

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 5 October 2022 at 7.30pm at Loughton Library & Town Hall.

Present:

Councillors: M Owen (in the Chair)
 R Brookes W Kauffman S Murray
 C P Pond (as substitute for Cllr Jennings) M Stubbings
 D Wixley (as substitute for Cllr Cohen)

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
 K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer)

There were no members of the public present.

- RG132 Apologies for absence**
 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jennings and Cohen. The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Owen (Vice Chairman would chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Jennings). Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Cohen, and Cllr C P Pond for Cllr Jennings.
- RG133 Declarations of Interest**
 No Declarations of Interest were received.
- RG134 Confirmation of Minutes**
 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2022 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.
- RG135 Public Representations**
 There were no public representations.
- RG136 Town Clerk’s / Chairman’s Report**
 The Town Clerk & Chairman had nothing to report.
- RG137 Training and Conferences**
 The Committee NOTED the update on training undertaken / meetings attended.
- RG138 Christmas Closedown Arrangements 2022**
 The Committee NOTED in line with the existing Town Council policy agreed in February 2008 and updated October 2021, that the office is operational with ‘skeleton staffing’ and reduced hours over the Christmas period as follows:-

Friday 23 December	Closed 12 noon
Monday 26 December	Closed
Tuesday 27 December	Closed
Wednesday 28 December	10am – 3pm
Thursday 29 December	10am – 3pm
Friday 30 December	10am – 12.45pm
Monday 2 January	Closed

RG139 Citizens Awards

The Committee CONFIRMED its commitment to the annual Citizen Awards, and members were reminded of the importance of their support in encouraging local nominations.

RG140 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED the 2023 Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15 March 2023, commencing at 8pm in the Murray Hall, and AGREED they would like the meeting to continue in the same format as last year.

RG141 Finance

141.1 Current Financial Position

The Town Clerk reported that :

- Buckingham Court's building maintenance and utility costs would be over budget this financial year, as the decision for the office move had not been finalised when the budget forecasts were made in the previous financial year.
- Earmarked Reserves (EMR's) for Buckingham Court would be used in support of the removal costs.
- General insurance costs had increased from the previous year.

The Committee NOTED the report.

141.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £330,330.06 as detailed on payment schedules no. 353-358 have been made since the report to the meeting on 5 July 2022.

The Town Clerk reiterated that the Town Council's financial operations would be moved to electronic banking / BACS when possible.

RG142 Internal Financial Check

The Committee NOTED that Councillor Murray visited the office on 24 August 2022 and undertook a financial check on Purchase Orders and Receipts from the start of the 2022/23 financial year until the end of July 2022.

Cllr Murray expressed how impressed he was by the working knowledge of the two staff members who supported his visit.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for completing this exercise.

RG143 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2021/22

The Committee NOTED that:

- PKF Littlejohn LLP, the external auditors, have signed and returned section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2021/22, without any comments. This was dated 12 September 2022.
- Notice of 'Conclusion of Audit', which finalises the yearly audit requirements, dated 20 September 2022, has been posted on the Town Council's noticeboards and website.

RG144 Internal Audit

The Committee NOTED the interim internal audit from Heelis & Lodge will take place on 30 January 2023.

- RG145 Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments (SAAA) central external auditor appointment arrangements**
The Committee AGREED to remain in the central external auditor appointment arrangements, and NOT opt out.
- RG146 Book of Condolence**
The Committee AGREED with the recommendation from Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) that following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, all the condolences are grouped into a Book of Condolence to be included within a district bound volume, which can be stored at the Epping Forest Museum.
- The Town Council would keep copies of the Loughton based condolence messages for posterity. The Town Clerk confirmed he had spoken to local churches and that copies of their condolences were also sent to EFDC.
- Members thanked the staff involved for their weekend work in following the Royal protocols during the mourning period and for the proclamation announcement of the new King, Charles III.
- RG147 Remembrance Service**
Members AGREED
- that the Town Council will donate 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 13 November 2022.
 - to increase the donation amount to £150.
- RG148 Financial Assistance**
- 148.1** The Committee AGREED the Financial Assistance scheme is to continue in 2023/24.
- 148.2 General Applications 2022/23**
The Committee reviewed the additional information received from Grant a Smile CIC and requested that further detail is required, including the date and time of the planned event, before a decision can be made on this Essex wide project; and as a Town Council, whether it will, subject to the Council's financial assistance application terms and conditions, grant an award of £500.
- Officers will request the further detail required for members to review and consider at the next Resources and General Services (RGS) meeting on 7 December 2022.
- RC149 Utility Costs**
The Committee discussed, received and NOTED the latest update and that discussions are taking place with the Town Council's energy broker to secure the best way forward, following the Governments recent announcement. The office would take forward the best available utilities contract when available.
- RC150 Budget Considerations for 2023/2024**
- 150.1** The Committee NOTED the report.
- 150.2** The Committee NOTED the report.
- 150.3** The Committee NOTED the report.
- 150.4** The Committee NOTED the report.

150.5 Members NOTED the financial challenges for the forthcoming year 2023/24 Town Council budget. The Town Clerk was asked to look at potential interest earning opportunities for the banking accounts as interest rates begin to increase.

RC151 Policies Review

151.1 Equal Opportunities Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Equal Opportunities Policy, with next review October 2024.

151.2 Complaints Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Complaints Policy, with next review December 2024.

RC152 Buckingham Court

The Town Clerk provided the latest position on the progression of the office move.

The Committee NOTED this report.

RC153 Office photocopier

The Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk/RFO provided an update on the research undertaken for a new office photocopier, with two demonstrations scheduled for week commencing 10 October 22.

The Committee AGREED to delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk and Deputy Town clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to select the chosen supplier /model.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.27pm.

Signed:
Date: 7 December 2022