

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

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

Present:

Councillors: J Jennings (in the Chair)
R Brookes B Cohen W Kauffman
S Murray M Stubbings

Also present:

Councillor: D Wixley

Officer:

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

There were no members of the public present.

RG110 Apologies for absence

An apology was received from Cllr Owen.

RG111 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG112 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2022 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG113 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG114 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk had nothing to report. The Chairman raised concern regarding the recent "hacking" of some councillor e-mails. The Town Clerk AGREED to consult our IT Support.

RG115 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG116 Work Experience

The Committee NOTED the update on the sixth form student joining the office team to undertake work experience from Monday 18 July 2022 – Friday 22 July 2022, and expressed how pleased they were to be supporting a student.

RG117 Finance

117.1 Current Financial Position

Following discussion on current interest rates, the Committee's financial position as at 30 April 2022 along with available funds in ear marked reserves as at 31 May 2022 were NOTED.

117.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £409,951.55 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 349-352 have been made since the report to

the meeting on 13 April 2022, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG118 Precept

The Committee NOTED the first instalment of the 2022/23 Precept, £414,832.00, was received into the Council's Santander bank account on 29 April 2022.

RG119 Internal Financial Check

The Committee AGREED to continue with the appointment of a Town Councillor to undertake internal financial checks during the year and accepted Cllr Murray's offer to continue in this role for 2022/23.

Cllr Murray AGREED to provide some date options for July and August for a visit to the office to undertake a review of current finances.

RG120 Internal Audit

The Committee NOTED the clear Internal Audit Report received from our Internal Auditors, Healis & Lodge dated 12 May 2022, and congratulated the officers concerned.

RG121 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2021/22

The Committee NOTED that the AGAR was submitted to the External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP on 21 June 2022, and that the completed confirmation of dates for the provision of public rights form has been displayed on our noticeboards and posted on our Town Council website.

RG122 Financial Assistance

The Committee discussed and considered the financial assistance applications received and AGREED the following contribution from the 2022/23 Financial Assistance scheme:

- £1,000.00 – awarded to The Lopping Endowment Corporate Trustee Limited, for the purchase of a defibrillator

The Committee requested Grant a Smile CIC be asked for the following further information for their understanding and consideration, due to insufficient information in the application:

- A more detailed breakdown of costings and understanding required for this project, including showing:
- How and on what the project and any potential funding would be spent.

Subject to receipt the Committee will re-consider this application at the next Resources and General Services Committee on 5 October 2022.

The Committee requested that both of the applicants be advised that any future applications for the Council's Financial Assistance Application Scheme, unless an emergency, would need to be made within the scheme timelines.

Cllr Wixley recommended that "Grant a Smile" could be asked if they would like to participate in Loughton Day to raise funds. Following discussion, the Committee AGREED that 'Grant a Smile' should be made aware and asked the

Town Clerk to also check and ensure organisations who have received a 2022/23 grant award have been invited to participate in Loughton Day.

Cllr Wixley also requested that the Council defibrillators were checked to ensure the post codes were visible in the small white boxes on the front of the defibrillator cases. The Town Clerk NOTED this request.

RG123 PC Upgrades

The Committee discussed and NOTED the issues with the office computers memory and AGREED the spend of c£550 + VAT to update these accordingly.

RG124 Flag Flying

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG125 Christmas Card Competition 2022

The Committee NOTED that this year's competition will be launched prior to the autumn meeting of this Committee.

Following discussion, it was AGREED to continue and publicise accordingly in the historic format, with the following amendment:

- Inclusion – theming the Competition “Celebration Cards” to encourage more diversity, e.g., Hanukkah and Diwali as well as Christmas.

RG126 Policies Review

126.1 Code of Conduct

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Code of Conduct Policy, with next review June 2024.

126.2 Code of Conduct Annexe 3 Complaints Procedure

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the Code of Conduct Annexe 3 Complaints Procedure, with next review June 2024.

RG127 Local Government Boundary Commission

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the recommended response to EFDC, as drafted by the Environment and Heritage Committee at their meeting on 22 June 2022.

RG128 Civic Service / Citizenship 2023 award

Following discussion, the Committee AGREED the Town Mayor may hold a Civic Service in the Loughton Synagogue around the last weekend in February 2023.

Members also AGREED not to incorporate the Citizenship 2023 award into the Civic Service, but to keep this as part of the Annual Town Meeting.

RG129 Buckingham Court

The Committee NOTED the update from the Town Clerk on the office move back to Buckingham Court and correspondence from Essex County Council. Members AGREED to delegate authority to the office to continue and carry out works, as necessary.

The Town Clerk AGREED to review whether more prominent “Loughton Town Council” signage on the building would be possible.

RG130 Office photocopier

The Committee received and NOTED the position with the current office photocopier and AGREED to delegate authority to the office to pursue and deliver new arrangements subject to the approval of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this Committee.

RG131 Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) annual subscription fees

Following discussion, the Committee AGREED not to currently renew the subscription, and asked the Town Clerk to advise the Essex Wildlife Trust that due to the large increase in annual membership, this will not be renewed for now, pending further discussion.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee expressed a big “thank you” to the Town Clerk and Staff for the organisation of the Jessel Green event, and their gratitude to everyone for the delivery of such a wonderful day.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.09pm.

