

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 20 October 2020 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Ellis (Chairman), Fuller, Gilpin, Jones, Oliver (6.18pm), Peacey Wilcox & Taylor.

In attendance: Councillors Nicholson (6.18pm) & Wardrop (non-voting); Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; George Chastney, Liz Mackenzie, Jon Matthews, Jim Green (6.20pm) and Janet Allan for Cowes Heritage and Community Group; two members of the public.

523 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bertie.

524 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jones declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 528 as he is Treasurer of Cowes Heritage.

525 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 22 September 2020 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes.

526 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the quarter ending 30 September 2020 giving details of income and expenditure. Councillors looked at the spend against each of the budget headings and the ring fenced and ear marked balances. The balances in the Town Council's bank accounts and petty cash as at 30 September 2020 were £638,729.67 of which £154,737.84 is ring fenced / ear marked expenditure. The balance of the budget for 2020 / 2021 is £238,407.46. The Reserves as at 30 September 2020 were £245,584.37 which represents around nine months operating costs. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council receive, note and approve the Financial Statement as at 30 September 2020.

527 NATIONWIDE BUSINESS 1 YEAR FIXED RATE SAVER ACCOUNT

The Town Clerk advised Councillors that Cowes Town Council's Nationwide Business 1 Year Fixed Rate Saver Account matured on 14 October 2020 with a balance of £120,597.42 plus interest. Several options, post maturity, have been offered by Nationwide which include re-investing the funds into another Business 1 Year Fixed Rate Saver Account, a Business Instant Saver Account or Business 35 Day Saver Account. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council transfers the funds held into another Nationwide Business 1 Year Fixed Rate Saver Account with a gross interest rate per annum of 0.30%.

528 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that £18,750 remains in the budget for 'Grants'. The Town Council are reconsidering the following Applications for Grant following a working group meeting of Councillors and representatives from the organisations to gather more information about the applications.

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.

Councillor Jones made a presentation to the Committee, thanking Councillor Bertie for his support of the grant applications, and stating that the new Beckford Centre would be a benefit to the town and he hoped that the grant would be awarded.

Councillor Jones left the meeting while the grant applications were discussed.

Councillors have been advised that the merger of Cowes Heritage and Cowes Voluntary Community Group is now in progress, to be known as Cowes Heritage and Community Group (CHCG); a registration number is awaited from the Charities Commission. Councillors thought that the opportunity to purchase books and DVDs may bring additional income to the Group; the Beckford Centre also fits in well with the 'Place Plan' as heritage and education go hand in hand. The building could also be used as a hub for the wider community although Covid-19 presents limitations at this time. Councillors felt that the grant applications had been rushed as planning permission has not yet been granted, there are only two quotes received for the building works (a third quote is awaited) and concerns about the weight bearing capacity of the building were raised. Representatives of CHCG advised that test drill holes are being undertaken in November to assess the load bearing capacity of the existing foundations of the building. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council support the grant applications, in principle, subject to Cowes Heritage and Community Group making a new grant application to the Town Council once planning permission has been granted and a third quote for the building works has been received.

529 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT AT NORTHWOOD PARK AS FROM 1 APRIL 2021

The current grounds maintenance contractor for Northwood Park, Andy Butler Sports Ground Specialist, has confirmed that there will not be an increase in charges for the next financial year for grounds maintenance work at Northwood Park. The annual cost being £10,165.00. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council extends the contract with Andy Butler Sports Ground Specialist from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 for the sum of £10,165.00.

530 TOILET CLEANING AND LITTER PICKING CONTRACT AS FROM 1 APRIL 2021

The toilet cleaning contractor, All Round Cleaners, have confirmed a price increase for the year 2021/2022 to take into account the increase in the cost of consumables (5%), an increase of 50p per hour to the minimum wage of their staff and a charge for locking up the toilet blocks at Northwood Recreation Ground and Northwood Park, previously this had not been charged for in the contract. The contract is for the four public conveniences in Cowes and the toilets at Northwood Recreation Ground and Northwood Park; the cost being £39,997.74. Councillors discussed the locking up charges for the toilet block in Northwood Park of £1,277.50 per year; this task had originally been undertaken by staff at Northwood House. As the Town Council is only responsible for cleaning the Northwood Park toilets, Councillors felt that Northwood House staff should be responsible for organising the locking of the Park toilets. It was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council does not pay for locking the toilets at Northwood Park.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council extends the contract with All Round Cleaners from 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 for the sum of £38,720.24.**

ACTION

Subject to the above two Recommendations being Resolved the Town Clerk will advise Northwood House accordingly.

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 6.55pm.

531 STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk advised Councillors that the Clerks have returned to working from home as from Monday 28 September 2020. This follows the recent Government advice that has urged those office workers who can work effectively from home to do so. Home working will continue in line with Government advice.

532 HEALTH AND SAFETY

There are no health and safety matters to report at this time.

533 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no items raised for inclusion on future agendas.

The proceedings terminated at 7.01pm.

CHAIRMAN