



RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Members of the Resources and General Services Committee
are summoned to attend a Meeting at **7pm** on

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court,
Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ

to transact the business as shown in the agenda.

Mark Squire
Town Clerk
10 January 2024

Councillor M Owen (Chairman)
Councillor S Fontenelle (Vice Chairman)

Councillors
R Brookes
S Murray

B Cohen
M Stubbings

W Kauffman

Note to Councillors:
If you are unable to attend the meeting,
please phone your apologies to the office on 020 8508 4200.

A G E N D A

- 1 Apologies for absence**
To RECEIVE any apologies for absence.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
Councillors to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any items on the agenda.
- 3 Confirmation of Minutes**
To CONFIRM the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2023.
- 4 Public Representations**
To hear any representations from members of the public who have registered a request to address the Committee in accordance with no 5, Appendix C, of the Standing Orders.
- 5 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report**
To report (for discussion only) on any further significant information / matters that may be of interest to Committee members.
- 6 Training and Conferences**
The Deputy Town Clerk / RFO attended a 'Worknest' webinar on "Employment Law update / what's coming in 2024", which highlighted key changes to be aware of.

To receive and note.
- 7 Internal Financial Check**
To NOTE that Councillor Murray visited the office on the 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.
- 8 Financial Assistance Working Group**
The Committee is asked to confirm the three members of this working group to continue in 2024/25 to consider the grant applications. Currently Councillors M Owen, S Murray and G Wiskin.

Members are also asked to AGREE whether, as the working party suggested, the previous year's Town Mayor, should also be invited to sit on the Financial Assistance working group.
- 9 Town / Parish Council Funding for Places of Worship**
The SLCC provides an update on an amendment to the Local Government Act 1894. See pages 3-4.

To receive and note
- 10 Council-wide Priorities 2024/25**
The Committee are asked to NOTE the report on pages 5-8. NB the pages may need to be revisited after the Estimates discussions.

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

At the SSG meeting members were envisaging a precept increase of c7% given the financial information available at this time.

To receive and note.

12 Estimates for 2024/25

To review the Committees' budgets for the forthcoming financial year and agree a recommendation for the level of Precept for 2024/25 to be made to the meeting of the Council to be held on Tuesday 30th January 2024. See report on pages 9-10 and Appendix 1.

Mark Squire
TOWN CLERK
10 January 2024

Agenda Item 9
Town / Parish Council Funding for Places of Worship

As part of the Lords Report Stage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the government made an amendment to the Local Government Act 1894 with the aim of clarifying that there is nothing to prevent local councils from funding churches and other places of worship.

The amendment, which will be inserted after section 19 of the Local Government Act 1894 is:

19A Powers under other enactments (1) Nothing in this Part affects any powers, duties or liabilities conferred on a parish council by or under any other enactment (whenever passed or made). (2) This section does not apply in relation to community councils (see section 179(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

Parliamentary Explanatory Note: This amendment inserts a new section into the Local Government Act 1894 to clarify that the powers conferred on parish councils under Part 1 of that Act do not affect any powers, duties or liabilities of parish councils conferred by or under any other enactment (whenever passed or made).

To seek further clarification, particularly around what funding can be used for, whether it applies to town and community councils in Wales and if it applies to all faiths, SLCC wrote to the Department of Levelling, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

The DLUHC response reiterated that there was nothing in the 1894 Act prohibiting parish councils from funding the maintenance and upkeep of churches and other religious buildings should they wish to do so. Also, that this new amendment clarifies that the Local Government Act 1894 does not affect the powers, duties or liabilities of parish councils in England under any other legislation. It also confirmed that the amendment applies to England only. Furthermore, the amendment does not limit funding to any denomination.

