

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 21 November 2023 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Ellis (Chair), Brown, Carter, Hollis, Nicholson, Oliver, Rafferty & Walters.

In attendance: Debbie Faulkner, Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; two representatives from Cowes Fringe Ltd.

784 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

785 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

786 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 24 October 2023 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

787 DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024 / 2025

Having consulted with the Chairman of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee, the Town Clerk presented Councillors with the draft Budget for 2024 / 2025. The budget is split into three sections; each section was reviewed line by line.

1. General Administration – An increase in the Clerks' salaries, a potential national pay rise and increased hours for the new Town Clerk, results in an increase of £8,000. Office Rent has increased by £200 to £8,900. Stationery / Sundry Office Expenses / Software has increased by £500; Telephone / Broadband / Website has decreased by £500. Subscriptions and Insurance have both increased by £100. **The overall increase in this section being £8,400.**

2. Discretionary Services – There has been a small increase to the Grounds Maintenance works at Northwood Recreation Ground and other green areas in Cowes of £796. Councillors were asked to consider additional funding of 50% for Princes Green Grounds Maintenance and Beach Cleaning of the coastal path, the total cost being £3,500. The cost of the Environment Officer Services has increased by £2,000 as previously the Town Council was being undercharged in error. An increase of £4,100 has been made to the 'Cowes Library' budget heading to cover additional running costs. An increase of £200 has been made to the 'Dog and Litter bin emptying' budget heading to cover rising costs. **The overall reduction in this section being £1,504 as the £12,000 for the 'Cowes and Northwood Place Plan Promotion' budget heading has been moved down to the next section: Town Improvements / Grants/ Special Events.**

3. Town Improvements / Grants/ Special Events – An increase of £500 has been made to the 'Remembrance Sunday & Charity' budget heading to allow for increased costs / donations. **The overall increase in this section being £12,500.**

Overall within the three sections there is a proposed increase to the budget of £19,396 and the precept for 2024 / 2025 will be £354,900. The increase to a Band D property as result of this rise in the precept will be approximately £5.05 per year (42p per month).

It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Town Clerk will ask the IW Council what additional work will be provided by the Town Council paying a contribution of 50% towards the grounds maintenance at Princes Green.
2. The Town Clerk will ask the IW Council what the regime for cleaning the coastal path is in this current financial year and what difference to the frequency will be made by the Town Council paying a contribution of 50% towards future works.
3. The Town Clerk will ask the organisers of Picnic in the Park 2024 for a Town Council representative to be included on the organising Committee.

It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council approves the Draft Budget for 2024 / 2025, as below, which will require the precept to be £354,900.

<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	2024-2025
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	
Town Clerks' salaries / NIC/ Tax / Pension	£70,000
Office Rent	£8,900
Stationery / Sundry Office Expenses/Software	£1,200
Office Equipment / Photocopier	£1,000
Telephone / Broadband / Website	£1,000
Postage	£300
Conference fees & Travelling	£500
Training	£500
Hire of Meeting Rooms and / or Zoom	£400
Subscriptions	£2,200
Insurance	£2,600
Audit and Accountancy	£2,200
Mayor's Allowance	£2,000
Newsletter / Publicity	£4,000
Elections / Admin Contingency	£2,500
Civic Regalia	£500
Sub Total	£99,800
DISCRETIONARY SERVICES	
Northwood Rec Grounds Maintenance	£8,700
Northwood Rec - Skate Park / MUGA / Outdoor Gym Maintenance	£6,000
Northwood Park Grounds Maintenance	£12,800
Northwood Park Toilets - Cleaning Only	£4,000
Dog + Litter bin emptying	£6,000
Other Grounds maintenance: St Mary's Park; Moorgreen Reservoir; Arctic Park; Mornington Green; Brunswick Road playground; Park Road Rose Bed; Egypt Point; Mornington Woods	£7,600
Princes Green (50% contribution for grounds maintenance)	£2,000
Beach cleaning (50% contribution for removal of sand / shingle along coastal path)	£1,500

