

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 17 November 2020 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Ellis (Chairman), Bertie, Jones, & Peacey Wilcox.

In attendance: Councillor Wardrop (non-voting); one member of the public; Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk.

534 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fuller, Oliver & Taylor.

535 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peacey Wilcox declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 539ii as she is a Life Member and Vice President of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery. Councillor Jones declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 539ii as he is a Vice President of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery. Councillor Bertie declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 539ii as he is a Member of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery.

536 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 20 October 2020 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and the Chairman be authorised to sign the Minutes.

537 DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2021 / 2022

The Town Clerk presented Councillors with a draft budget for 2021 / 2022 which is split into three sections, each section was reviewed line by line.

1. General Administration – An increase in the scale points of the Clerks' salaries and possible national pay rise results in an increase of £3,000. There is an inflationary increase to the Town Council's Office Rent of £600. Travelling has now combined with Conference Fees resulting in a £200 budget saving. The 'Civic Regalia' budget heading has been reduced to £500 as major refurbishment works to the Mayoral chain have taken place in November 2020. **The overall increase in this section being £2,900.**

2. Discretionary Services – The cost of the Toilet Cleaning and Litter Picking contract, including a new locking up charge at Northwood Recreation, has increased by £4,500. The Dog and Litter bin emptying charge has been increased by £100 to allow for the predicted annual increase. **The overall increase in this section being £4,600.**

3. Town Improvements / Grants/ Special Events – A reduction of £2,000 has been made to the 'Grants' budget heading. The Big Lunch amount of £2,000 has been deducted as the unspent funds for the Big Lunch 2020 will be ring-fenced for the 2021 event. Public toilet refurbishment has been reduced by £3,500. **This has resulted in a decrease in this section of £7,500.**

Overall within the three sections there is not a proposed increase to the budget and the precept for 2021 / 2022 will remain at £314,340. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council approves the Draft Budget for 2021 / 2022, as below, which will require the precept, including grant, to be £314,340.

COWES TOWN COUNCIL DRAFT BUDGET 2021-2022

EXPENDITURE	2021-2022
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	
Town Clerks' salaries / NIC/ Tax / Pension	£53,440
Office Rent	£8,700
Sundry Office Expenses	£350
Stationery & Office Supplies/Software	£350
Office Equipment / Photocopier	£1,000
Telephone/Broadband / Website	£1,500
Postage	£300
Conference fees & Travelling	£500
Training	£500
Hire of Meeting Rooms and / or Zoom	£200
Subscriptions	£2,100
Insurance	£2,300
Audit and Accountancy	£2,000
Mayor's Allowance	£2,000
Newsletter / Publicity	£4,000
Elections / Admin Contingency	£2,500
Civic Regalia	£500
Sub Total	£82,240
DISCRETIONARY SERVICES	
Northwood Rec Grounds Maintenance	£7,500
Northwood Rec - Skate Park /MUGA/ Outdoor Gym Maintenance	£6,000
Northwood Rec Toilets - Cleaning, electricity + other costs	£14,600
Northwood Park Grounds Maintenance	£10,200
Northwood Park Toilets - Cleaning Only	£3,400
Dog + Litter bin emptying	£5,600
Other grounds maintenance in Cowes	£6,500
4 Public Toilets - Cleaning + other costs	£48,100
Cowes Library	£22,400
Cowes In Bloom	£8,000
Environment Officer	£2,600
Warmer Cowes	£2,700
Park Road Crossing Patrol	£5,000
Discretionary Services Contingency	£8,000
Sub Total	£150,600
TOWN IMPROVEMENTS/ GRANTS / SPECIAL EVENTS	
Street furniture maintenance	£2,500
Civic-Xmas trees/Festive lights/Bunting	£17,000
New Projects	£4,000
Grants	£20,000

Remembrance Sunday & Charity Donations	£1,500
Public Toilet refurbishment	£36,500
Sub Total	£81,500
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£314,340

538 LEASE FOR THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE AND STOREROOM AT NORTHWOOD HOUSE

The current lease for the office and storeroom at Northwood House expires on 25 November 2020. Councillors considered an inflationary increase to the rent from £675 per month to £719.03 per month, fixed for the next three years. As a gesture of goodwill, and with the Coronavirus pandemic causing further disruption for the short term at least, the Trustees of Northwood House do not intend to increase the rent until 1 April 2021 and not from 1 December 2020. This will allow for the new budget to accommodate the increase and reflects lower use of the utilities than normal at this time. Car parking charges are unchanged and room hire charges are updated to the standard 2020 rates, less any negotiated discounts. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council extends the Lease with Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd for three years starting 26 November 2020; the fixed rental fees from 1 April 2021 being £719.03 per month.

539 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that £18,750 remains in the budget for 'Grants'. However, at the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting on 22 September 2020 an action was agreed to ring-fence £10,000 for a future grant application from the newly formed Cowes Heritage and Community Group, therefore the balance remaining in the budget for 'Grants' is £8,750.

The Town Council have been asked to consider the following Applications for Grant:

- i. Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival – 2021 Festival - £50
- ii. Friends of Northwood Cemetery – Purchase of CCTV - £2,000

After a full discussion about each of the applications it was:

RECOMMENDED

That a grant be made to the Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival in the sum of £50.

ACTION

The Town Clerk will write to the Friends of Northwood Cemetery to ascertain the following information:

- Are the specifications of the CCTV suitable for the cemetery environment?
- Will the CCTV be sited in one area and will this be sufficient to cover all the areas affected by anti social behaviour, vandalism and drug abuse problems?
- Will the quality of the CCTV coverage be adequate to secure any police convictions?
- Have they considered the use of dummy cameras in the areas not covered by the CCTV?

When a reply to these points has been received the Grant Application will be reconsidered by the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee.

540 STAFFING MATTERS

There were no staffing matters raised by Councillors or Clerks.

541 HEALTH AND SAFETY

There were no health and safety matters raised by Councillors or Clerks.

542 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no items raised for inclusion on future agendas.

The proceedings terminated at 6.49pm.

CHAIRMAN