

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Tuesday 27 June 2023 at 7.30pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ.

Present:

Councillors: M Owen (in the Chair)
B Cohen
N MacKinnon (as substitute for R
Brookes) S Fontenelle
M Stubbings

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There were no members of the public present.

RG229 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Brookes and Murray, due to an Epping Forest District Council meeting clash. Cllr Mackinnon had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Brookes.

RG230 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG231 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG232 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG233 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk and Chairman had nothing to report.

RG234 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the update on staff and Councillor training.

RG235 Staffing

Members NOTED the Town Clerk's report on the accumulating levels of TOIL (time off in lieu) for office staff, which in many cases is difficult to reduce due to work volumes and numerous Town Council events. Members AGREED to delegate ongoing authority and discretion to the Town Clerk to selectively offer the option of salary where appropriate.

RG236 Staff Salaries 2023/24

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG237 Work Experience

The Committee NOTED the update on the sixth form student joining the office team to undertake work experience from Monday 17 July 2022 – Friday 21 July

2023, and expressed how pleased they were to be supporting a student again this year.

RG238 Finance

238.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the financial position and available funds in earmarked reserves as at the 30 April 2023.

238.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £895,558.79 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 372-377 have been made since the report to the meeting on 8 February 2023, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG239 Precept

The Committee NOTED the first instalment of the 2022/23 Precept, £452,150.00, was received into the Council's Santander bank account on 26 April 2023.

RG240 Internal Financial Check

The Committee AGREED to continue with the appointment of a Town Councillor to undertake internal financial checks during the year. Cllr Murray has undertaken this responsibility for 2021/22 and 2022/23, and members asked the office to consult and see if Cllr Murray would like to continue for 2023/24.

Cllr Owen offered to undertake this responsibility, if required.

RG241 Internal Audit

The Committee NOTED the clear Internal Audit Report received from the Internal Auditors, Healis & Lodge dated 12 May 2023, and congratulated the officers concerned.

RG242 Annual Governance and Accountability Return(AGAR) 2022/23

The Committee NOTED that the AGAR was submitted to the External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP on 16 June 2023, and that the completed confirmation of dates for the provision of public rights form has been displayed on Town Council noticeboards and posted on the Town Council website.

RG243 Flag Flying

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG244 Christmas Card Competition 2023

Following discussion, members unanimously AGREED not to hold a Christmas Card competition in 2023 in its current format and recommended that Councillors and Staff produce a festive photo card to be circulated digitally and a donation to be made to charity.

AGREED to recommend this proposal to the next Town Council meeting.

RG245 Policies Review

245.1 Data Protection Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Data Protection Policy, with next review June 2026.

245.2 Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, with next review June 2026.

RG246 Civic Service

Following discussion, the Committee AGREED that the Town Mayor hosts a Civic Service in 2024 and raises funds for the local foodbanks. The exact date will be determined in due course.

RG247 Town Council's Banking Arrangements

Members AGREED the recommendations made, and the transfer of the No 1 account to Unity Trust Bank

RG248 Loughton Town Council (LTC) email addresses

The Committee RECOMMENDED to Town Council that members should have separate LTC email addresses. The office would investigate any mandatory requirements; GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) implications; costs to implement; and report the findings to Town Council.

RG249 Think Loughton – Circulation

Following lengthy and detailed discussion, the Committee RECOMMENDED to Town Council that a “three-year plan” to phase out a paper version of “Think Loughton” is implemented. The Town Council would look at ways to improve engagement with residents via social media, resulting in both a cost and environmental benefit.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.07 pm.

Signed:

Date: 4 October 2023

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4 October 2023 at 7.30pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ.

Present:

Councillors:

M Owen (in the Chair)
R Brookes
W Kauffman
S Murray

B Cohen
S Fontenelle
M Stubbings

Officers:

M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There were no members of the public present.

RG250 Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

RG251 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG252 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG253 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG254 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk highlighted a recent article from the Daily Express regarding Council's with "high debt ratio's" following the recent announcement made by Birmingham City Council, and the tough financial circumstances facing Epping Forest District Council, as mentioned in their news release dated 21 September 2023.

The Chairman stated that it would be useful to review the financial position of the Town Council at the next Strategy and Staff meeting.

RG255 Training and Conferences

Following discussion, the Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG256 Staff Salaries 2023/24
Members NOTED the report.