5 Public Toilets - Cleaning + other costs (including Northwood Rec)	£52,000
Cowes Library	£26,500
Cowes In Bloom	£12,000
Environment Officer	£5,000
Warmer Cowes	£500
Park Road Crossing Patrol	£5,000
Discretionary Services Contingency	£8,000
Sub Total	£157,600
TOWN IMPROVEMENTS / GRANTS / SPECIAL EVENTS	
Street furniture maintenance	£3,500
Cowes & Northwood Place Plan Promotion	£12,000
Festive lights / Xmas Tree	£17,000
New Projects	£4,000
Grants	£15,000
Remembrance Sunday & Charity Donations	£2,000
Public Toilet refurbishment & Capital Projects	£40,000
Picnic in the Park 2024	£2,000
Flags, Banners and Bunting	£2,000
Sub Total	£97,500
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£354,900

Councillor Hollis left the meeting at 7.15pm.

788 ANNUAL REPORT FROM COWES LIBRARY

Cowes Library provided an annual report including details of the activities that take place in the Library, including visitor numbers. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will write to Cowes Library to thank them for all their hard work in providing not just a library.

789 NORTHWOOD HOUSE CHARITABLE TRUST COMPANY LIMITED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

Councillors received and noted the Northwood House Charitable Trust Company Ltd accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022.

790 PROPOSED AMENDED GRANT APPLICATION CRITERIA AND APPLICATION FORM

Councillors received and considered two suggestions for simplifying the grant criteria and grant application form so that it can be clear whether organisations are eligible to apply for a grant. It was agreed:

ACTION

Councillors Carter, Nicholson and Oliver will meet to consider all suggestions and produce a scoring matrix for use when considering future grant applications.

791 APPLICATIONS FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that there is £1,837 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. Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival – 2024 Festival - £100

- ii. Cowes Fringe Ltd – Cowes Fringe 2024 - £10,000

After a full discussion about each application it was:

RECOMMENDED

- i. That a grant be made to Isle of Wight Music, Dance & Drama Festival in the sum of £100.
- ii. That a grant is not made to Cowes Fringe Ltd. They can re-apply when the scoring matrix and Grant Application process has been reviewed and agreed.

792 CONNECT4COMMUNITIES HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000

Cowes Town Council purchased 100 x £50 Aldi vouchers of which, to date, 87 vouchers have been allocated to those who have provided a completed application form and claimed eligibility; 13 vouchers remain available to those persons who claim eligibility. The full amount of £5,000 has now been spent on vouchers. The next round of funding has been agreed, an additional £5,000 of funding is expected to be received by the Town Council shortly.

793 APPOINTMENT OF THE TOWN CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

Following interviews on Thursday 9 November 2023, Mrs Claudine Russell has been offered and accepted the post of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Mrs Russell will start on 2 January 2024; the current Town Clerk will extend her retirement date to 31 January 2024 to enable a thorough induction and handover period. Mrs Russell will start on Salary Scale LC2 SCP 24 which equates to £17.16 per hour for a 25 hour week. The salary will be subject to an additional scale point each April and a further additional scale point on successful completion of the CiLCA qualification. The position will be subject to a three month probationary period. Upon successful completion, Mrs Russell will be entitled to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. Councillors offered their support for the new Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

794 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk advised that the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services has reached agreement on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The pay rise equates to £1,925 for all spinal points to 43 (pro rata, part time) backdated to 1 April 2023. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council receives and notes the NJC pay award for 2023 / 2024.

795 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

The Deputy Town Clerk is currently investigating dates to take part in the three day online 'IOSH Managing Safely' course.

796 CLERKS' CONCERNS

No concerns were raised by the Clerks.

797 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

No items were raised for inclusion on future agendas.

The proceedings terminated at 7.51pm.

CHAIRMAN