

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 8 February 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 Murray
D Wixley (as substitute for J Jennings)

B Cohen
M Stubbings

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

There were two members of the public present.

RG191 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Jennings. Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Jennings. The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Owen (Vice Chairman) would chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Jennings.

RG192 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman and Town Clerk read out the pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests declared in respect of the Financial Assistance Award Scheme working party, involving Cllrs Murray; Owen; and Wixley.

Cllr Murray declared pecuniary interests for agenda item 8 for the Financial Assistance Applications for 2023/24 for: 8. Loughton Methodist Church – as a trustee and 20. Citizens Advice Epping Forest District – as trustee.

Cllr Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 for the Financial Assistance applications for 2023/24 for: 4. Epping Forest Foodbank; 5. Loughton Baptist Church; 9. Restore Community – Grow Community Garden; 10. Restore Community – Noah’s Ark Toddler Groups; 11. Restore Community – Oakwood Hill Community Centre; 12. Restore Community – Oakwood Hill Youth Club; 14. Spark – a branch of Worth Unlimited; 15a. St Mary’s Church Loughton – Ignite; 15b. & 15c. St Mary’s Church Loughton; 16. St Michaels Café; 17. 3Food4U; 18. Voluntary Action Epping Forest; 19. Youth Employment Strategy, as a member of these organisations.

Cllr Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest for agenda item 8 for the Financial Assistance Applications 2023/24 for 20. Citizens Advice Epping Forest District – as a member.

Cllr Cohen declared a non-pecuniary interest for agenda item 8 for the Financial Assistance Applications 2023/24 for 6. & 7. Loughton, Chigwell & District Synagogue – as a member.

Cllr Brookes declared a non-pecuniary interest for agenda item 8 for the Financial Assistance Applications 2023/24 for 8. Loughton Methodist Church– as a member and 15a. 15b. & 15c. St Mary’s Church Loughton – as a member.

The Committee AGREED to bring forward in the agenda the two following items, as a member of the public wished to address the Committee; Agenda Item 4 – Public Representations; and Agenda Item 8 – Financial Assistance Applications 2023/24.

RG193 Public Representations

A member of the public addressed members giving further insight into the Financial Assistance Award 2023/24 scheme application for 5. Loughton Baptist Church. Expanding on the information provided within the application, the Committee were informed of the range of community groups that use the premises.

The speaker expressed their disappointment that the Financial Assistance Working party had not recommended them an award due to “the guidance issued by the NALC regarding the 1984 Local Government Act, which ‘prohibits councils’ involvement in ‘property relation to the affairs of the church’, e.g., the maintenance or improvement of the buildings or land or contributing to the costs”, as they advised this information was not known. The Committee AGREED the application form would be updated for future reference. Members also explained the Committee have to decide, if on balance with the information provided, whether an application constitutes as building works.

RG194 Financial Assistance Applications 2023/24

194.1 General Applications

The Committee discussed the proposals of the Working Party. The Town Clerk reported that currently Resolve Community – Oakwood Hill Youth Club are about to lose their leader and have not been meeting all the time. The Deputy Clerk / RFO advised the committee that the amount of the claim by the Youth Club for their 2022/23 award granted by the Council, had been reduced to reflect this.

Members AGREED the applications for 2023/24 together with the recommendations of the Working Group, as read out by the Chairman, 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.

Organisation	Amount Granted £	Purpose of Grant
1. Affordable Counselling Epping Forest	500.00	Counselling Sessions
2. Alfie James Productions	200.00	Performance Skills Workshop
3. Basics Essex	1,000.00	Community awareness / Demonstration trailer
4. Epping Forest Foodbank	2,000.00	Purchase of food supplies and foodbank rent
5. Loughton Baptist Church	0 (Due to Council criteria / NALC guidelines)	Health & safety / Security improvements to building
6. Loughton Chigwell & District Synagogue (1)	500.00	Supply of weekly food parcels

7. Loughton Chigwell & District Synagogue	0 (Due to Council criteria / NALC guidelines)	Security Gates / CCTV
8. Loughton Methodist Church	1,000.00	Café refit / New play area
9. Restore Community – Grow Community Garden	2,500.00	Running Costs
10. Restore Community – Noah’s Ark Toddler Groups	3,000.00	Running Costs
11. Restore Community – Oakwood Hill Community Centre	3,000.00	Operational Costs
12. Restore Community – Oakwood Hill Youth Club	1,500.00	Operational Costs
13. Samaritans – Redbridge Branch	700.00	Running Costs
14. Spark – a branch of Worth Unlimited	1,500.00	Complex Cases Counselling Service
15a. St Mary’s Church Loughton - Ignite	249.00	A general laptop as a tool to engage children through song, PowerPoint, video
15b. St Mary’s Church Loughton	750.00 (Members agreed to award the full amount requested (£1,542) if the defibrillator can go on outside wall for public access or £750 if placed inside as on application)	Defibrillator / pads / training
15c. St Mary’s Church Loughton	500.00	Laptop – safeguarding training / storing sensitive information securely
16. St Michaels Cafe	1,000.00	Furniture / equipment for community cafe
17. 3Food4U	3,500.00	Rent for venue
18. Voluntary Action Epping Forest	1,000.00	Handyperson scheme – operational costs
19. Youth Employment Strategy	1,750.00	3 conferences for school students at Waltham Abbey Marriott Hotel
Total awarded	26,941	

