

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 23 April 2024 at 6.15pm.

Present: Councillors Nicholson (Chair), Brown, Ellis, Hollis, Sanders and Walters

In attendance: Claudine Russell, Town Clerk; Debbie Faulkner, Locum Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk ; Councillor Wardrop (non-voting).

The Committee received the resignation of the Chairman; Councillor Ellis. Councillors expressed their gratitude to Councillor Ellis for his hard work on the Committee. It was proposed, and agreed, that Councillor Nicholson be the Chairman for this meeting.

838 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Oliver and Rafferty.

839 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

840 MINUTES RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 26 March 2024 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

841 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the year ending 31 March 2024 giving details of income and expenditure. Councillors looked at 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 March 2024 were £513,088.14 of which £261,628.96 is ring fenced / ear marked expenditure. The Reserves as at 31 March 2024 were £251,459.18 which represents approximately nine 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 March 2024.

842 COSTS FOR WATERING CONTRACT 2024

The Deputy Town Clerk and Facilities Manager had contacted 4 companies for quotations and received two quotes back which were presented at the last meeting. Councillors then asked for Supplier Evaluation Forms, Risk Assessments and Method Statements to be completed by the Contractors in order to make a recommendation. Only one of the Contractors completed and returned these forms which were circulated to Councillors prior to this meeting. The cost per visit for this Contractor will be £102.20 with a standard contract of 54 visits totalling £5,598.80. If Cowes Town Council enter into a 3 year fixed term contract, the Contractor will charge 10% less and also use the Cowes Town Council logo on their EV van. Following discussion it was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council suspends Financial Regulation 10.4 to allow for only one quotation to be considered.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council enter into a 3 year fixed term contract with JW Autoshine at a total annual cost of £5,598.80 (minus 10% discount).**
- 3. That Cowes Town Council allows the Town Council logo to be placed on JW Autoshine's EV van.**

843 COWES TOWN COUNCIL HOLDING FUNDS FOR COWES YOUTH HUB

Cowes and Northwood Town Councils sponsor the Place Plan which has helped to develop a Cowes Youth Hub. This Hub will generate income and expenditure but they do not have a bank account. Cowes Town Council have been approached to manage the funds raised by the Youth Hub. Previously, Cowes Town Council have had a similar arrangement with the organisers of Picnic in the Park. As the Youth Hub employ staff there were some concerns around how the Payroll would be managed and overseen. A donation is expected from a Cowes Stakeholder towards this provision and the Stakeholder approve Cowes Town Council holding the funds. Cowes Town Council would need to be invoiced directly so that any VAT can be claimed back. It was agreed:

ACTION

The Mayor to liaise with the Place Plan working group for more information regarding the Payroll administration of the Cowes Youth Hub.

844 UPDATE ON HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000

The Town Clerk gave Councillors an update on the Household Support Fund. Cowes Town Council have received a total of £5,000 which was due to be spent by 31st March 2024. A quarterly update has been completed by the Clerks and sent to the Household Support Fund. Cowes Town Council have spent £2,000 from this fund and the remaining £3,000 can continue to be used for this purpose so has been earmarked accordingly. The Clerks have successfully handed out 21 vouchers so far, most of which have been referred from Cowes Primary School and the Foodbank. After some discussion, it was agreed:

ACTION

The Clerks will contact the Household Support Fund administrators to ask if application forms can be handed out via the Food Pantries in Cowes.

845 TIMELINE FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS

Councillors have been looking at reviewing which months of the year grant applications are considered. It was suggested that grant applications are only considered during Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing meetings that take place in May through to February of each municipal year. It was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council accept and consider future grant applications between May and February of each municipal year.**
- 2. That a limit of 10% of the total grant budget of £15,000 i.e. £1,500 will be set as a cap for each grant application.**
- 3. Subject to points 1 and 2 being agreed, the Grant Application guidelines will be amended accordingly.**

846 FLAGS AND BANNERS UPDATE

Councillors Sanders and Walters have been overseeing the flags and banners process. There have been a few enquiries but no bookings as of yet.

847 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer has given in her notice and finishes on Friday 26 April 2024. The former Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer, Debbie Faulkner, has agreed to return on a locum basis under the same terms and conditions as before. The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer provided the Councillors with a severance statement following her resignation. Councillors Carter and Rafferty are leading on a review of the job roles so Councillors can then make a decision about a staffing structure moving forward.

848 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

The Town Clerk was asked to look at what other Town Council's follow in response to Health and Safety and Human Resources audits and circulated her findings prior to this meeting. Cowes Town Council need to ensure they are compliant with the law and have the relevant paperwork in place to support this. The Isle of Wight Association of Local Councils (IWALC) have been liaising with Isle of Wight College to look at the possibility of offering a one day course in Health and Safety to local councils. At the last meeting, it was advised that Ventnor Town Council employ a Business Development Officer whose role includes Health and Safety. Some Town Councils outsource Health & Safety and Human Resources matters to companies such as Peninsula. The Deputy Town Clerk and Facilities Manager is working towards a Health and Safety qualification, but more in-depth qualifications and experience is required. After some discussion, it was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will contact Peninsula, and one other company, to obtain prices for the completion of a Health and Safety Audit.

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 7.09pm

849 CLERKS CONCERNS

None raised.

Councillor Walters left the meeting at 7.19pm.

850 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

No items were raised for inclusion on a future agenda.

The proceedings terminated at 7.27pm

CHAIRMAN