

COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Office, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 22 October 2024 at 6.15pm.

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

In attendance: Councillor Wardrop (non-voting); Debbie Faulkner, Locum Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; two representatives for the grant applications.

906 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Brown.

907 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

**908 MINUTES
RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting held on 24 September 2024 be taken as read, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

909 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the quarter ending 30 September 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 30 September 2024 were £752,489.58 of which £198,165.97 is ring fenced / ear marked expenditure. The Reserves as at 30 September 2024 were £332,880.02 which represents approximately eleven months operating costs. This falls within the recommended 3 to 12 months reserves as set by the National Association of Local Councils. A number of projects that have concluded will be removed from the 'Ear Marked Expenditure' list in the next financial year. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council receive, note and approve the Financial Statement as at 30 September 2024.

910 PUBLIC CONVENIENCE CLEANING CONTRACT AS FROM 1 APRIL 2025

The Town Clerk advised that four contractors were invited to quote for the contract for the cleaning of the public conveniences in Cowes and for litter picking at Northwood Recreation Ground. Three contractors have provided quotations for Councillors' consideration, one contractor has declined to quote. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Town Clerk will seek references for Contractors B and C. They will also be asked to provide a completed Supplier Evaluation form, proof of public liability insurance, proof of a waste disposal contract and their company's health and safety policy.
2. The Town Clerk will seek a further quotation for the cleaning contract.
3. Councillors will review all quotations and documentation at the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting on 26 November 2024.

911 APPLICATIONS 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 Applications for Grant:

- Cowes Heritage and Community Group – Storage Unit – £1,500
- UK Sailing Academy (UKSA) – 'Test the Water' Programme - £1,260

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

RECOMMENDED

- 1. That Cowes Town Council receives and pays the invoice for the storage unit, on behalf of the Cowes Heritage and Community Group, in the sum of £1,246.**
- 2. That Cowes Town Council makes a grant of £1,260 to UKSA for the 'Test the Water' programme.**

912 WARMER COWES

The Footprint Trust have requested funding for their 'Warmer Cowes' scheme. There is an amount of £500 held in the Town Council's budget for this scheme which, in 2023 – 2024 identified energy savings of £18,504 for Cowes residents, developed 24 household Energy Action Plans at homes, outreach and by phone. They gave additional telephone help to 5 households and attended 12 outreach events in Cowes. The cost of delivering that service in Cowes cost approximately £3,430. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council releases the funding of £500 held for the 'Warmer Cowes' scheme.

913 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 vouchers to the value of £3,000, leaving £2,000 remaining for the purchase of further vouchers. The Clerks have handed out 39 vouchers from the 60 purchased, 21 remain available for issue.

914 UPDATE ON THE VACANCY FOR A FACILITIES MANAGER

Councillors discussed the resolution from Full Council on 5 September 2024 which was to place an advert in the media for a Facilities Manager. The advert was placed with a deadline for applications of 18 October 2024; one application has been received. Unfortunately the applicant does not hold the essential qualification required and therefore will not be considered for interview.

Councillors Nicholson and Rafferty and the Deputy Town Clerk have met with a local building company to discuss the provision of their facilities management service for the Town Council. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Deputy Town Clerk will follow up a specification with the company, requesting prices for the provision of their services.
2. Councillors will review the specification and costs at the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting on 26 November 2024.

915 VACANCY FOR AN ADMIN ASSISTANT (20 HOURS PER WEEK)

At the Town Council meeting on 3 October 2024, Town Councillors resolved to advertise for an Admin Assistant for 20 hours per week. The Town Clerk presented Councillors with a draft job description, person specification and advert for consideration. It was agreed:

ACTIONS

1. The Admin Assistant job description, person specification and advert is agreed.
2. The pay scale will be LC1, SCP 7 – 12 (£12.63 - £13,73 per hour, pay rise pending).
3. The Town Clerk will place the advert in the local media.

916 ADDITIONAL HOURS WORKED BY THE DEPUTY TOWN CLERK

Councillors and Clerks have previously raised concerns about the number of additional hours worked by the Deputy Town Clerk outside of the agreed contractual hours; currently there are 63 hours in credit. The Town Clerk advised that to take these hours as time off in lieu would add additional pressure to workloads and suggested that it would be beneficial to the Town Council to pay 60 of the additional hours worked at the usual hourly rate of £15.48. The salaries budget is currently underspent as the Locum Town Clerk only works 18 hours per week and 25 hours per week were budgeted for in this financial year. It was:

RECOMMENDED

That Cowes Town Council pays the Deputy Town Clerk for 60 hours of the additional hours worked at the hourly rate of £15.48.

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 8pm.

917 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR EMPLOYEES

At the Town Council meeting on 3 October 2024, the Town Council's Grievance Procedure for Employees was to be reviewed. Councillors agreed to ask the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee to review this procedure. Councillors Carter and Rafferty have some proposals for amendments to the procedure and will forward those to the Town Clerk. It was agreed:

ACTION

The amended Grievance Procedure for Employees will be presented for review at the next Town Council meeting on 7 November 2024.

918 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS

There were no other staffing matters to discuss.

919 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

There were no health and safety matters to discuss.

920 CLERKS' CONCERNS

No concerns were raised by the Clerks.

921 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS

- Lone Working Policy (following review by the next Chairs and Clerks informal meeting)
- Opportunities to provide services and generate income for the Town Council.

The proceedings terminated at 8.10pm

CHAIRMAN