194.2 Citizens Advice – Epping Forest District

The Committee CONFIRMED that a separate budget item for a grant provision to the Citizens Advice (CA) is in place. The budget allocation of £8,500 for 2023/24 was AGREED. Members requested the CA are invited to the next Resources and General Services Committee for members to learn and understand more about their work. The

Committee also RECOMMENDED the budget allocation for 2024/25 for the CA is reviewed during the budget process.

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

RG195 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG196 Town Clerk’s / Chairman’s Report

The Town Clerk provided the following updates:

- The Finance & Office Assistant will be reducing his weekly working days from five to three with effect from the 1st March 2023.
- In the absence of the Cemetery Attendant, the Services Manager & Community and Services Officer are managing ongoing cemetery tasks.
- Buckingham Court cleaning will be managed with the support of internal caretaking colleagues, rather than using a more costly external contractor.
- Our current Caretaker will be retiring early April 2023, hence we will be advertising shortly for a replacement.

The Chairman had nothing to report.

RG197 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED the Annual Town Meeting will be held at 8pm at The Murray Hall, Borders Lane, Loughton IG10 3SB on Wednesday 15 March 2023.

Following discussion, the Committee requested officers revert back to the previously more comprehensive listing of members “Attendance at Meetings” listed in the Think Loughton Annual Report, to include all Councillors attending a meeting, whether or not, they are actually a member of that Committee.

RG198 Meetings Schedule

The Committee AGREED to delegate the production of the Loughton Town Council draft meeting schedule for 2023/24 to the Town Clerk, subject to email consultation with members, and ratification at the first appropriate Town Council meeting.

RG199 Financial Limits

The Chairman checked with the Town Clerk, who agreed the current levels remain sufficient, with the exception of the Town Clerk’s and Services Manager’s credit card limits. The Town Clerk requested with increased cost of living, whether these could be increased to:

- £2,000 – Town Clerk
- £1,500 – Services Manager

The Committee AGREED the increases in the Credit Card limits as requested by the Town Clerk, and confirmed that the remainder of the financial limits, as listed in the agenda, are adequate.

RG200 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.

RG201 Finance

201.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee's financial position as at the 30 November 2022 along with available funds in ear marked reserves as at 30 November 2022 were NOTED.

The Town Clerk reported that with the office return to Buckingham Court and the refurbishment of the Council Chamber, there may be an opportunity to advertise and generate some additional rental income for the hiring out of this area. Hire fee recommendations will be taken to Recreation Committee for consideration.

201.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £349,348.98 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 364-367 have been made since the report to the meeting on 7 December 2022, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG202 Internal Auditor – Interim Internal Audit Report

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

RG203 Insurance – Annual Review

Following a query and discussion on whether the current insurance value of the drinking fountain was sufficient, members AGREED not to seek any re-evaluations, and CONFIRMED the current levels of insurance cover as summarised.

RG204 Asset Register

The Deputy Clerk / RFO explained that some of the Loughton noticeboards were not included on the Asset Register as whilst the Council take responsibility for these, ownership belongs to Epping Forest District Council.

The Committee NOTED the Register of Assets and Properties as at 31 December 2022

RG205 Policy Review – Dignity at Work Policy

Members AGREED signing up to the 'Dignity at Work Policy' with next review date February 2026.

RG206 Standing Orders, Financial Regulations update.

Members NOTED that the Town Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and all other relevant Town Council documents, will be updated to reflect the new Buckingham Court address of Loughton Town Council.

RG207 King Charles III Coronation Day

The Town Clerk reported that:

- The Town Council has applied to Essex Highways to seek approval for the use of bunting in the High Road and Broadway. The Economic Development Officer at Epping Forest District Council has also been contacted to enquire whether the District Council will be putting up bunting throughout the District. No responses have yet been received.
- Based on enquiries and using a good quality bunting, approximate total costs for the High Road and Broadway, including the contractor (with 'cherry picker') to put up / take down, would be in the region of £3,200.
- Subject to the consideration and approval of the Environment & Heritage Committee, there may be potential for a virement of £3,000 from Street Furniture Earmarked funds to be used for the coronation bunting.

The Committee AGREED the recommendation for bunting subject to the Town Clerk referring / agreeing the usage of the Earmarked funds with the Environment & Heritage Committee, in order to support this initiative.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

Signed:
Date: 12 April 2023