SLCC with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has long campaigned for a change in the legislation. We interpret this amendment as

confirming that parish councils can continue to use existing specific powers in respect of church property (e.g. powers to maintain open churchyards and church clocks). What remains less clear is whether it creates a power to fund any maintenance or improvement works relating to affairs of the church or an ecclesiastical charity. Neither is it clear if S137 of the 1972 Local Government Act can be used for such work. Of course, as the DLUHC response points out, only the courts are authorised to give an authoritative legal interpretation of the legislation.

Relevant updates to existing SLCC advice will be made soon.

Agenda item 10
Council-wide Priorities 2024/25

OVERALL PRIORITIES 2024/25		
Ranking	Committee	Activity
1	Recreation	Jessel Green Day
2	Environment & Heritage	Loughton Day
3	Planning & Licensing	Local Plan modifications
4	Resources and General Services	Transfer to electronic banking

PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE – Priorities 2024/25

Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail (current position)
Current activities		
High	Local Plan	Further deliberations
High	Planning and Licensing	Responding to applications
High	All other matters within the committee's	terms of reference
Medium	Design Award Scheme	Annual award presentation

RECREATION COMMITTEE – Priorities 2024/25

Current Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail (current position)
Current Activities		
1	Jessel Green Day	Preparation and organisation
2	Solar energy installations for Council buildings	Further research and budgetary allowance
3	Halls heating systems	Further research and budgetary allowance
4	Other playgrounds	New works/upgrading's
5	RVRG path maintenance	Budgetary constraints
6	RVRG	Improvements to changing rooms area
7	Land adjacent to Willingale Road Allotment	Use as a nature reserve/community orchard. Some clearance and environmental studies undertaken
8	Hillyfields litter bins	Working with EFDC
9	Hillyfields landscaping / new gate	Specifications and costings
10	Roding Valley Recreation Ground	Registration as a "Field in Trust"

11	Byelaws for Town Council land	To be researched
	On-going Activites	
High	Running the committee	Agenda, reports, research, minutes, finance, admin
High	Kingsley and Murray Halls	Bookings, admin, finance, maintenance and works
High	Open spaces including the Memorial Garden in Roding Road	Maintenance
High	Willingale Road Playing Field and Roding Valley Recreation Ground	Football lettings, maintenance and works
High	Playgrounds / outdoor gyms	Maintenance
High	Responding to consultations	Variable
High	Any other matters within the committee's terms of reference	As detailed in the Standing Orders
High	Provision of Public Access Defibrillators	Maintenance

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE – Priorities 2024/26

Current Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail/Current Position
	Current activities	
High	Loughton Day / Heritage Open Days	September events + heritage trail/leaflets – 2024
High	Loughton Cemetery Wall	Work to commence soonest
High	Registration of Village Greens	Historically applications submitted to ECC
High	Conservation Areas / areas of local landscape merit	Monitor proposals submitted to EFDC Local List review TBC
High	Liaison with City of London Corporation	All aspects re Epping Forest including route signage
High	Weekly food market in the High Street	Soonest
High	St John the Baptist – Closed Churchyard	Continue dialogue
Medium	Lady Whitaker's Mead	Development of new cemetery /or other project
	On-going activities	
High	Running the committee	Agenda, reports, research, minutes, finance, admin
High	Community Lavatory scheme	Awaiting approaches to businesses
High	Cemetery (Church Lane)	Burials, administration, maintenance Rules and Regulations review
High	War memorials	Inspect and maintain
High	Heritage plaques, drinking fountain, seats and other street furniture; Lopping Hall clock	Installation and maintenance
High	Allotments	Lettings, licences, administration

High	Christmas lights (Kings Green, The Broadway and High Road)	Installation, inspections and maintenance
High	Christmas Window Competition	Admin and arrangements
High	Winter salt bag partnership	Facilitating the ECC scheme Replacement of existing grit bins
High	Responding to consultations	Variable
High	Any other matters within the Committee's terms of reference	

