

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

**MINUTES of the Meeting held by ZOOM
on Wednesday, 14 October 2020 at 7.15pm**

Present:

Councillors: J Jennings (in the Chair)
J Angold-Stephens M Dalton J Jogia
J Mahoney S Murray A Omer

Also present:

Councillors: D Wixley

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
B Smith (Assistant Town Clerk)

RG247 Apologies for absence
No apologies for absence were received.

RG248 Declarations of Interest
Cllr Dalton declared a non-pecuniary interest in the application for Rotary Club of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell.
Cllr Mahoney declared a non-pecuniary interest in the application for Rotary Club of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell.
Cllr Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in the application for Rotary Club of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell.

RG249 Confirmation of Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and will be signed by the Chairman.

RG250 Public Representations
None were received.

RG251 Town Clerk's Report
The Town Clerk reported on the following items:

- The second instalment of the Precept, £378,222, was received into the Council's Santander bank account on 18 September 2020.
- The Strategy and Staff Group meeting on 21 August 2020.
 - In the budget assessment to date (impacted by Covid) there would definitely be a downturn in income, largely due the closure of Town Council halls, but the financial situation should be manageable.
 - The revised staffing structure shows Pippa Bryce promoted to the new position of Assistant Town Clerk (Civic & Administration) and Brent Smith as Assistant Town Clerk (Finance). A new Assistant Finance and Administration Officer has just been appointed.
 - There would be no reappointment of a Community Officer (no community events currently) or Assistant Caretaker (restricted use of halls) until the Covid situation has substantially eased.

- It was agreed for a small allowance for beverages for council staff and external visitors to Town Council premises.
- It was agreed that the Town Council would maintain a skeleton staff presence and reduced opening hours during the festive break between Christmas and New Year 2021.

The Town Clerk would be preparing a fuller written report for the Town Council Meeting on the 28 October 2020

RG252 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the following courses / conferences have been attended / booked: -

- Cllr D Wixley and the Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer - Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) AGM - 24 September 2020
- Assistant Town Clerk (Finance) – First Aid at Work (Requalification) - St. Johns Ambulance 28 and 29 October 2020
- Cemetery Attendant – Brushcutters/Trimmers Maintenance and Operation - 15 and 16 October 2020 at Writtle University College, Chelmsford, Essex
- Pesticide Application PA1 - 18 November 2020 at Writtle University College, Chelmsford
- Pesticide Application PA6A – 24 November 2020 at Writtle University College, Chelmsford, Essex

RG253 EALC AGM 2020

Cllr D Wixley and the Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer attended the annual EALC AGM dated 24 September 2020. The Town Clerk reported that at the meeting members were asked to approve a constitutional change in clause 4.05, effectively removing Town & Parish Clerks from the EALC Executive Committee, however the motion was not passed.

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG254 Citizenship Awards

The Committee CONFIRMED its commitment to the annual Citizenship Awards and approved the revised application form. It was noted that the existing scheme does also allow the Town Council to recognise those residents who provide exemplary service or charitable work (not necessarily directly attributable to Loughton). This would not however be one of the mainstream awards.

RG255 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED that the 2020 Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10 March 2021 commencing at 8pm in the Murray Hall. Whilst this is not a council meeting, all town councillors are expected to attend.

The Committee AGREED to continue with the format used at last year's meeting by inviting local organisations and voluntary groups, particularly those in receipt of Financial Assistance from the Council, to mount displays at the event to attract more public interest. The organisations successful in their grant applications for 2021/22 would also be presented with a certificate by the Town Mayor.

All are subject to the Covid implications at the time.

RG256 IT Update

The Committee NOTED the report from the Assistant Town Clerk on the agreed update of the office computer and IT Systems.

Cllr Murray requested that now some office staff are working from home and using council laptops, there should be a policy / procedure for usage of laptops at home.

RG257 Website Accessibility

The Committee NOTED the attached report and approved the Accessibility Statement.

The Committee thanked Debra Paris for her work on updating the council's website.

RG258 Local Council Awards

The Committee NOTED that the 'Foundation' and 'Quality' Local Council Awards levels have now been updated and the checklist for both levels will be approved at the full Town Council Meeting on 28 October 2020 for members to endorse. It is envisaged that the Gold reaccreditation will be achieved by the end of 2020.

RG259 Christmas Closedown Arrangements

It was NOTED that the Town Council Offices would close on Thursday 24 December at 12 noon, reopen on Tuesday 29 and Wednesday 30 December from 10am to 4pm. The offices would close early on Thursday 31 December at 12.45 pm. Then close on Friday 1 January 2021. The offices would then reopen as normal from 9am on Monday 4 January 2021.

RG260 Remembrance Service

The Committee RESOLVED to donate £100 to the Royal British Legion in support of the Poppy Appeal and towards the cost of the wreath to be laid by the Town Mayor at the Remembrance Service in November 2020.

RG261 National Salary Award

The Committee NOTED that on 26 August 2020, the National Joint Council for Local Government Service agreed new pay scales for 2020/21 which have been implemented from 1 April 2020.

RG262 Finance & Administration Assistant Position

The Town Clerk reported that the Finance & Administration Assistant position had been offered to Lyndsey Mitchell who should be able to start in early November 2020.

**RG263 Financial Assistance
General Applications 2020/21**

The Committee considered the grant request from the Rotary Club of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell and CONFIRMED it can be awarded.

RG264 Current Financial Position

The current financial position was NOTED.

RG265 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that Payments totalling £197,962.78 as detailed on payment schedules nos 315 - 319 have been made since the report to the meeting on 24 June 2020.

The Committee AGREED that in lieu of the current ZOOM meetings, the payment schedules should be sent to the Chairman and Vice Chairman before subsequent Committee meetings. The schedules and accompanying invoices are available at the council offices for inspection.

The Committee NOTED that details of all Council payments in excess of £500 are provided on the Council's website on the strategic documents page.
http://www.loughton-tc.gov.uk/Finance_and_Transparency_2580.aspx

RG266 Internal Audit Report 2019/20

The Committee NOTED the internal auditor's final report for 2019/20 which had been circulated electronically to all members.

The Town Clerk reported a clean audit. Officers were congratulated on such an excellent report.

RG267 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2020/21

The Committee noted that the current auditors had been in place for a considerable number of years, and considered the options and under the spirit of Best Value, CONFIRMED the following:

1. Healys & Lodge were to be appointed as the Council's internal auditors for 2020/21
2. This would be a 5-year appointment.
3. The scope of their work was AGREED as follows:
 - i. Accounting arrangements and bank reconciliations
 - ii. Corporate governance
 - iii. Review of expenditure
 - iv. Assessment and management of risk
 - v. Precept determination and budgetary control
 - vi. Income controls
 - vii. Petty cash account
 - viii. Salaries and wages
 - ix. Asset control, investments and loans
 - x. Year-end procedures

RG268 Internal Financial Check

The Committee NOTED that a further appointment with Cllr Jogia will be set for the next internal financial check and the Assistant Town Clerk reported that this would take place on Thursday 15 October 2020.

RG269 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Committee is RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the following two items in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as they contain confidential information relating to contractual matters.

RG270 Buckingham Court

The Committee NOTED the report from the Town Clerk.

RG271 Councils Water Supplier

The Committee NOTED the report from the Assistant Town Clerk.

Signed:
Date: 2 December 2020