

## COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 6.15pm.

**Present:** Councillors Ellis (Chair), Carter, Hollis, Nicholson, Oliver, Rafferty and Sanders.

**In attendance:** Claudine Russell, Town Clerk; A representative from IOW Pantries; two Representatives from IW Story Festival; two Representatives from Independent Arts.

### 824 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown and Walters.

### 825 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Oliver declared a pecuniary interest in relation to Minute No 827ii as he knows the applicant.

Councillor Oliver declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Minute No 827i as he liaises with the organisation.

### 826 MINUTES RESOLVED

**That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 27 February 2024 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

### 827 APPLICATION FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that there is £237 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) IOW Pantries CIC - £2,000

A Representative from IOW Pantries CIC attended the meeting to talk about the Pantry and answer questions from Councillors, following which she left the meeting. The grant was requested towards part of a bigger scheme, which involves setting up a distribution centre for the whole Island whilst also reaching families in need in the Cowes area. The IOW Pantries CIC Crowdfunder page states they were approached by Cowes Town Council, whereas this was not the case. Councillors have asked for this to be amended. After a full discussion it was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council pay IOW Pantries £2,000 from the money set aside for the Place Plan Promotion.**

Councillor Oliver left the meeting.

ii) IW Story Festival - £2,000

Two Representatives from IW Story Festival attended the meeting to talk about the opportunities they will offer in 3 schools: Cowes Primary, Lanesend Primary and Northwood Primary. The Representatives answered questions from Councillors and then left the meeting. After a full discussion it was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council pay IW Story Festival £1,400 from the money set aside for the Place Plan Promotion, subject to satisfactory completion of the Place Plan matrix. This**

**money would cover the two schools in the Cowes area: Cowes Primary School and Lanesend Primary School.**

Councillor Oliver returned to the meeting.

iii) Independent Arts - £1,920

Two Representatives from Independent Arts attended the meeting to talk about offering SingAbout sessions to residents of Cowes and to answer questions from Councillors.

After a full discussion, Councillors felt they did not have enough significant information to make a decision. It was agreed:

**ACTION**

The Town Clerk will invite Independent Arts to reapply in May, at the start of the next Financial Year.

**828 PLANTING OF TROUGHS, PLANTERS AND HANGING BASKETS IN COWES FOR SUMMER 2024**

Councillors suspended Financial Regulations 10.4 as only one quotation from Care in the Garden has been received. Their quotation for the summer planting of the troughs and planters in Cowes is for the sum of £1,110. The filling and installation of hanging baskets is for the sum of £1,700 and for maintenance, weeding, dead heading and removal of the plants at the end of the season the sum is £800. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

- 1. That Councillors suspended Financial Regulation 10.4 as only one quotation from Care in the Garden has been received.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council engages Care in the Garden for the summer planting of the troughs and planters in Cowes for the sum of £1,110.**
- 3. That Cowes Town Council engages Care in the Garden for the filling and installation of hanging baskets in Cowes for the sum of £1,700.**
- 4. That Cowes Town Council engages Care in the Garden for the maintenance, weeding, dead heading and removal of the plants at the end of the season in Cowes for £800.**

**829 COSTS FOR WATERING CONTRACTS**

Councillors suspended Financial Regulation 10.4 to allow consideration of two quotes. The Deputy Town Clerk and Facilities Manager had contacted 4 companies for quotations and received two quotes back. Councillors were asked to consider the watering contract for 2024 which includes all the hanging baskets, 3-tier planters, wooden tubs and concrete planters in Cowes. The contract will be based on 3 visits a week for 18 weeks. The cost per visit for Contractor A will be £102.20 with a standard contract of 54 visits totalling £5,598.80 including the cost of feeding the plants which will be around £80. If Cowes Town Council entered in to a 3 year fixed term contract with Contractor A they would charge 10% less and also use the Cowes Town Council logo on their EV Van. The cost per visit for Contractor B will be £70 with a standard contract of 54 visits totalling £3,880 including the cost of feeding the plants which will be around £100. In order to ensure that both Contractors comply with Health and Safety requirements, Councillors would like them to complete a Supplier Evaluation Form, Risk Assessment and Method Statement and will discuss further at the next Finance Committee Meeting. It was agreed:

**ACTION:**

The Town Clerks will arrange for Supplier Evaluation Forms, Risk Assessments and Method Statements to be completed by the Contractors and then presented to the Councillors at the next Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee Meeting for further consideration.

**830 PRICING STRUCTURE FOR HIGH STREET FLAGS AND BANNERS**

Councillors received and considered the flags and banners pricing structure and guidelines. The hire costs January to May for banners will be £100 per week and for Flags £25 per week. The hire costs June to September for banners will be £140 per week and for Flags £35 per week. The hire costs October to December for banners will be £100 per week and for Flags £25 per week. These prices include the installation, maintenance and removal and are based on a cost per banner/flag. Organisations are to provide their own flags and banners and only Cowes Town Council have the authority to install/remove these. It was agreed:

ACTION:

Councillors Walters and Sanders to finalise the terms and conditions of the flags and banners contract.

Following discussion it was:

**RECOMMENDED:**

**That Cowes Town Council agree in principle to the banners and flags pricing structure.**

**831 UPDATE ON CONNECT4COMMUNITIES HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000**

The Town Clerk gave the Councillors an update on the Connect4Communities Household Support Fund. Cowes Town Council have received a total of £5,000 which was due to be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The Clerks have successfully handed out the first £1,000 worth of vouchers and so have ordered vouchers valued at £1,000. The total spend to date is £2,000. Cowes Town Council have been advised that they do not need to give the unspent money of £3,000 back and can continue to use it for this purpose, until it has been spent. Cowes Town Council have been advised that Connect4Communities will be known as Household Support Fund and will no longer be linked to Hampshire County Council. The Isle of Wight Council have 6 months of household support funding and applications for this will open soon. Councillors have previously requested funding of £15,000, as per minute number 777. There are some concerns with regards to demand plus there is a limit on households as only 2 vouchers per household can be claimed in any grant period. After some discussion it was agreed:

ACTION:

The Town Clerk to check with the Officer from the Household Support Fund to see if they can make contact with Cowes Medical Centre as their Social Prescriber could allocate application forms.

**832 ONLINE ACCOUNTING SYSTEM**

The Town Clerk has been researching online accounting systems including Quickbooks, SAGE and Scribe. After liaising with the External Auditors for advice, Scribe is the preferred choice. Scribe costs £23 a month and there are some set up costs which need to be clarified.

It was agreed:

ACTION

The Town Clerk will arrange for a Demo of Scribe and finalise the costings and training available, for discussion by the Finance, Staffing and Acquisitions Committee.

**833 HEALTH AND SAFETY PROPOSAL**

A Health and Safety and Human Resources audit proposal was presented to the Councillors prior to this meeting. The Town Clerk was asked to contact 3 other Town Councils to see what they have in place regarding Health and Safety and Human Resources compliance. Ventnor Town Council responded and advised that they have an HR Committee and also employ a Business Development Officer where Health and Safety is included in the role. After some discussion it was agreed:

ACTION:

The Town Clerk will source quotes from other companies in relation to Health and Safety and Human Resources audits and these quotes will be taken to the next Chairs and Clerks Meeting.

**834 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS**

No other staffing matters were discussed.

**835 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

No other Health and Safety matters were discussed.

**836 CLERKS CONCERNS**

No concerns were raised by the Town Clerk.

**837 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

- To consider setting a criteria for Grant applications to be open from May to February.

The proceedings terminated at 8:21pm

**CHAIRMAN**