

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL
RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 17 January 2024 at 7.00pm 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 S Fontenelle)
B Cohen
M Stubbings

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)
P Hoy (Services Manager)

There were no members of the public present.

- RG292 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Fontenelle and Kauffman. Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Fontenelle.
- RG293 Declarations of Interest**
No Declarations of Interest were received.
- RG294 Confirmation of Minutes**
The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.
- RG295 Public Representations**
There were no public representations.
- RG296 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report**
The Town Clerk and Chairman had nothing to report.
- RG297 Training and Conferences**
The Committee NOTED the update on staff training.
- RG298 Internal Financial Check**
Members NOTED that Cllr Murray visited the office on 18 December 2023 and undertook a financial check on the purchase Invoices and cheques from the beginning of the 2023/24 financial year to date.

Cllr Murray advised the key focus was a check on random invoices, which all matched up, and that he was very impressed with officers, who were instantly able to answer any questions that arose.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for his support in undertaking this exercise.

RG299 Financial Assistance Working Group

The Committee AGREED that the members of this working group will continue to be Councillors M Owen, S Murray and G Wiskin.

Members also AGREED that the previous year's Town Mayor should also be invited to sit on the Financial Assistance Working Group. Cllr B Cohen accepted the invitation for the 2024/25 Financial Assistance awards.

The working group will continue to assess the financial grant applications and provide recommendations to the next Resources and General Services Committee meeting for the 2024/25 financial year.

RG300 Town / Parish Council Funding for Places of Worship

The Committee received and NOTED the SLCC update.

RG301 Council-wide Priorities 2024/25

Following discussion, the Committee discussed and NOTED the Council-wide Priorities report.

Cllr Wixley requested that under the Recreation Committee priorities list, that "current priority number 11 – Byelaws for Town Council land", be updated to read "Byelaws for Town Council land, specifically relating to Roding Valley Recreation Ground." The Town Clerk confirmed that this would be amended accordingly.

RG302 Considerations for 2024/25 Estimates following the Strategy & Staffing Group (SSG) meeting of 4 December 2023

Members received and NOTED the update from the Strategy & Staffing Group meeting on 4 December 2023 regarding precept increase.

RG303 Estimates for 2024/25

303.1 Budget Review

The Town Clerk provided an overview of the rationale and content of the draft budget calculations, and new Ear Marked Reserves, which were NOTED by the Committee.

303.2 Services Recharges

The Committee NOTED the report.

303.3 Tax Base

The new restated Tax Base for 2024/25 for Loughton Town Council, was NOTED by the Committee.

303.4 Committees' Estimates & RECOMMENDATIONS for Precept to Council

The Committee recognised the difficult economic climate, not least the ongoing 'cost of living' and 'utility costs,' crises which would be reflected in the expenditure categories for the following financial year. Also noted was the reduction in Earmarked Reserves.

The Committee NOTED the draft estimates and RECOMMENDED to Council that the precept for 2024/25 be set at £993,909, with the budget details (pre-service recharges) as follows:

Committee	Income	Expenditure
	£	£
Resources and General Services	21,000	612,808
Environment and Heritage	17,253	117,301
Recreation	162,346	497,105
Planning and Licensing	0	200
	200,599	1,227,414
Increase / Decrease in Earmarked Reserves		
Resources & General Services		5000
Environment & Heritage		5000
Recreation		-57,906
Planning and Licensing		0
Total	200,599	1,179,508
Net requirement	978,909	
Increase in General Reserves	15,000	
Final Net Requirement	993,909	76.35

This results in charges to band D increasing 6.95% from £71.39 (2023/24) to £76.35 (2024/25), (still comparably low) which equates to a rise of £4.96 annually, less than £0.095 weekly.

Members reiterated that the Council has worked intensively to keep this increase as low as possible, and that whilst November 23 inflation costs were encouraging, the overall effect on supplier costs are likely to be higher, due to the impact of earlier months CPI and RPI rates.

303.5 Public Loans Outstanding

The Committee NOTED the information provided on the current status of the public loans outstanding.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 7.27 pm.

Signed:
Date: 7 February 2024