100
- c) **Lanesend Primary School** £1,000
- d) **Moorgreen Road Allotment Society** £1,479.85

2. That the Town Clerk writes to Cowes Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society to inform the organisation that their application has been re-considered and remains on hold. Cowes Town Council propose to undertake a project to look at the wider issue in Cowes as having established where defibrillators are located in the Town, poses the question when are the defibrillator holders premises open to the public and can the public access the defibrillators. Once this information has been obtained Cowes Town Council will produce an information leaflet to inform residents and visitors of these details. This will form an agenda item for the next meeting of the Projects Committee.

3. That the balance in the budget of £970.15 be kept in reserve pending further applications which may be received.

d) Applications for 3 year grant funding

The Town Clerk wrote to Cowes Carnival Committee, Cowes Fireworks Committee and the Isle of Wight Literary Festival inviting them to make an application for a 3 year grant, subject to annual ratification by the Town Council. The Town Council considered the following applications:

- (i) **Cowes Carnival** £3,000
- (ii) **Cowes Fireworks Committee** £3,000
- (iii) **Isle of Wight Literary Festival** £5,000 – Youth Zone + £6,300 – Staging the Festival

RECOMMENDED

1. That, from April 2016 and subject to annual ratification, a 3 year grant be made to the following organisations in accordance with the amounts shown:

- a) **Cowes Carnival** £3,000
- b) **Cowes Fireworks Committee** £3,000
- c) **Isle of Wight Literary Festival** £6,300 for staging the Festival

2. That a 3 year grant is not awarded to the Isle of Wight Literary Festival Youth Zone as this is a relatively new addition to the Festival and feedback and a summary of what has been achieved needs to be considered annually. Therefore it is recommended to award the following grant for the 2016 event only:

- a) **Isle of Wight Literary Festival Youth Zone 2016** £5,000

18 ACQUISITIONS

a) Further devolution of services

The Town Clerk presented a report following a meeting on 3 November 2015 with the Isle of Wight Council detailing their proposals to devolve further services to the local level. They also stated that one of their budget saving options is to withhold the local council tax support grant which was £6,519 for Cowes Town Council in 2015/2016. A number of other options are being considered and it was agreed that Cowes Town Council need to be proactive in considering areas / services that we could do better at the local level. A further meeting has been called by the Isle of Wight Council for 7 December 2015.

b) Princes Green Winter Bedding 2015

The Town Clerk reported that the cost of the winter bedding plants had come in under budget; the amount allocated was £600 and the plants cost £400. However this did not take into account the cost to plant the area and maintain it through the winter which is an additional £672.32. As this is a Principal Park we have been obliged to use the Isle of Wight Council's contractor for these works.

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council allocates a further £500 for the planting of bedding plants at Princes Green and for the maintenance of the flower beds throughout the winter season.

c) Grounds Maintenance 2016 / 2017

The Town Clerk reported that written requests for quotations for a grounds maintenance contract have been sought from four contractors with a deadline of 20 November 2015. One quote has been received, three are to follow. Details of costs involved will be considered when budget planning for 2016 / 2017.

d) Cowes Library

Following a meeting of the Isle of Wight Council Executive Committee on 27 October 2015, the Isle of Wight Council are asking Cowes Town Council to take responsibility for the running costs of Cowes Library as from April 2016. A working party of Town Councillors have met with Isle of Wight Council officers to look at the running costs of the library, which includes business rates. A schedule of condition for the building had been received and due to the poor state of disrepair it would be inadvisable for the Town Council to take responsibility for the building until a full independent structural survey had been undertaken. Cowes Town Council will continue to work with Isle of Wight Council officers to ensure the future of the library service in Cowes. Details of costs involved will be considered when budget planning for 2016 / 2017.

e) Public Toilets in Cowes

Following a meeting of the Isle of Wight Council Executive Committee on 27 October 2015, the Isle of Wight Council are asking Cowes Town Council to take responsibility for the operating costs of the four public toilets in Cowes as from April 2016. Cowes Town Council have been unable to obtain up to date costings but based on figures from 2013 / 2014 the total cost of operating the four public toilets was £59,252,93. Cowes Town Council continues to engage with Isle of Wight Council officers to gain up to date figures which will be considered when budget planning for 2016 / 2017.

19 STAFFING

a) No staffing matters were raised by Councillors or Clerks.

The proceedings terminated at 8.01pm.

CHAIRMAN