

## COWES TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee Meeting held in the Library, Northwood House, Cowes on Tuesday 28 January 2025 at 6.15pm.

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

**In attendance:** Councillors Peacey Wilcox and Wardrop (non-voting); Debbie Faulkner, Locum Town Clerk; Kate Scragg, Deputy Town Clerk; a representative from Community Action IW.

### 937 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barney.

### 938 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Peacey Wilcox declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute Nos 942 and 943 as she is an IW Councillor.

### 939 MINUTES RESOLVED

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

### 940 FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

The Town Clerk submitted a financial statement for the quarter ending 31 December 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 December 2024 were £651,092.18 of which £196,259.30 is ring fenced / ear marked expenditure. The Reserves as at 31 December 2024 were £325,746.88 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. It was:

#### **RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council receive, note and approve the Financial Statement as at 31 December 2024.**

### 941 RING FENCED AND EAR MARKED BALANCES FROM THE 2024 – 2025 BUDGET HEADINGS

The Town Clerk proposed that any balances as at 31 March 2025 from the following budget headings be ring fenced: Subscriptions; Elections/Admin contingency; Dog and litter bin emptying; Cowes Library; Cowes in Bloom; Park Road Crossing Patrol. Should any invoices be received in the meantime the balances will be adjusted accordingly.

The Town Clerk proposed that any balances from the following budget headings be earmarked as at 31 March 2025: Flags and Banners (the difference between income and expenditure); Northwood Rec/Skate Park/MUGA/Outdoor Gym Maintenance; Cowes and Northwood Place Plan Promotion; Street Furniture Maintenance; New Projects Public Toilet Refurbishment & Capital Projects; Picnic in the Park 2024. It was agreed:

#### ACTION

The Town Clerk will enquire whether there is still a need to carry on earmarking the funds of £704.00 held for the Route 32 Community Bus.

It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council approves the Ring fenced and Earmarked budget balances as at 31 March 2025, to include to clarification regarding the Route 32 Community Bus.**

**942 COWES TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE IW COUNCIL AND TRANSPARENCY WITH DEPARTMENTS THAT WE DEAL WITH**

Councillors discussed the possible ramifications for the Town Council in regard to Devolution and Discretionary Services that the Town Council currently pay for. Councillors want to be advised of a single point of contact for each department / service that we are dealing with.

**943 IW COUNCIL'S INVOICE FOR COWES LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP COSTS FOR 2023 – 2024**

The Town Council have received an invoice for Cowes Library partnership costs for 2023 / 2024 in the sum of £40,900.17; the Town Council had only budgeted for £22,400. Following a meeting with IW Council Officers, the invoice has been sent back to the IW Council for considering why these costs have escalated at such a rate. It was agreed:

**ACTION**

The Town Clerk will add Cowes Library to the Agenda for the next meeting of the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee.

Councillor Wardrop left the meeting at 7.06pm.

**944 PUBLIC CONVENIENCE CLEANING CONTRACT AS FROM 1 APRIL 2025**

At the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting on 26 November 2024, Councillors reviewed quotations from four contractors. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would seek references for contractor D. 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. The Town Clerk was also actioned to seek a further quotation for the cleaning contract which has now been received from Contractor E. The Town Clerk advised that satisfactory references had been received from Contractor C but all other documentation remains outstanding. It was agreed:

**ACTIONS**

1. Councillors will not consider Contractor C as, after many attempts to obtain the necessary documentation, this has not been forthcoming.
2. The Town Clerk will invite Contractor E to meet with Councillors to discuss their quotation before any recommendation can be made to Full Council.

Councillor Ellis left the meeting at 7.19pm.

**945 APPLICATION FOR GRANT**

The Town Clerk reported that £6,894 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:

- Cowes Medina Bowling Club – Purchase of a new shed – £1,000.

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

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council make a grant to Cowes Medina Bowling Club in the sum of £1,000.**

**946 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 £4,000, leaving £1,000 remaining for the purchase of further vouchers. The Clerks have handed out 53 vouchers from the 80 purchased, 27 remain available for issue.

Councillor Peacey Wilcox left the meeting at 7.21pm.

**947 OPPORTUNITIES TO APPLY FOR GRANTS (MIN NO 929 REFERS)**

At the Finance, Acquisitions and Staffing Committee meeting on 26 November 2024, the Town Clerk was actioned to investigate available grants and report back to the next Committee meeting. The Town Clerk has looked into three grant funding schemes i.e. getgrants; crowdfunder and grantfinder. It was noted that to access grants a specific project needs to be identified to access the appropriate funding stream. It was agreed that when Councillors identify a specific project the Clerks will investigate a funding stream.

**948 UPGRADING AND PURCHASING A PAY MONTHLY SMART PHONE AND TAKING OUT A DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT SCHEME**

The Clerks reported that their current mobile phone, used for Council work, needs to be upgraded to allow better communication with more applications to include a camera. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That the Clerks are authorised to purchase a suitable pay monthly smart phone and take out a direct debit payment scheme.**

**949 DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION FOR A FACILITIES MANAGER / TOWN MANAGER**

The Chairman presented Councillors with a draft job description for the position of a full time Facilities Manager / Town Manager. It was agreed to make some slight amendments to emphasise the Facilities Manager role and to agree the appropriate salary for the role. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council authorise the Chairman of the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee and the Town Clerk to finalise the job description, create a person specification and agree a pay scale so that this position can be advertised asap.**

**950 APPOINTMENT OF THE ADMIN ASSISTANT AND THE CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT**

Following the advert for an Admin Assistant (20 hours per week), the appointment of Mrs Andrea Young was made and she started at Cowes Town Council on 6 January 2025. Councillors reviewed the draft Contract of Employment and it was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Cowes Town Council approve and sign the Admin Assistant's Contract of Employment.**

**951 ADVERTISEMENT FOR A FULL-TIME TOWN CLERK & RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER (MIN NO 932 REFERS)**

The Town Council placed an advertisement for a full-time Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. One person showed an interest in the position but having received the job description, person specification and application form, they did not apply. The Locum Town Clerk advised Councillors that she would like to be reinstated to her former

permanent position in order that the Council can continue to function in the correct and progressive way. It was:

**RECOMMENDED**

**That the Locum Town Clerk be reinstated to her former permanent position of Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer on the same terms and conditions as before.**

**952 FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY ACTION IW OFFICER (MIN NO 933 REFERS)**

At the Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting on 26 November 2024, the Town Clerk was actioned to ask the Community Action IW Officer to liaise with the High Street traders to create a regular link with the Town Council. The Community Action IW Officer has spoken to traders in the High Street and will continue to maintain a link with them.

**953 OTHER STAFFING MATTERS**

There were no other staffing matters to discuss.

**954 LONE WORKING POLICY**

The Town Clerk presented Councillors with an amended Lone Worker Policy for consideration. It was agreed:

**ACTION**

Councillors will take away the Policy and suggest any appropriate amendments for consideration at the next Finance, Acquisitions & Staffing Committee meeting.

**955 OTHER HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

There were no other health and safety matters to discuss.

**956 CLERKS' CONCERNS**

No concerns were raised by the Clerks.

**957 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDAS**

- Outcome of the Devolution process
- Cowes Library
- Lone Working Policy

The proceedings terminated at 8.10pm.

**CHAIRMAN**