

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 24 January 2023 at 6.15pm.

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

In attendance: Councillor Paler (non-voting); two representatives from Cowes Fringe Ltd; one representative from Island Food Festival Ltd; two representatives from WightTricks Academy; two representatives from Market Days IOW CIC; Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Assistant Town Clerk.

696 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carter, Hollis & Jones.

697 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

698 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 22 November 2022 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

699 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the quarter ending 31 December 2022 giving details of income and expenditure. Councillors looked at the spend against 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 31 December 2022 were £689,409.84 of which £237,347.67 is ring fenced / ear marked expenditure. The Reserves as at 31 December 2022 were £299,587.48 which represents approximately 11 months operating costs. This falls within the recommended 3 to 12 months reserves as set by the National Association of Local Councils. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council receive, note and approve the Financial Statement as at 31 December 2022.

700 RING FENCED AND EAR MARKED BALANCES FROM THE 2022 – 2023 BUDGET HEADINGS

The Town Clerk submitted details of existing ring fenced and ear marked balances and suggested which additional amounts from the 2022 / 2023 budget headings should be ring fenced or ear marked and carried over to the financial year 2023 / 2024. Assuming that invoices do not come in for payment before 31 March 2022, those budget headings for ring fencing being: Subscriptions; Northwood Recreation Ground, Grounds Maintenance; Dog & Litter bin emptying; Other Grounds Maintenance in Cowes; Sani bin contract; Cowes Library; Cowes In Bloom; Environment Officer; Park Road Crossing Patrol. Those budget headings for ear marking being: Northwood Recreation Ground – Skate Park / MUGA / Outdoor Gym Maintenance; Cowes & Northwood Place Plan Promotion; Street Furniture Maintenance; New Projects (Ark & Dove £1,000); Public Toilet Refurbishment & Capital Projects; Picnic in the Park (Balance); Flags and Banners (Balance). Any underspend from other budget headings will go into the Town Council's Reserves. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That the balances in the budget headings, as listed above, be ring fenced or earmarked, as appropriate, at the financial year end on 31 March 2023.

701 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that £12,450 remains in the budget for 'Grants' for the financial year 2022 / 2023. The Town Council has been asked to consider the following Applications for Grant:

- i. Cowes Fringe Ltd – Cowes Fringe event - £10,000
- ii. Dragon Class, Solent Division – 75th Edinburgh Cup - £2,000
- iii. Island Food Festival Ltd – Food Festival 2023 - £10,000
- iv. WightTricks Academy – Total warehouse conversion to gym and café - £10,000
- v. Market Days IOW CIC – Community event at Moorgreen Reservoir - £2,500

After a full discussion about each grant application it was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That a grant be made to Cowes Fringe Ltd in the sum of £2,500 specifically for the promotion and marketing of the Cowes Fringe Event 2023. The organisers will send their invoices up to that amount for payment by the Town Council.**
- 2. The Town Clerk will write to Dragon Class, Solent Division to ask exactly what the requested £2,000 will be spent on.**
- 3. The Town Clerk will liaise with the organisers of Island Food Festival Ltd to ascertain which part of the Festival the Town Council can support and bring the proposal back to the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting on 28 February 2023.**
- 4. That a grant be made to WightTricks Academy, in the form of a bursary, in the sum of £3,000 which will allow students from low income families in Cowes to take part in lessons. The sum will be held by the Town Council and released upon request from the WightTricks Academy.**
- 5. That a grant be made to Market Days IOW CIC in the sum of £2,500. The organisers will send their invoices up to that amount for payment by the Town Council.**

702 OPTIONS FOR MATURED FUNDS HELD IN THE TOWN COUNCIL'S 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 11 January 2023 with a balance of £122,298.33 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 18 Month 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 a Nationwide Business 18 Month Saver Account with a gross interest rate per annum of 3.00%.

703 VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (VCSE) SUPPORT SERVICE

Town and Parish Councils have been asked to consider financial support for the VCSE Support Service. This service provides a vibrant, varied and valuable source of support to local people. The IW Council, due to funding pressures, is no longer able to fully support this service and there is a shortfall of £20,000. The contribution requested from Cowes Town Council, based on an allocation of Council Tax precept, is £1,240. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council contributes the requested £1,240 on the proviso that the VCSE achieve 75% of their £20,000 shortfall i.e. £15,000, from other Town & Parish Councils. The contribution to be taken from the Discretionary Services Contingency budget heading.

704 NORTHWOOD PARK CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTION PLAN

Northwood House Charitable Trust are considering the Climate Change Adaption Plan and will re-visit in Autumn 2023 in advance of the tree planting season.

705 COWES WEEK FAMILY DAY

Councillors discussed possible activities that could be provided for Cowes Week 2023 on The Parade. It was agreed to wait and see what Cowes Week Ltd are planning for the Sunday for Cowes Week family day.

706 REVIEW OF COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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 Complaints Procedure. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That no amendments are required to the Cowes Town Council's Complaints Procedure.

707 ISLE OF WIGHT PENSION FUND 2022 VALUATION RESULTS AND EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION RATES: TOWN, PARISH AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Councillors received details of the Isle of Wight Pension Fund 2022 valuation results and employer contribution rates for Town, Parish & Community Councils. The employer rate remains at 23.5%. The Town Clerk has advised the Town Council's payroll provider of this information. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council receive and note the Isle of Wight Pension Fund 2022 valuation results and employer contribution rate of 23.5%.

708 DRAFT OFFER TO TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS TO ACCESS A PACKAGE OF eLEARNING (MIN NO 679 REFERS)

At the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee meeting held on 25 October 2022, the Town Clerk was actioned to enquire if Town Councillors could access the IW Council's Development Forum online training courses. Councillors discussed a draft offer provided by the IW Council to the Town Council, offering a number of online courses at the cost of £25 per person per course, which must be completed within 7 days. The IW Council are requesting feedback on the offer. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will advise the IW Council that Councillors think that the cost of £25 per course is too high and the time constraint to complete the course is too short. Councillors may be prepared to buy in to a service that allows all Councillors unrestricted access to courses.

709 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

Councillors discussed the Assistant Town Clerk's (ATC) job description and whether it encompasses all the tasks that the ATC is undertaking. It was suggested to review the ATC's job title, job description and salary. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will arrange a meeting between the Town Clerk, the Town Mayor, the Chairman of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee and the Assistant Town Clerk to discuss the above.

710 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

Councillors discussed risk assessments in relation to the Town Council's contractors. The Assistant Town Clerk is currently requesting updated Supplier Evaluation Forms and proof of public liability insurance from our existing contractors.

711 CLERKS' CONCERNS

The Clerks raised their concerns that there are a number of difficulties arising between individual Councillors which is having an effect on the Clerks' ability to work in collaboration with all Councillors. The Clerks request that all communications between Councillors is copied to the Clerks so that they are fully aware of all Councillors' activities, including details of any meetings with outside organisations / individuals, as per Standing Order 29.2.

712 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Review of the Cowes Town Council's procedures for dealing with complaints against Members.
- To discuss capping the amount of Grant that Applicants can apply for.

The proceedings terminated at 8.15pm.

CHAIRMAN