

**LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL**

**RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES of the Meeting held by ZOOM  
on Wednesday, 10 February 2021 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:** P Beales S Pewsey D Wixley

**Officers:** M Squire (Town Clerk)  
B Smith (Assistant Town Clerk - Finance)

**Press:** D Jackman (Everything Epping Forest)

**RG302 Apologies for absence**  
No Apologies for absence were received

**RG303 Declarations of Interest**  
With regard to Agenda items 7 Epping Forest Car Park Consultation, 9 Laptops (i) School Laptops, 10.1 Financial Assistance, General Applications and 10.2 Citizens Advice – Epping Forest, Councillors made the following declarations:

**Cllr Jennings** declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 through involvement with the Epping Forest Heritage Trust, and in 10.1 for the applications for Loughton Voluntary Care Association and Citizens Advice Epping Forest District.

**Cllr Murray** declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7 through involvement with the Epping Forest Heritage Trust, Item 9 (i) working for Loughton Secondary Schools and Items 10.1 in the applications for Epping Forest Re-use, Restore Group – Grow, Noah’s Ark Play Group, Oakwood Hill Community Centre, Oakwood Hill Youth Club, Willingale Community Garden, Loughton Voluntary Care Association, 3Food4U- Rotary Club of Loughton, St. Michael and All Angels Church, and Citizens Advice Epping Forest District.

**Cllr Angold-Stephens** declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10.1 for the applications for Oakwood Hill Community Centre and Citizens Advice Epping Forest District.

**Cllr Dalton** declared a Pecuniary interest in item 10.1 for the application for Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF).

**Cllr Mahoney** declared a non-pecuniary interest item 10.1 for the applications for Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF), 3Food4U-Rotary Club of Loughton, and Tinder Sticks CIC.

**Cllr Mahoney** declared a non-pecuniary interest item 10.1 for the applications for Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF), 3Food4U-Rotary Club of Loughton, and Tinder Sticks CIC.

**Cllr Wixley** although not a member of this committee declared non pecuniary interests in item 10.1 as a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust and in 10.2 as a member of Citizens Advice.

**RG304 Confirmation of Minutes**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2021 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and will be signed by the Chairman.

**RG305 Public Representations**

None were received.

**RG306 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report**

The Town Clerk reported that due to limited resources, during this difficult Covid-19 period, applications for the Local Council Awards have been deferred until such time as circumstances allow. He also informed members that there had been a couple of changes to the award criteria, and in particular regarding the Newsletter which can now be produced in digital format without a full paper distribution. Also the Council needs to make a statement (to be minuted as such) regarding the stance against crime and disorder.

An appointment has been booked with the newly appointed Internal Auditor to attend the Council offices on the 23 February 2021, to carry out an interim audit.

**RG307 Meetings Schedule**

The Committee NOTED that as Epping Forest District Council's (EFDC) schedule of meetings timetable will not be available until their agenda of 15 February 2021 and not then presented to the EFDC meeting of 25 February 2021, it is unlikely that a draft of our own timetable will be available for the next Town Council Meeting on the 17 February 2021. The Town Clerk would inform the Town Council at the next meeting and prepare a draft soonest for circulation to members, on the basis that it would be ratified at the next Resources and General Services meeting on 7 April 2021.

**RG308 Epping Forest Car Park Consultation**

The issue was discussed in some length. There was a general concern that car parking could be displaced into residential streets adjoining the forest ,creating additional problems and increasing pollution levels.

The Committee AGREED to make their own individual responses to this consultation.

Cllr Beales joined the meeting during the next item.

**RG309 Annual Town Meeting**

Committee Members reviewed the options and noted that there were valid reasons for and against holding the meeting. If the meeting were to be held at all, it would need to be held remotely. The Committee AGREED to defer the decision and take to the Council Meeting on the 17 February 2021. Further guidance maybe forthcoming by this time.

**RG310 Laptops**

(i) School laptops

The Committee AGREED that there were sufficient funds available via other school and government sources and therefore no further requirement for the Council to contribute.