RG257 Christmas Closedown Arrangements 2023
The Committee NOTED in line with the existing Town Council policy agreed in February 2008 and updated in October 2021, that the office is operational with 'skeleton staffing' and reduced hours over the Christmas period as follows: -

Friday 22 December	Closed 12 noon
Monday 25 December	Closed
Tuesday 26 December	Closed
Wednesday 27 December	10am – 3pm
Thursday 28 December	10am – 3pm
Friday 29 December	10am – 12.45pm
Monday 1 January	Closed

RG258 Citizens Awards
The Committee CONFIRMED its commitment to the annual Citizen Awards.

RG259 Financial Assistance
The Committee AGREED the Financial Assistance scheme is to continue in 2024/25, and to the inclusion of the new rule number 13 in the application form.

Members NOTED the thanks received from successful 23/24 grant recipients, following completion of their projects.

RG260 Annual Town Meeting
The Committee NOTED the 2024 Annual Town meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 5 March 2024, commencing at 8pm in the Murray Hall, and AGREED they would like the meeting to continue in the same format as last year.

RG261 Finance
261.1 Current Financial Position
The Committee NOTED the financial position and available funds in earmarked reserves as at the 31 July 2023.

261.2 Accounts Paid
The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £551,756.49 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 378-380 have been made since the report to the meeting on 27 June 2023, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG262 Internal Financial Check
Members NOTED that Cllr Murray visited the office on 2 October 2023 and undertook a financial check on Monthly Payroll / Tax & National Insurance / Pensions from the start of the 2023/24 financial year to the end of September 2023.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for completing this exercise.

RG263 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23
The Committee NOTED that:

- PKF Littlejohn LLP, the external auditors, had signed and returned section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2022/23, without any comments. This was dated 22 August 2023.

- Notice of 'Conclusion of Audit' which finalises the yearly audit requirements, dated 25 August 2023, has been posted on the Town Council's noticeboards and website.

The Town Clerk thanked the RFO for her work in this respect.

RG264 Internal Audit

The Committee NOTED the interim internal audit from Heelis & Lodge will take place on 25 January 2024.

RG265 Remembrance Donation

265.1 Members AGREED that the Town Council will donate £150 to the Royal British Legion in support of the Poppy Appeal and towards the cost of the wreath laid by the Town Mayor at the annual Remembrance Service to be held this year on 12 November 2023.

265.2 The Committee AGREED a small wreath laying service can be held the preceding Friday (10 November 2023) at 11am, to enable local schools to be invited to lay their wreaths, along with both the Town Mayor and British Legion.

RG266 Policies Review

266.1 Early Retirement Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Early Retirement Policy, with the next review October 2027.

266.2 Reserves Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Reserves Policy, with the next review October 2027.

RG267 Loughton Town Council (LTC) email addresses

Members reviewed the requirements / costs and AGREED the option of £6 per month, per Councillor, for both the gov.uk email address and access to "one drive". Councillors also AGREED the recommendation of setting a budget allocation in 2024/25 for the implementation of this project after the outcome of the elections in May 2024.

A member found the Loughton Town Council website to be poor and difficult to navigate. The Town Clerk asked what changes were needed, and would canvass Town Councillors, (in a circular email) to ascertain, if, and what changes they would like to see, for a future agenda item.

RG268 Think Loughton – Circulation newsletter – R&GS Min 249

The Committee NOTED the alternative estimated delivery costs and that further quotations for the whole package of design, print and delivery are awaited.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.02 pm.

Signed:

Date: 29 November 2023

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 29 November 2023 at 7.30pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ.

Present:

Councillors:

M Owen (in the Chair)
R Brookes
S Fontenelle
M Stubbings

W Kauffman
S Murray
D Wixley (as substitute for B Cohen)

Officers:

M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There were no members of the public present.

RG269 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Murray, who due to a work commitment, would be arriving late and from Cllr Cohen due to illness. Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Cohen.

RG270 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG271 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG272 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG273 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

Members NOTED the following Town Clerk's updates:

- The Town Mayor's Civic Service will be held on Sunday 11 February 2024 at 3pm.
 - The next Town Council meeting has been rescheduled from 12 December 2023 to the 20 December 2023, to accommodate a District Council budget meeting called for 12 December 2023.
 - Following notifications from residents and a review by Town Council officers, 7 Loughton salt bins have been removed, without any communication from Essex County Council. Cllr Chris Pond is investigating this further.

