

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 16 October 2019 at 7.45pm at Loughton Library & Town Hall.

Present:

Councillors: J Jennings (in the Chair)
J Angold-Stephens T Cochrane (as a substitute for Cllr Omer)
M Dalton J Jogia J Mahoney
S Murray from min no. 196.3

Officers: M Squire (Town Clerk)
B Smith (Assistant Town Clerk)

RG192 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Omer. The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Cochrane had been nominated as Cllr Omer's substitute for this meeting.

RG193 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Dalton declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 6, Financial Assistance Application, as he knew the applicant through his employment with Voluntary Action Epping Forest.

RG194 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2019 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

RG195 Public Representations

None were received.

RG196 Matters for Report

196.1 Training and Conferences - Min no RG187.1

The Committee NOTED that the Town Clerk had implemented a cross training programme covering all aspects of Loughton Town Council (LTC) work.

Courses recently attended/booked :-

- Town Clerk at Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) Essex Branch Training and AGM Day on 13 June 2019
- Town Clerk at Memorial Management Inspection Workshop run by the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) on 9 September 2019.
- Officers Debra Paris and Lorraine Gibson at 'Social Media' course run by Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) on 1 October 2019
- Officers Paul Hoy, Pippa Bryce and Debbie Taylor at 'Adult Mental Health First Aid Training' on 8 October 2019 run by Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) and funded by Essex County Council (ECC).
- Town Clerk looking to enrol on SLCC 'Website accessibility guidelines webinar' seminar.

196.2 Christmas Closedown Arrangements

The Committee NOTED that these arrangements were discussed at the Strategy and Staff Group meeting where it was agreed that the Town Council should operate over the Christmas holiday period, albeit, at skeleton staff levels and reduced working hours.

In line with the existing Council policy agreed in February 2008, the office hours will be as follows:

Tuesday 24 December	Closed 12 noon
Wednesday 25 December	Closed
Thursday 26 December	Closed
Friday 27 December	10am – 4pm
Monday 30 December	10am – 4pm
Tuesday 31 December	10am - 12.45pm
Wednesday 1 January	Closed

Cllr Murray joined the meeting during the next item.

196.3 Remembrance Service

The Committee RESOLVED to make a donation of £100 to the Royal British Legion in support of the Poppy Appeal and towards the cost of the wreath to be laid by the Town Mayor at the Remembrance Service in November.

Payment will need to be approved under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

196.4 Citizens Awards

The Committee REAFFIRMED its commitment to the annual Citizen Awards. Publicity for these awards started earlier this year in an effort to attract a higher number of entries - the cut-off date for entries being 31 January 2020. We will also be approaching community groups and local schools and using social media publicity to further promote the awards. The Town Mayor discussed the format of the awards with officers and opted for the award presentations to be made again at the next Annual Town Meeting in March 2020 as these arrangements worked well last year.

Members also wished to congratulate Pippa Bryce, Administration Assistant for her excellent work on the poster for this event.

196.5 Annual Town Meeting

The Committee NOTED that the 2020 Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 11 March 2020 commencing at 8pm in the Murray Hall. Whilst this is not a council meeting, all town councillors are expected to attend.

The Committee AGREED to continue with the format used at last year's meeting by inviting local organisations and voluntary groups, particularly those in receipt of Financial Assistance from the Council, to mount displays at the event to attract more public interest. The organisations successful in their grant applications for 2020/21 would also be presented with a certificate by the Town Mayor.

The meeting would conclude with refreshments and an opportunity for members of the public to speak informally with their councillors. Local businesses which have supported the local community would also be invited.

A guest speaker would be used only if a suitable candidate could be sourced.

196.6 Strategy and Staff Group / Job Evaluation exercise - Min no RG 188

The Committee NOTED that the Strategy and Staff Group met on Wednesday 11 September 2019. The principal discussions centred on the confidential Job Evaluation Outcome Report from Vine HR dated 19 August 2019. Recommendations from the report on the existing SCPs (salary scales) for all staff, and alignment to local government sector levels of pay and other general operational considerations were taken on board and endorsed by the Working Group. The impact on budgets for 2020/21 was also considered.

Other areas covered included

- Support for Pippa Bryce – Administration / Allotments / Cemetery Assistant for her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) course starting on 29 October 2019.
- Other sundry staffing matters.
- Death of a National Figure arrangements.
- Loughton Library & Town Hall, (now listed as an Asset of Community Value).