Cllr Murray thanked Cllr Beales for bringing this matter to the attention of the Committee

(ii) Office laptops

The Town Clerk reported that during the Covid-19 lockdowns, a number of staff that are working at home were not able to work as constructively as they normally do on behalf of the Council, due to a lack of or inadequate laptops and difficulty in accessing the server. There was also a need to access Adobe Acrobat

functions for some colleagues. Members stressed the need to provide adequate equipment, especially during these difficult times.

The Committee AGREED that;

- laptops and ancillary PC functions should be purchased up to a limit of £2,000. Any figure above this level should be agreed with the Chairman of this Committee.
- that a safeguarding policy for staff using Town Council laptops be formulated and agreed by this Committee at a future meeting.

Cllr Omer left the meeting during the next item.

**RG311 Financial Assistance Applications 2021/22**  
**311.1 General Applications**

Cllr Jogia wished it to be NOTED to thank the Chairman and the members of the Financial Assistance Working Group for their hard work in preparing for the meeting. She added that there was a general consensus of agreement in the amounts granted in principle. She felt that the quality of the applications was high and that the organisations awarded these grants do a wonderful job for the Loughton community.

Cllr Murray praised the Town Council's policy for making such substantive grants available to the Community on an annual basis.

The Committee RESOLVED to make the following contributions from the scheme by granting financial assistance to:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Amount Granted £</b>	<b>Purpose of Grant</b>
Affordable Counselling Epping Forest (ACEF)	400.00	Counselling Sessions
Alfie James Productions	200.00	Performance Skills Workshop
Epping Forest Re-Use	200.00	Tools
Grow (Restore Comm.)	4,000.00	Mobility Path & Running Costs
Noah's Ark Play Group (Restore Comm.)	2,500.00	Crafts, Toys & Running Costs
Oakwood Hill Community Centre (Restore Comm.)	3,000.00	Operational Costs
Oakwood Hill Youth Club (Restore Comm.)	2,000.00	Supplies & Crafts
Willingale Community Garden (Restore Comm.)	2,000.00	Activities & New Shed
Loughton Voluntary Care Association	450.00	Running Costs & Hyacinth Bulbs
Rotary Club of Loughton - 3Food4u	2,500.00	Venue Rent
Samaritans – Redbridge Branch	600.00	Running Costs
St Michael & All Angels Church Loughton	2,000.00	Play Area

Tinder Sticks CIC	750.00	Outreach Events
Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF)	1,500.00	Providing Benefits Advice
<b>Total awarded</b>	<b>£22,100.00</b>	

**311.2 Citizens Advice – Epping Forest District**

The Committee CONFIRMED that a separate budget item for a grant provision to the Citizens Advice is in place. The budget allocation of £8,500 for 2021/22 was AGREED.

Organisation	Amount Granted £	Purpose
Citizens Advice – Epping Forest District	8,500.00	Running costs

**RG312 Financial Regulations**

**312.1 Annual Review**

The Committee is NOTED that the annual review of the Financial Regulations was APPROVED by Loughton Town Council, on 8 July 2020 as per minute RG240.

**312.2 Financial Limits**

The Committee CONFIRMED the financial limits below were adequate.

Topic	Amount £	Last reviewed	Last changed
Limit of imprest on no 2 a/c	40,000	Feb 2020	July 2018
Limit of officers signing cheques on no 2 a/c Except for Salary/Autopay – Essex Pensions - HMRC Other items subject to £150 cheque limit for officers	150	Feb 2020	April 2010
Limit of imprest on Security Deposits a/c	3,000	Feb 2020	April 2006
Limit of cheques on Security Deposits a/c	none	Feb 2020	April 2006
Petty cash imprest	150	Feb 2020	-
Urgent repair work etc without budgetary provision (FR 3.4)	5,000	Feb 2020	April 2008
Additional audit work of external auditor (FR 12.1)	750	Feb 2020	May 2004
Tenders to be obtained (FR 12.3, 12.6 & 12.8)	over 50,000	Feb 2020	May 2004
3 quotes to be obtained (FR 12.8)	10,000 to 50,000	Feb 2020	May 2004
3 estimates to be obtained (FR 12.8)	2,000 to 10,000	Feb 2020	May 2004
Public Contracts Regulations 2015 apply	over £25,000	Feb 2020	Feb 2016
Bad debts may be written off by RFO	250	Feb 2020	Feb 2014
Credit card:			
No 1 Town Clerk	1,000	Feb 2020	Nov 2004
No 2 Services Manager	1,000	Feb 2020	Feb 2020