The Chairman had nothing to report.

RG274 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG275 Christmas Card 2023

Cllr Fontenelle arrived during this agenda item.

Members NOTED the update on the Town Council's electronic Christmas card, which will be distributed in early December 2023.

RG276 Remembrance Services

The Town Clerk reported that local schools had initiated contact with the Town Council with reference to holding a remembrance service at Kings Green on Friday 10th November, to enable children to attend.

Members NOTED the update on the Remembrance Services at the War Memorial on Kings Green.

RG277 Utilities

The Committee NOTED the update on utilities.

RG278 Finance

278.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the financial position and available funds in earmarked reserves as at the 30 September 2023.

278.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £320,089.94 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 381-382 have been made since the report to the meeting on 4 October 2023, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG279 Precept

The Committee NOTED the second instalment of the 2023/24 Precept, £452,150.00 was received into the Council's Santander bank account on 27 September 2023.

RG280 Internal Financial Check

Members NOTED that Cllr Murray will be visiting the office on 18 December 2023 to undertake a further financial check from the start of the 2023/24 financial year to date.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for his support in undertaking this exercise.

RG281 Financial Assistance

Cllr Murray arrived during this agenda item.

Following discussion and vote the Committee AGREED not to carry over any 2023/24 unallocated or unclaimed Financial Assistance budget at year end to 2024/25.

RG282 Staff Salaries 2023/24

282.1 Salary Increases

The Committee received and NOTED the update on the 2023/24 salary changes.

282.2 Pensions

The Committee received and NOTED the communication on the financial strain review being undertaken by the Essex Pension Fund.

RG283 Think Loughton – Circulation newsletter – R&GS Min 249.

Members discussed and AGREED not to make any changes to the current production of Think Loughton, and to carry on as we are.

Cllr Wixley recommended an article on boundary changes would be useful in the Spring 2024 issue, subject to space.

RG284 Parish Basic Allowance

The Committee RECOMMENDED to Full Council to retain the level of the Parish Basic Allowance that members may claim £120 per member per annum, in Council Year 2024/25.

RG285 Loughton Town Council Website

Following discussion and consideration, the Committee AGREED to leave the Town Council website in the current format, and not make any changes.

RG286 New PA System

The Committee AGREED that Officers can purchase a new PA system, costing in the region of £400-£600, noting funds will be drawn from the 'office equipment and maintenance' budget line.

RG287 Subscription Review

Cllr Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 19 of the agenda, as a life member of Essex Playing Fields.

The Committee discussed and reviewed the current list of organisations of which it is currently a member and AGREED to continue to support those listed for 2024/25 in the agenda, without any amendments.

Members NOTED the savings already made.

RG288 Buckingham Court fees

The Committee AGREED not to increase the Chamber Room fees for hire for 2024/25, to try and encourage greater use of the facilities.

RG289 Committee Priorities

The Town Clerk reported that Cllrs Stubbings and Wisken had now been added as additional signatories on bank accounts. However, additional signatories would be left on the priority list, as further signatories maybe required following the Town Council elections in May 2024.

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the priority list for 2024/25 as listed in the agenda, without any amendments.

RG290 Budgets / Estimates 2024/25

Cllr Murray declared a pecuniary interest in Citizens Advice Epping Forest District (CA), as a Trustee, and Cllr Wixley a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the CA.

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk gave an overview of the preliminary budget recommendations, and the Town Clerk reported that interest paid on bank balances are significantly higher than over the past few years, where interest earned had been almost zero. It was also reported that following the move last

year to Buckingham Court, that costs for the premises are now stable, except for “utilities”, which across all premises continue to be challenging.

Following discussion and the ongoing support to Citizens Advice Epping Forest District (CA), Members requested that Officers write to CA, to request the possibility of a ‘physical presence’ in Loughton.

The Committee considered and AGREED the estimates of income and expenditure and levels of ear marked funds for 2024/25 as listed in the agenda, subject to the understanding that there may well be further changes, given the difficult ongoing financial pressures.

RG291 Prevent Duty Guidance

Members NOTED the information and guide shared by EFDC, had been circulated to Councillors and Officers, along with a link to a number of online courses available including awareness and referrals.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30 pm.

Signed:

Date: 17 January 2024

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

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Present:

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	R Brookes	W Kauffman
	S Fontenelle	S Murray
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Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
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There were no members of the public present.

