

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in The Library, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 28 September 2021 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Walters (Chair), Bertie, Carter, Ellis, Jones, Nicholson & Rafferty.

In attendance: Councillor Brown (non-voting); Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk;
a representative from St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes.

597 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hollis & Peacey Wilcox.

598 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Carter declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 600.1 as she works for the NHS at St Mary's Hospital.

Councillor Walters declared a pecuniary interest in Minute No. 600.2 as he has a standing order and makes donations to St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes.

599 MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 27 July 2021 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

600 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT

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

1. The Friends of Cowes Medical Centre – 3 Phlebotomy Trolleys - £1,999.94

After a full discussion about this grant application, a named vote was taken and all voting Councillors present at the Committee meeting voted against this grant application. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council does not make a grant to the Friends of Cowes Medical Centre.

Councillor Walters left the meeting and Councillor Ellis took the Chair for the next item.

2. St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes – Dismantle 9 trees / bushes to ground level - £2,880

After a full discussion about this grant application it was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will contact St Mary the Virgin Church, Cowes to request that the grant application be re-submitted to the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting to include details of which trees and bushes are to be dismantled, sight of the report from T.D.G. Tree Services and the health and safety issues to support the proposed dismantling.

Councillor Nicholson left the meeting at 6.34pm.

601 REVIEW OF COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S GRANT APPLICATION FORM

The Chairman of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee asked the Committee to review the current Grant Application Form and bring any suggestions for additions or removals to the form back to the next Committee meeting. It was agreed:

ACTION

Councillors to review the current Grant Application Form and bring any suggestions for additions or removals to the form back to the next Committee meeting.

602 REVIEW OF NORTHWOOD HOUSE CHARITABLE TRUST COMPANY LIMITED'S (NHCTCL) ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020 AND TO CONSIDER THE PROCEDURE FOR FUTURE SUPPORT

Councillors reviewed NHCTCL's Annual Report and Unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2020. The Town Council currently supports the Trust by paying for bin emptying in the Park, cleaning of the Park public toilets and the costs of grounds maintenance; this contract expires on 31 March 2022 and Councillors will consider whether to continue supporting these works for NHCTCL at the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee. Councillors acknowledged that Northwood House and Park are a valuable asset to Cowes and the Trust and volunteers are doing a fantastic job. It was agreed:

ACTION

1. The Town Clerk will request sight of NHCTCL's Accounts on a yearly basis to review their financial position.
2. The Town Clerk will seek three quotations for the grounds maintenance contract at Northwood Park commencing on 1 April 2022.
3. A representative from NHCTCL will be invited to attend the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee when the grounds maintenance quotations are considered.

603 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MORNINGTON WOODS VOLUNTEER GROUP

Mornington Woods Volunteer Group have been working on Mornington Wood and Jenny's Wood for a number of years and have been drawing down financial support for these works from the Town Council via the funds held for community projects. These funds have been fully spent and Councillors considered whether to continue to provide any financial support. Councillors agreed that the woods have been greatly improved by the hard work of the volunteers. It was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council sets aside a sum of up to £500 from the 'Discretionary Services Contingency' budget heading for 2021 / 2022 to support Mornington Woods Volunteer Group.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council continues to set aside a sum of up to £500 every financial year from the 'Discretionary Services Contingency' budget heading to support Mornington Woods Volunteer Group.**

604 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S ZOOM SUBSCRIPTION

During the Covid-19 pandemic Cowes Town Council subscribed to Zoom to enable the business and meetings of the Town Council to continue. The annual subscription expires on 2 October 2021. Councillors considered the benefits of renewing the subscription during these uncertain times. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council renews its annual Zoom subscription for the sum of £119.90.

605 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS MADE AND REVIEW OF CONTRACTS HELD BY COWES TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Clerk presented Councillors with a list of mandatory and discretionary payments made and a list of the current contracts held by Cowes Town Council. The Town Council pays for grounds maintenance in public areas via the IW Council who secured an Island wide grounds maintenance contract on behalf of Town and Parish Councils.

Grounds maintenance at Northwood Park is undertaken by a private contractor. The Town Council supports Cowes Library by paying for cleaning costs, gas and electricity, water and sewerage, building security, premises insurance and salary costs. Councillors agreed that the Library is an asset to the town and perhaps a visit by Councillors could be possible to see what activities are currently taking place there. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will investigate whether a visit by Councillors could be made to Cowes Library.

606 ASSISTANT TOWN CLERK'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)

Councillors discussed the benefits of renewing the Assistant Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC, which expires on 1 November 2021, in the sum of £208. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council renew the Assistant Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC in the sum of £208.

607 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

Councillors asked if the Clerks are happy with their office accommodation. The Town Clerk confirmed that they are. The office, being located in a larger building, has the benefit of never working alone as there are always other offices occupied and Northwood House staff are available for assistance if needed.

608 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Clerks have resumed working in the Town Council Office and are following the recommended guidelines for Covid-19 safe working practices.

Councillors agreed that using the Library at Northwood House for Committee meetings is a good idea during these Covid-19 times. The Clerk advised that larger rooms will be used for Town Council meetings, when available, to accommodate social distancing.

The Clerk was asked whether risk assessments were undertaken in regard to Covid-19 and other matters. The Clerk advised that risk assessments are undertaken by the Clerks on a regular basis.

609 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no items raised for inclusion on future agendas.

The proceedings terminated at 7.13pm.

CHAIRMAN