

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Ellis (Chairman), Bertie, Bustin, Fuller (6.18pm), Jones (6.25pm), Oliver (6.16pm), Peacey Wilcox & Taylor.

In attendance: Councillor Wardrop (6.16pm) non-voting; Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; George Chastney, Liz Mackenzie & Jim Green for Cowes Heritage; Janet Allan for Cowes Voluntary Community Group; Reverend Andrew Poppe & Peter Cove for St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes.

512 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

513 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jones declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 515.1 as he is Treasurer of Cowes Heritage.

514 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 18 August 2020 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes.

515 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that £20,850 remains in the budget for 'Grants'. The Town Council have been asked to consider the following Applications for Grant:

1. Cowes Heritage – Building works to Cowes Voluntary Community Group (aka The Beckford Centre) - £5,000
2. Cowes Voluntary Community Group (aka The Beckford Centre) - Building works - £5,000
3. St. Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes – Repair to Churchyard headstones - £2,110

Councillor Jones left the meeting while the Cowes Heritage and Cowes Voluntary Community Group grant applications were discussed.

It was agreed to discuss the grant applications for Cowes Heritage and Cowes Voluntary Community Group together as they related to the same building project. Representatives from both groups gave a presentation to the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee. Councillors raised concerns that The Beckford Centre could one day be sold. This would mean that a Town Council grant of £10,000 may be unrecoverable and lost in the sale process. The question of activities in the Centre was discussed but due to Covid-19 most activities had to be put on hold. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. That an amount of £10,000 will be ring fenced from the 'Grants' budget heading.
2. A working group meeting will be arranged between a small number of Councillors, a representative from Cowes Heritage, a representative from Cowes Voluntary

Community Group and the Town Clerk to discuss both grant applications in more detail.

3. The working group will report back to the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting.

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 7pm.

Following a presentation to the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee from representatives of St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes, it was:

RECOMMENDED

That a grant be made to St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes in the sum of £2,100.

516 ROUTE 32 COMMUNITY BUS (MINUTE NO. 507 REFERS)

Following receipt of funds of £704.00 from the Route 32 Community Bus account, Cowes Town Council resolved to ring fence the funds against any future costs associated with the Route 32 Community Bus scheme. Gurnard Parish Council and Northwood Parish Council have confirmed that they have also ring fenced their funds held.

It was also agreed that Cowes Town Council would write to the Isle of Wight Community Bus Partnership Ltd to ask for sight of the accounts for the Route 32 Community Bus to ensure that this vital service is maintainable. The Isle of Wight Community Bus Partnership responded that the funds they hold do not directly support the running of their three routes and costs per route. Their funds pay for drivers' expenses, co-ordinator costs, uniforms, medical examinations and driving tests. Most of their income goes directly to Southern Vectis via their fares and bus pass income from the IW Council. The main risk to providing services is the availability of volunteer drivers so any suggested volunteers would be the strongest safeguard to services.

517 SUBSCRIPTION TO ZOOM (VIRTUAL MEETINGS)

During the Covid-19 pandemic the Town Council have used 'Zoom' to hold virtual meetings rather than the usual face to face meetings. The Zoom service is free for a meeting of up to 40 minutes but this is rarely long enough to conclude proceedings. Therefore it was proposed that, during the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, the Town Council subscribes to Zoom for a monthly fee of £11.99 which will extend the duration of a meeting up to 24 hours without the need for an adjournment during meetings. The cost of the subscription could be taken from the 'Hire of Meeting Rooms' budget heading as meeting rooms are currently not being hired. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That, for the next 12 months, Cowes Town Council subscribes to the monthly Zoom service for the cost of £11.99 per month.

518 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES' PAY AGREEMENT 2021-21

The Town Clerk advised that agreement had been reached between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union on rates of pay applicable as from 1 April 2020. The rates of pay for the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk have been increased by 2.75% and an additional days' holiday has been granted. The Town Clerk advised that she had already built in an extra 3% into the 'Salaries' budget to cover any pay agreements. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council notes the Local Government Services' Pay Agreement for 2020 – 2021.

519 ASSISTANT TOWN CLERK'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS

The Town Clerk advised that the Assistant Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC expires on 31 October 2020, the cost of renewal being £202. Councillors discussed the benefits of the Assistant Town Clerk being a member of the SLCC. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council renews the Assistant Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC for the sum of £202.

520 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk advised Councillors that the Clerks continue to work in the Town Council office, however recent Government advice has urged those office workers who can work from home to do so. The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk will consider this advice and advise Councillors should home working be reinstated.

521 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Town Clerk advised Councillors that precautions are being taken in the office to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and the Clerks are not accepting any visitors / meetings at this time.

522 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no items raised for inclusion on future agendas.

The proceedings terminated at 7.32pm

CHAIRMAN