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RG270 Declarations of Interest

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The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk gave an overview of the preliminary budget recommendations, and the Town Clerk reported that interest paid on bank balances are significantly higher than over the past few years, where interest earned had been almost zero. It was also reported that following the move last

year to Buckingham Court, that costs for the premises are now stable, except for “utilities”, which across all premises continue to be challenging.

Following discussion and the ongoing support to Citizens Advice Epping Forest District (CA), Members requested that Officers write to CA, to request the possibility of a ‘physical presence’ in Loughton.

The Committee considered and AGREED the estimates of income and expenditure and levels of ear marked funds for 2024/25 as listed in the agenda, subject to the understanding that there may well be further changes, given the difficult ongoing financial pressures.

RG291 Prevent Duty Guidance

Members NOTED the information and guide shared by EFDC, had been circulated to Councillors and Officers, along with a link to a number of online courses available including awareness and referrals.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30 pm.

Signed:

Date: 17 January 2024

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 at 7.00pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ.

Present:

Councillors:

M Owen (in the Chair)	
R Brookes	B Cohen
S Murray	M Stubbings
D Wixley (as substitute for S Fontenelle)	

Officers:

M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)
P Hoy (Services Manager)

There were no members of the public present.

RG292 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Fontenelle and Kauffman. Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Fontenelle.

RG293 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG294 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG295 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG296 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk and Chairman had nothing to report.

RG297 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG298 Internal Financial Check

Members NOTED that Cllr Murray visited the office on 18 December 2023 and undertook a financial check on the purchase Invoices and cheques from the beginning of the 2023/24 financial year to date.

Cllr Murray advised the key focus was a check on random invoices, which all matched up, and that he was very impressed with officers, who were instantly able to answer any questions that arose.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for his support in undertaking this exercise.

RG299 Financial Assistance Working Group

The Committee AGREED that the members of this working group will continue to be Councillors M Owen, S Murray and G Wiskin.

Members also AGREED that the previous year's Town Mayor should also be invited to sit on the Financial Assistance Working Group. Cllr B Cohen accepted the invitation for the 2024/25 Financial Assistance awards.

The working group will continue to assess the financial grant applications and provide recommendations to the next Resources and General Services Committee meeting for the 2024/25 financial year.

RG300 Town / Parish Council Funding for Places of Worship

The Committee received and NOTED the SLCC update.

RG301 Council-wide Priorities 2024/25

Following discussion, the Committee discussed and NOTED the Council-wide Priorities report.

Cllr Wixley requested that under the Recreation Committee priorities list, that "current priority number 11 – Byelaws for Town Council land", be updated to read "Byelaws for Town Council land, specifically relating to Roding Valley Recreation Ground." The Town Clerk confirmed that this would be amended accordingly.

RG302 Considerations for 2024/25 Estimates following the Strategy & Staffing Group (SSG) meeting of 4 December 2023

Members received and NOTED the update from the Strategy & Staffing Group meeting on 4 December 2023 regarding precept increase.

RG303 Estimates for 2024/25

303.1 Budget Review

The Town Clerk provided an overview of the rationale and content of the draft budget calculations, and new Ear Marked Reserves, which were NOTED by the Committee.

303.2 Services Recharges

The Committee NOTED the report.

303.3 Tax Base

The new restated Tax Base for 2024/25 for Loughton Town Council, was NOTED by the Committee.

303.4 Committees' Estimates & RECOMMENDATIONS for Precept to Council

The Committee recognised the difficult economic climate, not least the ongoing 'cost of living' and 'utility costs,' crises which would be reflected in the expenditure categories for the following financial year. Also noted was the reduction in Earmarked Reserves.

The Committee NOTED the draft estimates and RECOMMENDED to Council that the precept for 2024/25 be set at £993,909, with the budget details (pre-service recharges) as follows:

Committee	Income	Expenditure
	£	£
Resources and General Services	21,000	612,808
Environment and Heritage	17,253	117,301
Recreation	162,346	497,105
Planning and Licensing	0	200
	200,599	1,227,414
Increase / Decrease in Earmarked Reserves		
Resources & General Services		5000
Environment & Heritage		5000
Recreation		-57,906
Planning and Licensing		0
Total	200,599	1,179,508
Net requirement	978,909	
Increase in General Reserves	15,000	
Final Net Requirement	993,909	76.35

This results in charges to band D increasing 6.95% from £71.39 (2023/24) to £76.35 (2024/25), (still comparably low) which equates to a rise of £4.96 annually, less than £0.095 weekly.

