

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 6.15pm.

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

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

893 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barney & Oliver.

894 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

**895 MINUTES
RESOLVED**

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

896 APPLICATION FOR GRANT

The Town Clerk reported that £9,400 remains in the budget heading 'Grants' for the Financial Year 2024 / 25. The Town Council have been asked to consider the following Application for Grant:

- Isle of Wight Literary Festival – 2024 Festival – £1,500.

After a question and answer session with the applicants and a full discussion by Councillors it was:

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council does not make a grant to the Isle of Wight Literary Festival (IWLF).**
- 2. That the Locum Town Clerk writes to the IWLF to advise that Cowes Town Council appreciates what the event brings to Cowes. However, when a grant application was received late in 2023, the IWLF were advised that any applications for grant must be made as soon as possible when the event is being organised. Cowes Town Council would consider providing sponsorship of the event but are disappointed that another late grant application means that the Town Council's support would not be included in any promotional material. Therefore any future applications for grant must be sent to the Town Council for consideration at the early stages of organising future festivals.**
- 3. The Town Council will also suggest that in future years the IWLF approach other Town & Parish Councils for financial support.**

897 UPDATE ON EXISTING HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND OF £5,000

The Town Clerk gave Councillors an update on the Household Support Fund. Cowes Town Council had received £5,000; the Clerks have purchased another 20 x £50 vouchers, therefore £3,000 has now been spent. This leaves £2,000 remaining, which has been earmarked for the purchase of further vouchers. The Clerks have handed out 36 vouchers from the original purchases of 40; 4, plus the additional 20, remain available for issue.

898 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S ZOOM SUBSCRIPTION

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council's Zoom subscription expires on 10 November 2024. The annual cost to renew the subscription is £129.90 plus VAT. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council renews its Zoom subscription in the sum of £129.90 plus VAT.

899 STAFFING STRUCTURE REVIEW – POST OF FACILITIES MANAGER

Councillors discussed the recommendation made to Full Council on 5 September 2024 which was to place adverts in the media, asap, for a Town Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Facilities Manager and Clerical Assistant. Town Councillors resolved to advertise, in the first instance, for a Facilities Manager for 20 hours per week. The Town Clerk presented Councillors with a draft job description, person specification and advert for consideration. Councillors also discussed the appointment of an Admin Assistant for 20 hours per week to relieve some of the workload from the Clerks. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Facilities Manager position requires a suitably qualified person to fulfil the role and the job description, person specification and advert would be amended accordingly.
2. To reflect the necessary qualification required, the pay scale will be SCP 13 – 17 (£26,873 - £28,770) pro rata, pay rise pending. The hourly rate being £13.97 - £14.95.
2. The Town Clerk will place the advert in the local media, asap.
3. Councillor Nicholson will explore whether a local contractor may wish to be considered for the management of the Town Council's facilities.

It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council places an advert in the local media, asap, for an Admin Assistant (20 hours per week) to include an appropriate job description and person specification.

900 LOCUM TOWN CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

The current arrangement with the Locum Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer expires on 31 October 2024; Councillors discussed whether to extend the arrangement. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council extends the arrangement with the Locum Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer until 31 October 2025.

901 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 £238. The benefits to the Town Council of being a member were discussed. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council renews the Deputy Town Clerk's membership of the SLCC in the sum of £238.

902 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

Councillors discussed the heavy workload of the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) and Facilities Manager. Currently there are 58 additional hours accrued by the DTC which will either have to be taken as time off, which will have a knock on effect on the workload, or Councillors will have to consider whether to pay for those hours. It was agreed that Cowes Town Council need to advertise urgently for an Admin Assistant to relieve the workload of the DTC; the appointment of a Facilities Manager will also be of benefit.

903 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

Councillors discussed the recent Access Audit of the five public conveniences in Cowes. This has raised a number of issues which will be considered by the Projects Committee. Any financial implications will be referred to the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee, if necessary.

904 CLERKS' CONCERNS

The Deputy Town Clerk raised concerns about her ever increasing workload and the pressures caused by this. The appointment of two new members of staff should alleviate some of the pressure.

905 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

No items were raised for inclusion on a future agenda.

The proceedings terminated at 7.58pm.

CHAIRMAN