**312.3 Payments Procedures**

It was noted that all instructions and the direct debit mandates had previously been approved by the Council and the mandates authorised by two councillor signatures. The Committee reviewed and CONFIRMED the list of payments currently made by direct debit as follows:

Name	Gross Amount	Frequency	Due date	Purpose
Peninsula Business Services	£241.11	Monthly	4 <sup>th</sup>	HR services
Epping Forest District Council	£ 1012.00	Monthly	20 <sup>th</sup>	Business rates for Kingsley & Murray Halls, RVRG & WRPf changing rooms
World Pay (formerly Streamline)	Various	Monthly	18 <sup>th</sup>	Hire of terminal for credit/debit card payments and associated fees/charges
Crown Gas & Power	Various	Quarterly	10 days after invoice date	Gas supply at Murray Hall and Kingsley Hall
SSE	Various	Monthly	Various	Electricity supply at RVRG, Cemetery, Murray Hall, Kingsley Hall, WRPf and Kings Green
First Business Water	Various	Monthly	End of Month	Water Supply at Cemetery, Murray Hall, Kingsley Hall, WR Pavilion, WR Allotments.
The Comms Guys	Various	Monthly	20 <sup>th</sup> of Month	Phones and Broadband at Head Office
Pitney Bowes	Various	Monthly	Various	Postage: Franking Machine at Head Office
EE	Various	Monthly	30 <sup>th</sup>	Mobile phones for external staff
NatWest	Various	Monthly	27 <sup>th</sup>	Credit card purchases (in full, monthly)
Public Works Loan Board	£14,103.22	Half yearly	19 <sup>th</sup> Jan/July	Loan repayment Buckingham Court
Public Works Loan Board	£18,295.62	Half yearly	28 <sup>th</sup> Mar/Sept	Loan repayment Murray Hall (1)
Public Works Loan Board	£17,849.89	Half yearly	1 <sup>st</sup> June/Dec	Loan repayment Murray Hall (2)
ICO	£55.00	Annually	Sept	Subscription

- RG313 Finance**  
**313.1 Current Financial Position**  
The Committee's financial position and details of the funds available from earmarked reserves as at 30 November 2020 were NOTED.
- 313.2 Accounts Paid**  
It was NOTED that payments totalling £217,927.51 as detailed on payment schedules no. 321-323 until 18 January 2021 have been made and entered on the accounts system, since the report to the meeting on 2 December 2020 (see pages 20 – 22). Schedules and accompanying invoices were available at the council offices for inspection.
- RG314 Insurance – Annual Review**  
The Committee considered and NOTED the report. It was highlighted that we are covered for loss of business Insurance. The Assistant Town Clerk reported that he did try to claim in the earlier part of last year during the Covid-19 lockdown and the claim was rejected by the Insurance company. In September 2020 there was a Government Directive that these claims should be assessed and therefore he has re-applied to claim for the loss of business.  
The Committee requested that the cover levels for the Drinking Fountain and all the Notice Boards in Loughton are reviewed.
- RG315 Asset Register**  
The Register of Assets and Properties as at 31 January 2021 was reviewed and AGREED as presented in the Agenda.
- RG316 Essex County Council – Micro Grant Communication & Technology Support Fund**  
The Committee NOTED the availability of the Essex County Council Micro Grant Communication & Technology Support Fund.
- RG317 Exclusion of the Press and Public**  
The Committee RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the following item in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as it contained confidential information relating to contractual matters.
- RG318 Buckingham Court – Min no RGS 290**  
The Committee NOTED the oral update.
- RG319 Councils Water Supplier – Min no RGS 271**  
The Committee NOTED the oral update.

Signed: .....  
Date: 7 April 2021