Members reiterated that the Council has worked intensively to keep this increase as low as possible, and that whilst November 23 inflation costs were encouraging, the overall effect on supplier costs are likely to be higher, due to the impact of earlier months CPI and RPI rates.

303.5 Public Loans Outstanding

The Committee NOTED the information provided on the current status of the public loans outstanding.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 7.27 pm.

Signed:

Date: 7 February 2024

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7 February 2024 at 7.30pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ.

Present:

Councillors: M Owen (in the Chair) from Min no 312
R Brookes B Cohen
S Murray (in the Chair until Cllr Owen arrived) M Stubbings

Also present: Cllr D Wixley

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There were no members of the public present.

RG304 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence received from Cllr Owen, as he would arrive late to the meeting.

In the absence of both the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Cllr Murray agreed to chair the meeting until Cllr Owen arrived.

RG305 Declarations of Interest

The Town Clerk read out the interests declared in respect of the Financial Assistance Award Scheme working party, involving Cllrs Cohen; Murray; Owen; and Wiskin.

Cllr S Murray – **Non-pecuniary interest** – 6. Christian Drama Resource Centre; 7. Citizens Advice – EF District; 8. Epping Forest Foodbank; 9. Epping Forest Heritage Trust; 13. Loughton Voluntary Care Association; 14. Restore Community – Grow Community Garden; 15. Restore Community – Noah's Ark Toddler Groups; 16. Restore Community – Oakwood Hill Community Centre; 17. Roding Valley Parkrun; 19. South Loughton Cricket Club; 22. & 23. St Mary's Church Loughton (applications a & b); 24. St Michael & All Angels Church – Little Angel Toddlers; 26. 3Food4U; 28. Youth Employment Strategy

Cllr Wixley declared a **non-pecuniary interest** for agenda item 10.1 for the Financial Assistance Applications 2024/25 for 9. Epping Forest Heritage Trust; 12. Loughton Cricket Club; 14. Restore Community – Grow Community Garden; 19. South Loughton Cricket Club and for agenda item 10.2 for 7. Citizens Advice Epping Forest District – as a member.

RG306 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2024 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG307 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG308 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk and Chairman had nothing to report.

RG309 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG310 Royal British Legion

The Committee NOTED the thank you letter received from the Royal British Legion for the contribution to the Poppy Appeal.

RG311 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED that the Annual Town Meeting will be held at 8pm at The Murray Hall, Borders Lane, Loughton IG10 3SB on Tuesday 5 March 2024. The format will be the same as the previous year.

Cllr Owen arrived during this item and took over as Chairman for the remainder of the meeting.

RG312 Meetings Schedule

The Town Clerk informed members that confirmation had just been received of Epping Forest District Council's (EFDC) meetings calendar for 2024/25, which was now available on their website.

The Town Clerk would investigate the possibility of amending the date of the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 23 April 2024, (due to a clash with an EFDC's Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting). Although he is generally, reluctant to do so, once the timetable had been set, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There are however likely to be a few amendments to the Planning and Licensing Committee meetings set for May 2024. This is because the meetings schedule was constructed before the notification of Town Council elections, scheduled for Thursday 2 May 2024.

The Committee AGREED to delegate the production of the Loughton Town Council draft meeting schedule for 2024/25 to the Town Clerk, subject to email consultation with members, and ratification at the first appropriate Town Council meeting. The Town Clerk advised the draft calendar of meetings would be produced and shared in due course.

RG313 Financial Assistance Applications 2024/25

313.1 General Applications

The Committee considered the proposals of the Working Party and noted a recommendation by a member, that application numbers 3. Affordable Counselling Epping Forest and 27. Voluntary Action Epping Forest should receive increased funding. The large volume of applications (which have increased significantly this year) added to the difficulty of appropriating allocations.

After some discussion it was AGREED to accept the original recommendations of the Working Party for the 2024/ 25 applications, and to make the following contributions from the scheme by granting financial assistance as listed below. Members also NOTED that it is

Council policy to withhold 10% in case of emergency applications during the year.

Members thanked the Deputy Town Clerk and Officers for their hard work on the scheme.

The Town Clerk also recognised the very thorough work of Councillors during the assessment process.