Resources and General Services – Priorities 2024/25

Priority	Main Function	Greater Detail/Current Position
Current activities		
High	Transfer to Electronic Banking	Transfer to Unity Bank; amalgamating / reducing current banking arrangements
High	Additional Signatories	The addition of two further Councillor signatories to bank accounts
Medium	Local Council Awards	To commence in stages in 2024
Low	Council structure	Continuing reviews
On-going activities		
High	Seeking external funding sources	Targeted action
High	Banking arrangements and investments	Kept under review
High	Running the Committee	
High	Admin for whole council	
High	Council and committee agendas and minutes	
High	All council finances, end of year accounts, audit etc	
High	Management of Buckingham Crt	
High	Personnel and employment matters, staff management	Staff Handbook reviews as required
High	IT and office equipment	
High	Civic matters	Civic Celebrations incl Citizenship Awards
High	Annual Report	Preparation and printing
High	Newsletter	Editorial, printing and distribution
High	Noticeboards	Maintenance and installation
High	Publicity and website	
High	Annual Town Meeting	Arrangements and admin
High	Christmas Card competition	Arrangements and admin
High	Emergency Plan	Amendments and circulation
High	Financial Assistance Scheme	Admin and finance
High	New legislative requirements	
High	Policy reviews	On-going
High	Responding to consultations	Variable

High	Contract reviews	On-going
High	Training strategy	Annual review
High	Any other matters within the Committee's terms of reference	
Low	Community Forum	Arrangements and admin

Agenda item 12
Estimates for 2024/25

1 Budget Review

All the Committees have now considered their draft budgets for 2024/25 and provided their estimates for consideration by this Committee.

* See Appendix 1

For information, the latest Retail Price Index (RPI) figure is 3.9% as of November 2023, and the latest Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) 4.2% as of November 2023.

2 Service Recharges

These are internal transfers reflecting the cost of running each committee and do not affect the total budgeted expenditure. They are included in the spreadsheet budget figures for 2024/25 provided in the reports. Once the budget has been reviewed, the service recharge for each committee will be calculated and included in the figures for presentation to the Council.

3 Tax Base

The tax base which will be used to calculate the 2024/25 Band D Council Tax for Loughton Town Council as confirmed by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is 13,017.5 (12,667.9 in 23/24). This is the figure that when divided into the precept gives the Band D annual amount per household. Effectively this means that the base precept level available to the Town Council is slightly increased from last year.

EFDC explains the Tax Base as follows: -

Council Tax Base - This is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area. To calculate the tax base for an area, the number of dwellings in each council tax band shown on the Valuation List is reduced to take account of discounts and exemptions. The resulting figure for each band is then multiplied by its proportion relative to Band D (from 6/9 for Band A to 18/9 for Band H) and the total across all eight bands is calculated. An adjustment is then made for the collection rate. The tax base figure that is used by the billing authority when it sets its council tax uses an adjustment for the collection rate, the actual discount for second homes and any premium applicable to empty homes.

4 Committees' Estimates

The summary of the Committees' estimates taking into account each Committee's requests is 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 EMR		
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

The Earmarked Funds summary is shown on Appendix 1 page 11. An overall net reduction in Earmarked Funds of £47,906 is recorded.

This would result in a 6.95% (£4.96) increase on the Band D charge from £71.39 to £76.35.

The Committee is asked to consider the options, and agree

- I. If and where the savings are to be made; and/or
- II. which new items of expenditure are to be included in the budget; and
- III. the estimates

This will provide a **RECOMMENDATION of the level of precept for 2024/2025** to be made to the meeting of the Council on 30 January 2024.

5 Public Loans Outstanding's

For information, please see below for details of the current status of public loans outstanding.

Summary of outstanding loans to Council				
Figures refer to capital balance outstanding				
Purpose		Opening balance	Closing balance 31.12.23	End date of loan
			2023	
Buckingham Court	19.1.01	400,000	53,055.74	19.01.26
Community Centre (1)	28.3.02	500,000	115,341.33	28.03.27
Community Centre (2)	28.6.02	500,000	113,387.57	28.06.27
Total		1,400,000	281,784.64	