

## COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in The Drawing Room, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 22 November 2022 at 6.15pm.

**Present:** Councillors Ellis (Chair), Bertie, Brown, Carter, Hollis, Jones & Nicholson.

**In attendance:** Councillors Paler & Wardrop (non-voting); a representative from Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd (NHCTCL); Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk.

**681 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Walters.

**682 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Wardrop declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 685 as she is Cowes Town Council's representative on the Supporters of Cowes Library.

**683 MINUTES  
RESOLVED**

**That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 October 2022 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**684 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE QUOTATION FOR NORTHWOOD PARK AS FROM 1 APRIL 2023**

Councillors discussed the grounds maintenance quotation from Andy Butler Sports Ground Specialist for 11/4/23 – 31/3/24 in the sum of £12,800. Councillors discussed whether NHCTCL should apply for a grant to cover this amount which would be considered on 24 January 2023 by the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee for a recommendation to Full Council on 2 February 2023. The representative from NHCTCL commented that a late decision in February would not give sufficient time for their budget to be set accordingly. The first proposal made was to request that NHCTCL make a grant application for the grounds maintenance charge of £12,800, this proposal was seconded, there were three votes in favour. The second proposal made was to give NHCTCL a further year under the existing system of Cowes Town Council paying the contractor's monthly invoice and the following year beginning 1 April 2024 will require a grant application, this proposal was seconded, there were four votes in favour and this proposal was carried. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**1. Subject to the draft budget being approved, Cowes Town Council continues to pay the grounds maintenance contractor for the works at Northwood Park from 1/4/23 – 31/3/24 in the sum of £12,800.**

**2. As from 1 April 2024 NHCTCL will apply for a grant for future grounds maintenance works at Northwood Park.**

The representative from Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd left the meeting after this agenda item.

**685 REPORT FROM COWES LIBRARY**

A report from staff at Cowes Library and a report from the Library Services Manager was circulated to all Town Councillors. The report outlined the various activities and events held at the Library, which is also now a dedicated warm space. Councillors were of the same mind as grounds maintenance works at Northwood Park, in relation to future financial support for the Library. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. Subject to the draft budget being approved, Cowes Town Council continues to pay the quarterly invoices from the IW Council to support Cowes Library from 1/4/23 – 31/3/24.**
- 2. As from 1 April 2024 Cowes Library will apply for a grant for future financial support of Cowes Library.**

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 6.58pm.

**686 DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2023 / 2024**

Having consulted with the Chairman of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee, the Town Clerk presented Councillors with two draft Budgets for 2023 / 2024. Councillors agreed that v2 should be the one recommended to Full Council. The budget is split into three sections; each section was reviewed line by line.

**1. General Administration** – An increase in the Clerks' salaries, a further possible national pay rise and increased National Insurance costs, results in an increase of £5,560. Audit and Accountancy have increased by £100 to cover any rise in costs.

**The overall increase in this section being £5,660.**

**2. Discretionary Services** – There has been a small increase to the Grounds Maintenance works at Northwood Recreation Ground and other green areas in Cowes. Northwood Recreation Ground Toilets and the other four public conveniences have been merged into one budget heading. The cost of the Environment Officer Services has increased slightly. An increase of £4,000 has been made to the 'Cowes in Bloom' budget heading. A reduction of £2,200 has been made to the 'Warmer Cowes' budget heading.

**The overall increase in this section being £3,550.**

**3. Town Improvements / Grants/ Special Events** – An increase of £500 has been made to the Street Furniture Maintenance budget to allow assets in the Town to be upgraded. An increase of £2,000 has been made to the 'Festive Lights / Xmas Tree' budget heading. A budget of £2,000 has been set aside for both the 'Picnic in the Park 2023' and 'Flags, Banners & Bunting'.

**The overall increase in this section being £6,500.**

Overall within the three sections there is a proposed increase to the budget of £15,710 and the precept for 2023 / 2024 will be £335,504. The increase to a Band D property as result of this rise in the precept will be approximately £3.73 per year (0.31p per month). It was agreed:

**ACTION**

An item will be added to the next Projects Committee Agenda 'Future funding for commercial opportunities'.