Organisation	Amount Granted £	Purpose of Grant
1. Accuro	500.00	Educational activities for children and young people
2. Action for Family Carers	0 Unsuccessful on this occasion	Club Lead (staff) costs
3. Affordable Counselling Epping Forest	500.00	Counselling sessions
4. Alfie James	200.00	Performance skills workshops
5. BASICS Essex	1,120.00	Equipping a volunteer Doctor
6. Christian Drama Resource Centre	500.00	Website update / PC upgrade / storage boxes / staff costs
8. Epping Forest Foodbank	3,000.00	Food supplies / rent
9. Epping Forest Heritage Trust	500.00	Core staff costs / conservation tools
10. Grant a Smile CIC	250.00	A community wide event celebrating diversity and culture
11. Loughton Baptist Church	0 Unsuccessful due to our criteria / NALC guidelines	Soundproofing of main hall / building
12. Loughton Cricket Club	500.00	Lawnmower
13. Loughton Voluntary Care Association	1,000.00	Operating costs
14. Restore Community – Grow Community Garden	2,500.00	Running costs
15. Restore Community – Noah's Ark Toddler Groups	2,500.00	Running costs
16. Restore Community – Oakwood Hill Community Centre	2,500.00	Operational costs

17. Roding Valley Parkrun	400.00	New PA system
18. Samaritans Redbridge Branch	700.00	Running costs
19. South Loughton Cricket Club	249.99	Jet washer
20. Spark – a branch of Worth Unlimited	1,500.00	Complex cases counselling service
21. St Clare Hospice	600.00	'Help people live well with dementia' garden project
22. St Mary's Church Loughton – (application a)	244.08	Additional chairs, with arms
23. St Mary's Church Loughton – (application b)	350.00	Table tennis table
24. St Michael & All Angels Church – Little Angel Toddlers	400.00	Play area matting / toys
25. The Lopping Endowment Corporate Trust	1,200.00	Renovation of brickwork / terracotta carvings
26. 3Food4U	3,000.00	Rent for venue
27. Voluntary Action Epping Forest	1,000.00	Benefit advice service
28. Youth Employment Strategy	1,750.00	3 conferences for school students at Waltham Abbey Marriott Hotel
Total awarded	26,964.07	

313.2 Citizens Advice – Epping Forest District

The Committee CONFIRMED that a separate budget item for a grant provision to Citizens Advice (CA) is in place. The budget allocation of £8,500 for 2024/25 was AGREED.

Organisation	Amount Granted £	Purpose
7. Citizens Advice – Epping Forest District	8,500.00	Running Costs

RG314 Financial Limits

The Committee confirmed and AGREED the financial limits, as listed in the agenda, are adequate.

RG315 Payments Procedures

The Committee reviewed and discussed the Direct Debit payments currently being made by the Council and NOTED that all instructions and Direct Debit mandates have previously been approved by the Council and the mandates authorised by two Councillor signatures.

RG316 Finance

316.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee's financial position as at 30 November 2023 along with available funds in earmarked reserves as at 30 November 2023 were NOTED.

316.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £566,639.62 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 383-386 have been made since the report to the meeting on 29 November 2023, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG317 Internal Auditor

The Chairman thanked officers for their work and the Committee NOTED the clean Interim Internal Audit Report from auditors Heelis and Lodge.

RG318 Insurance

Following discussion, members CONFIRMED the current levels of insurance cover as summarised.

RG319 Asset Register

The Committee NOTED the Register of Assets and Properties at 23 January 2024, and would follow up on a few minor points.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.16 pm.

Signed:

Date: 10 April 2024

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 10 April 2024 at 7.30pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ.

Present:

Councillors:	M Owen (in the Chair)	
	R Brookes	B Cohen
	S Fontenelle	W Kauffman
	S Murray	M Stubbings

Also present: Cllrs C Davies; J Riley and D Wixley

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There were 2 members of the public present.

The Chairman advised the meeting would be recorded.

RG320 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence received.

RG321 Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Murray and Fontenelle both declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 5 – Restore Community, due to their support of the organisation.

RG322 Confirmation of Minutes

Cllr Wixley had reported that the following amendments were required to minute no. RG313.1:

- Reference to 3. “Affordable Councillors Epping Forest”, should read 3. “Affordable Counselling Epping Forest”, and
- No number 7. In the list of organisations – this had been inadvertently missed from the Citizens Advice - Epping Forest District entry.