196.7 Social Media Policy - Min no RG187.5

The Committee NOTED that members and officers alike will soon be provided with a hard copy of the social media policy and asked to acknowledge receipt and understanding of the working document.

196.8 Telephones - Min no RG189

The Committee NOTED the new Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) broadband line was installed at the end of June 2019 at the agreed cost of £29.99 plus line rental of £11.99 per month. Since the installation we have had no internet failures and our phone lines have operated continuously.

The increased broadband speed has been advantageous in the upgrading of our accounts programme.

Cllr Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item, as he knew the applicant.

**RG197 Financial Assistance
General Applications 2019/20**

The Committee RESOLVED to make the following contributions (as listed below) from the scheme by granting financial assistance to:

Organisation	Amount granted £	Item	Power
Youth Employment Strategy YES Partnership	500.00	Towards the cost of the training of 40 Students	LGA 1972 s137

RG198 Finance

198.1 Internal Audit

The Committee NOTED that the next visit by the Internal Auditor was booked for Thursday 17 October 2019.

198.2 External Audit 2018/19

The Committee NOTED the External Auditor's Certificate and that the Notice of Conclusion of Audit, published on 19 September 2019 was currently displayed on the noticeboards around the town and on the council's website. It was pleasing to note that the 'clean audit' would enable resumption of the Local Council Awards submissions for Gold Standard.

198.3 Banking/ Bank Mandates Min no RG187.6

The Committee was made aware of the difficulty and frustration involved in making the appropriate changes to banking mandates and noted the following changes:

The 'named' councillors now have authorisation to our accounts with Nationwide and Santander. Nationwide and Santander have approved these applications and confirmed this in writing.

Due to the issues encountered with Santander the Assistant Town Clerk has raised this as a complaint with their Customer Services team and this is ongoing.

NatWest have now changed their process for paying staff salaries and moved 'on line'. This uncovered an issue with the signatories on the wages account. Again a complaint was raised which has now been resolved and the council have received a cheque for £150.00 for the inconvenience. The new online salaries system starts from October 2019.

198.4 Current Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the report.

198.5 Future Budgeting Provision

The Town Clerk provided the Committee with some concepts and ideas for future workings, which would be discussed in greater detail at the next meeting including the following:

- Budgeting reporting
- Streamlining budget codes
- The upgrade of the RBS Omega Accounting System to Omega Rialtas Suite
- Future maintenance costs of Loughton Town Council (LTC) assets - e.g. tree work, recreation areas, halls
- Community Day

198.6 Internal Financial Check

The Committee NOTED that Cllr Jogia had accepted the appointment of being the councillor to carry out checks on the Council's financial transactions and attended the offices on 12 August 2019 with Cllr Angold-Stephens, who carried out our checks.

During their visit Cllrs Jogia and Angold-Stephens inspected records connected with petty cash, payroll for May, June and July 2019 along with the credit card transactions for June and July.

They recorded that no issues had been identified and thanked the staff for providing them with the relevant documents and all their help.

The Assistant Town Clerk further reported that Cllr Jogia attended the offices on 16 October 2019 and inspected records connected with payroll for August, September and October 2019 along with the petty cash and Hall Hire transactions for September 2019.

It was recorded that no issues were identified and she thanked the members of staff for their help.

The Committee NOTED the Council's current bank balances and most recent reconciliations.

198.7 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £290,283.53 as detailed on payments schedules nos. 291 – 298 have been made since the report to the meeting on 26 June 2019.

The schedules and accompanying invoices were made available at the meeting for inspection.

The Committee NOTED that details of all Council payments in excess of £500 are provided on the Council's website on the strategic documents page.

http://www.loughton-tc.gov.uk/Finance_and_Transparency_2580.aspx

198.8 Upgrade of Accounts Software and VAT returns

The Committee NOTED that the Council's accounts software provided by RBS Rialtas was upgraded at the beginning of October 2019 and installed on all the PCs in the office. This is their latest version which complies with the new VAT on line return system. This was the last quarter where the council would complete its VAT return manually and for the quarter ending December 2019 we would use the on line accounting system.

RG199 Future Work of the Committee

No items were raised for future discussion

Signed
Date: 4 December 2019