It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council approves the Draft Budget v2 for 2023 / 2024, as below, which will require the precept to be £335,504.**

<b>COWES TOWN COUNCIL DRAFT BUDGET (v2) FOR 2023 - 2024</b>	
<b>GENERAL ADMINISTRATION</b>	
Town Clerks' salaries / NIC/ Tax / Pension	£62,000
Office Rent	£8,700
Stationery / Sundry Office Expenses/Software	£700
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	£400
Subscriptions	£2,100
Insurance	£2,500
Audit and Accountancy	£2,200
Mayor's Allowance	£2,000
Newsletter / Publicity	£4,000
Elections / Admin Contingency	£2,500
Civic Regalia	£500
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£91,400</b>
<b>DISCRETIONARY SERVICES</b>	
Northwood Rec Grounds Maintenance	£8,204
Northwood Rec - Skate Park / MUGA / Outdoor Gym Maintenance	£6,000
Northwood Park Grounds Maintenance	£12,900
Northwood Park Toilets - Cleaning Only	£4,000
Dog + Litter bin emptying	£5,800
Other grounds maintenance in Cowes	£7,300
5 Public Toilets - Cleaning + other costs	£52,000
Cowes Library	£22,400
Cowes In Bloom	£12,000
Environment Officer	£3,000
Warmer Cowes	£500
Park Road Crossing Patrol	£5,000
Cowes & Northwood Place Plan Promotion	£12,000
Discretionary Services Contingency	£8,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£159,104</b>
<b>TOWN IMPROVEMENTS / GRANTS / SPECIAL EVENTS</b>	
Street furniture maintenance	£3,500
Festive lights / Xmas Tree	£17,000
New Projects	£4,000
Grants	£15,000
Remembrance Sunday & Charity Donations	£1,500
Public Toilet refurbishment & Capital Projects	£40,000
Picnic in the Park 2023	£2,000
Flags, Banners and Bunting	£2,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£85,000</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£335,504</b>

**687 TERMS OF SERVICE – PROJECT OVERSIGHT FOR THE PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT OF MEDINA ROAD PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

Councillors were asked to consider the Terms of Service – Project Oversight costs for the proposed refurbishment of Medina Road Public Conveniences. The quotation received from M.J. Hayles was £3,250. There will also be an additional charge of £750 to comply with Southern Water’s terms to include registration of the project with the Health & Safety Executive and also preparation of a risk assessment by the architect and by the tendering contractors. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Financial Regulation 10.4 is suspended to consider only one quotation for the works.**
- 2. That M.J. Hayles Architectural Service be appointed to manage the refurbishment project at Medina Road Public Conveniences for the sum of £4,000.**

**688 CONNECT4COMMUNITIES GRANT UPDATE**

The Town Clerk advised that all of the 20 £50 Aldi vouchers have now been allocated to those in need of support at this time, having been referred by the Foodbank in Cowes and by the local schools.

**689 LANESEND PRIMARY SCHOOL’S ‘DANCE LIVE 2023’**

Councillors were asked to consider making a donation to Lanesend Primary School’s annual Dance Live performance being held on Thursday 23 February 2023 at Portsmouth Guildhall. Any donations will help towards the cost of the costumes, set and the trip to Portsmouth. It was agreed:

**ACTIONS**

1. The Mayor will make a donation of £100 from the ‘Mayor’s Allowance’ to support ‘Dance Live 2023’.
2. Lanesend Primary School will be advised to make a grant application should they wish to request further funds.

**690 REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF COWES TOWN COUNCIL**

At the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee meeting held on 24 May 2022 it was agreed that the Committee would look at one of the Town Council’s policies or procedures at each meeting. This meeting reviewed the Code of Conduct for Members of Cowes Town Council. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That no amendments are required to the Code of Conduct for Members of Cowes Town Council.**

**691 NJC SALARY AWARD FOR 2022 – 2023**

The Town Clerk advised that following lengthy negotiations with unions, the NJC Salary Award for 2022 – 2023 has now been agreed. It will involve an increase of £1 per hour across all pay scales. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council receive and note the NJC Salary Award for 2022 – 2023.**

**692 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS**

Councillors raised whether the Town Council office was required if staff could work from home. It was agreed that the Town Council office was required for meetings and to enable members of the public to visit the Town Council. As Covid restrictions continue to ease it may be possible to revert back to holding all Committee meetings in the Town Council office.

**693 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

There were no health and safety matters to discuss.

**694 CLERKS' CONCERNS**

There were no concerns to discuss.

**695 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS**

- Review of the Complaints Procedure

The proceedings terminated at 7.31pm.

**CHAIRMAN**