

## COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 26 September 2023 at 6.15pm.

**Present:** Councillors Ellis (Chair), Brown, Hollis, Nicholson (6.16pm) & Oliver (6.16pm).

**In attendance:** Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Councillor Paler (non-voting); five representatives from grant applicant organisations.

### **759 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Walters.

### **760 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **761 MINUTES RESOLVED**

**That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 22 August 2023 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

### **762 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT**

The Town Clerk reported that there is £7,587 remaining in the 'Grants' budget heading for the 2023 / 2024 financial year. The Town Council has been asked to consider the following Applications for Grant:

- i. Ability Dogs 4 Young People – Charitable Activities Expenditure - £2,000
- ii. Cowes Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society (CAODS) – Renewal of red fire retardant velvet curtains and pelmet - £3,500
- iii. Isle of Wight Citizens Advice Bureau – Provision of advice services – £1,000.
- iv. Isle of Wight Literary Festival 2023 – Cost of the Festival - £5,000
- v. UK Sailing Academy – Test the Water programme - £1,470

After a full discussion about each application it was:

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- i. **That a grant be made to Ability Dogs 4 Young People in the sum of £500.**
- ii. **That a grant be made to Cowes Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society (CAODS) in the sum of £1,500.**
- iii. **That a grant be made to Isle of Wight Citizens Advice Bureau in the sum of £500.**
- iv. **That a grant be made to Isle of Wight Literary Festival in the sum of £2,500.**
- v. **That a grant be made to UK Sailing Academy in the sum of £750.**

### **763 CONNECT4COMMUNITIES HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000**

Cowes Town Council have purchased 100 x £50 Aldi vouchers of which, to date, 79 vouchers have been allocated to those who have provided a completed application form and claimed eligibility; 21 vouchers remain available to those persons who claim eligibility. The full amount of £5,000 has now been spent. It was agreed:

#### **ACTION**

That Cowes Town Council will apply for funding from the next round of Connect4Communities in the sum of £15,000.

**764 WINTER PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE IN COWES**

Councillors were asked to consider the cost of winter planting from Care in the Garden for the sum of £810 and maintenance charges of £50 per week for 25 weeks for the sum of £1,250. The total cost being £2,060. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town engage Care in the Garden for winter planting and maintenance in Cowes for the sum of £2,060 with the cost to be met from the 'Cowes in Bloom' budget heading.**

**765 WIGHT COMMUNITY ENERGY**

Councillors were asked to consider making an investment in Wight Community Energy (WCE), a non-profit community benefit society regulated by the financial conduct authority that was established in 2015 to bring renewable energy into community ownership. WCE are targeting a 6% per year return on investments which start at £250. After a discussion it was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council does not invest in Wight Community Energy.**

**766 MORNINGTON WOODS VOLUNTEER GROUP**

For the last number of years, the Town Council has set aside £500 per year from its 'Discretionary Services Contingency' budget heading for the use of Mornington Woods Volunteer Group to draw down from for their expenses. With the cost of insurance and raw materials rising steadily, £500 is not enough to cover their expenses. It was proposed that for the financial year 2023/2024 an additional £200 be made available and for future financial years an annual amount of £700 be set aside. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Cowes Town Council makes a further sum of £200 available to Mornington Woods Volunteer Group from the 'Discretionary Services Contingency' budget heading for the remaining financial year 2023 / 2024.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council makes available £700 to Mornington Woods Volunteer Group from the 'Discretionary Services Contingency' budget heading for future financial years.**

**767 RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR THE VACANCY OF TOWN CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

The advertisement for the vacancy has been placed in the IW County Press and the IW Observer and circulated amongst IWALC and the local SLCC branch. The deadline for applications being 12 noon on Monday 2 October 2023. To date, three people have requested the information pack and application form. Councillors discussed who will take part in the interview process and any other requirements for the selection process. It was agreed:

**ACTIONS**

- 1. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor will meet with the Town Clerk to review the completed application forms after the deadline has passed.**
- 2. Based on the content of the Application Forms, psychometric testing of applicants will be considered.**

**RECOMMENDED**

**That the Interview Panel should consist of no more than four Councillors and the Town Clerk, those Councillors to be agreed at the Town Council meeting.**

**768 DEPUTY TOWN CLERK'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS (SLCC)**  
Councillors were asked to consider renewing the Deputy Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC in the sum of £222. The benefits of being a member of the SLCC were discussed. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council renews the Deputy Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC in the sum of £222.**

**769 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS**

No other staffing matters were discussed.

**770 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

The Deputy Town Clerk will shortly be undertaking a three day training course by the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health - IOSH Managing Safely. There are three options for accessing the course: Online Zoom £250; Online Tutoring £495; Face to face training £595. It was agreed that the Deputy Town Clerk will select her preferred choice of learning.

**771 CLERKS' CONCERNS**

No concerns were raised by the Clerks.

**772 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS**

- Review of grant applications received and supported in the current financial year.

The proceedings terminated at 7.28pm.

**CHAIRMAN**