Both theses amendments had been made to the definitive version of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2024 and the minutes were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG323 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG324 Restore Community

Following discussions and questions, Councillors NOTED the presentation given by Jo Mackey – Head of Operations, and Hester Botha – Project Lead – Children and Families, on their Loughton projects/work across the Restore Community.

The update included information on their current projects:

- Noah’s Ark Pre-school – Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings.
- Grow Community Garden – Wednesday and Saturday.
- Holiday Club – runs every school holiday.
- TLG (transforming lives for good) – 1:1 coaching to primary school children.
- Community Hub – Thursday mornings.

- Multiply – In partnership with Essex County Council, helping parents support their children's maths learning, and

Future projects:

- Community Health Hub.
- Homework Club.
- Lunch Club for Seniors.
- Youth Club for over 11's.

A member and the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Jo and Hester for their time and informative update.

RG325 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk reported:

- A grant of £30,000.00 has been received from Epping Forest District Council UK shared prosperity fund, for the redevelopment of Newmans Lane playground.
- A portrait of the King, which we applied for, has now been received and will be displayed in the Council Chamber in due course.
- An evening induction course for the new Council, following the May 2024 elections, will be arranged following the completion and signing of the declarations of interest.

The Chairman had nothing to report.

RG326 Training and Conferences

Members NOTED the update on training.

A member advised one of the key learnings from the defibrillator training, was the requirement to phone to obtain a code to open the defibrillator cabinet.

RG327 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED the draft minutes for the 2024 Annual Town Meeting held on 5 March 2024, have been circulated and no issues requiring further consideration by the Town Council had arisen.

RG328 Staff Salaries 2024/25

The Committee NOTED the update.

RG329 Staff Appraisals

Members NOTED that all staff appraisals have now been completed. Following discussion, the Town Clerk advised that the Town Clerk's appraisal should be discussed and considered by members at the Strategy and Staffing meeting.

RG330 Meetings Schedule

The Committee NOTED the 2024/25 definitive schedule of meetings for Loughton Town Council has been agreed and circulated.

RG331 80th Anniversary of D-Day Landings Commemoration

The Committee NOTED the report on the Lighting of the Beacon commemoration event on Hillyfields Open Space on the 6 June 2024, and receipt of the certificate of grateful recognition.

Cllr Kauffman advised he could procure an army jeep, which could be present at the commemoration event, and advised he could complete a risk assessment if officers could send him requirements.

RG332 Finance

332.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee's financial position as at 31 January 2024 along with available funds in earmarked reserves as at 31 January 2024 were NOTED. The Town Clerk / Deputy Town Clerk explained the process of the service charge.

332.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £332,229.70 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 387-388 have been made since the report to the meeting on 7 February 2024, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG333 Internal Financial Check

Members NOTED Cllr Murray had visited the office on 26 March 2024, and undertook an internal financial inspection of monthly payroll / tax & NI / pensions from 1 April 2023 to date.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for his support.

RG334 Annual Insurance

The Committee NOTED the annual insurance premium for 2024/25 (year 3 of a 3-year contract with Zurich), which also includes fully comprehensive insurance for the Town Council's lease van.

Following discussions on the work required to the Town Council's lease van, it was agreed to proceed with the repairs.

RG335 Governance and Accountability

The Committee NOTED and AGREED the following reviews and risk assessments.

335.1 Internal Audit

335.1.1 Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit

335.1.2 Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control.

335.2 Risk Assessment and Management

RG336 Year End 2023/24 Accounts

Following an update from the Town Clerk, members NOTED the tight time frame to complete the Year / End Financials for 2023/24. As the first full Council meeting of the new Town Council has had to be brought forward a week, the annual Council Financials would appear as an appendix to be received and reviewed on the evening of the meeting itself.

The Town Clerk advised the move to electronic banking would be arranged following the elections in May 24, to enable signatories to be considered / agreed. The Chairman requested this is added to the agenda for the next Resources and General Services committee in June 2024.

RG337 2024/25 Fees for Hall Hire; Football Pitches and Licence Fees

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG338 2024/25 Cemetery Fees / Licence for vehicle access to Roding Road allotment site

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG339 Franking Machine

Following discussion, the Committee AGREED to serve notice to the Council's current Franking Machine provider, using up the current balance of postage within the machine, and transfer to using postage stamps.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.40pm.

Signed:

Date: 26 June 2024