

THESE MINUTES NOT YET CONFIRMED

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 4 October 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

W Kauffman

S Murray

B Cohen

S Fontenelle

M Stubbings

Officers:

M Squire (Town Clerk)

K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There were no members of the public present.

RG250 Apologies for absence

No apologies for absence were received.

RG251 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG252 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG253 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG254 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk highlighted a recent article from the Daily Express regarding Council's with "high debt ratio's" following the recent announcement made by Birmingham City Council, and the tough financial circumstances facing Epping Forest District Council, as mentioned in their news release dated 21 September 2023.

The Chairman stated that it would be useful to review the financial position of the Town Council at the next Strategy and Staff meeting.

RG255 Training and Conferences

Following discussion, the Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG256 Staff Salaries 2023/24

Members NOTED the report.

RG257 Christmas Closedown Arrangements 2023

The Committee NOTED in line with the existing Town Council policy agreed in February 2008 and updated in October 2021, that the office is operational with 'skeleton staffing' and reduced hours over the Christmas period as follows: -

Friday 22 December	Closed 12 noon
Monday 25 December	Closed

Tuesday 26 December	Closed
Wednesday 27 December	10am – 3pm
Thursday 28 December	10am – 3pm
Friday 29 December	10am – 12.45pm
Monday 1 January	Closed

RG258 Citizens Awards

The Committee CONFIRMED its commitment to the annual Citizen Awards.

RG259 Financial Assistance

The Committee AGREED the Financial Assistance scheme is to continue in 2024/25, and to the inclusion of the new rule number 13 in the application form.

Members NOTED the thanks received from successful 23/24 grant recipients, following completion of their projects.

RG260 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED the 2024 Annual Town meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 5 March 2024, commencing at 8pm in the Murray Hall, and AGREED they would like the meeting to continue in the same format as last year.

RG261 Finance

261.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the financial position and available funds in earmarked reserves as at the 31 July 2023.

261.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £551,756.49 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 378-380 have been made since the report to the meeting on 27 June 2023, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG262 Internal Financial Check

Members NOTED that Cllr Murray visited the office on 2 October 2023 and undertook a financial check on Monthly Payroll / Tax & National Insurance / Pensions from the start of the 2023/24 financial year to the end of September 2023.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for completing this exercise.

RG263 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2022/23

The Committee NOTED that:

- PKF Littlejohn LLP, the external auditors, had signed and returned section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23, without any comments. This was dated 22 August 2023.
- Notice of ‘Conclusion of Audit’ which finalises the yearly audit requirements, dated 25 August 2023, has been posted on the Town Council’s noticeboards and website.

The Town Clerk thanked the RFO for her work in this respect.

RG264 Internal Audit

The Committee NOTED the interim internal audit from Heelis & Lodge will take place on 25 January 2024.

RG265 Remembrance Donation

265.1 Members AGREED that the Town Council will donate £150 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 12 November 2023.

265.2 The Committee AGREED a small wreath laying service can be held the preceding Friday (10 November 2023) at 11am, to enable local schools to be invited to lay their wreaths, along with both the Town Mayor and British Legion.

RG266 Policies Review

266.1 Early Retirement Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Early Retirement Policy, with the next review October 2027.

266.2 Reserves Policy

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Reserves Policy, with the next review October 2027.

RG267 Loughton Town Council (LTC) email addresses

Members reviewed the requirements / costs and AGREED the option of £6 per month, per Councillor, for both the gov.uk email address and access to “one drive”. Councillors also AGREED the recommendation of setting a budget allocation in 2024/25 for the implementation of this project after the outcome of the elections in May 2024.

A member found the Loughton Town Council website to be poor and difficult to navigate. The Town Clerk asked what changes were needed, and would canvass Town Councillors, (in a circular email) to ascertain, if, and what changes they would like to see, for a future agenda item.

RG268 Think Loughton – Circulation newsletter – R&GS Min 249

The Committee NOTED the alternative estimated delivery costs and that further quotations for the whole package of design, print and delivery are awaited.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 8.02 pm.

Signed:

Date: 29 November 2023