Signed:

Date: 5 October 2022

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

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 7 December 2022 at 7.30pm at Loughton Town Council, Council Chamber, 1 Buckingham Court, Rectory Lane, Loughton IG10 2QZ

Present:

Councillors: M Owen (in the Chair)
B Cohen M Stubbings
D Wixley (as substitute for
Cllr Brookes)

There were no members of the public present.

RG154 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Brookes, Jennings, Kauffman, and Murray. Cllr Wixley had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Brookes. Cllr Owen (Vice Chairman) would chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Jennings.

RG155 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 17 as a member of Citizens Advice and similarly for agenda item 21 as a member of the Essex Playing Fields Association.

RG156 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG157 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG158 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk and Chairman had nothing to report.

RG159 Training and Conferences

The Committee NOTED the update on staff training.

RG160 Annual Citizens Awards

The Committee NOTED the update and were informed that no formal applications had been received, so far, despite widespread publicity. The Town Clerk has been told that a couple of potential applications were due to be submitted soon. The Committee would continue to monitor the continuing yearly trend of low volume applications.

RG161 Christmas Card Competition

The Committee NOTED the report and were made aware of the lower volume of entries received this year, despite widespread publicity. Certain schools did not wish to participate, and it was difficult to pinpoint specifically why there were

fewer responses. Nevertheless there were some particularly good entries, and the winners of each category had been informed of their success.

RG162 Buckingham Court Move

The Town Clerk reported that the move had gone smoothly and that colleagues were happy and comfortable in their new office space, which is far more user friendly. The provision of staff parking places was also a valuable consideration, as well as the layout of the chamber room which now needed little preparation time for Council meetings. There would be initial set up costs incurred for this move to Buckingham Court.

Members NOTED the oral report.

RG163 Photocopier

The Committee NOTED the update on the new photocopier which is expected to be delivered by the end of the week.

Members NOTED that the 'sell-off' value of the old copier is virtually non-existent and AGREED that the Town Clerk should obtain any return that he could in the circumstances.

RG164 Loughton Town Council (LTC) Van

The Committee NOTED the updates provided and agreed with the recommendations made from both the Recreation and Environment and Heritage Committees to purchase the new LDV van.

However correspondence has only just been received from Qualis, regarding their leasing deals with a major van supplier which may potentially provide the opportunity to hire a van over a period of years.

As the Estimates for the 2023/24 financial year are progressed, it is clear that with the severe economic challenges facing the country, the Town Council's finances are not immune, and that there are some difficult financial decisions yet to be made.

Members AGREED in principle to progress the van acquisition, but that the final decision would not be made until

- the Qualis prospect had been fully evaluated
- the overall financial outlook for the Town Council had been established over the next few weeks.

RG165 Utilities

The Committee received and NOTED the latest update on the Council's utilities.

RG166 Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Electoral Review of Epping Forest District Council (EFDC)

Members AGREED to submit the draft response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, as presented.

RG167 Finance

167.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee NOTED the financial position and the Council's current bank balances and most recent reconciliations as of 31 October 2022.

167.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £375,174.63 as detailed on payment schedules no. 359-363, had been made and entered onto the account system, since the report to the meeting on 5 October 22.

RG168 Precept

The Committee NOTED the second instalment of the 2022/23 Precept, £414,831.00 was received into the Council's Santander bank account on 26 September 2022.

RG169 Internal Financial Check

The Committee NOTED Cllr Murray will be visiting the office on 15 December 2022, to undertake an internal financial inspection.

RG170 Grant Funding – Citizens Advice (CA)

Members were interested in how many Loughton residents were benefitting from the grant funding and would welcome a general update on CA's activities in the district.

Members AGREED to invite CA to the next applicable Resources and General Services Committee meeting.

**RG171 Financial Assistance
General Applications 2022/23**

The Committee reviewed and considered the further information requested and received from Grant a Smile CIC.

Members were conscious of the current budgetary constraints, and how many Loughton residents would specifically benefit from this production, but also wished to support this inaugural event.

Considering the above factors, members AGREED to contribute £250 to Grant a Smile CIC.

After some discussion on the difficult financial climate experienced currently, Members AGREED in principle that any unallocated funds from the 2022/23 Financial Assistance budget, should be returned to General Reserves.

Ultimately any final decision would be made at the forthcoming Strategy and Staffing Group meeting and subsequent Resources & General Services Committee meeting before going to Council in the New Year. At this juncture the budgetary process should be near completion.

RG172 Staff Salaries / Pension Contributions / National Insurance Contributions

The Committee received and NOTED the update on the 2022/23 salary changes.

RG173 Parish Basic Allowance

The Committee RECOMMENDED to Full Council to retain the level of the Parish Basic Allowance that members may claim in 2023/24 at £120 per member per annum.

RG174 Subscription Review

The Committee reviewed the current list of organisations of which it is currently a member and AGREED to continue to support those listed for 2023/24 in the agenda, without any amendments.

RG175 Committees Priorities

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the priority list for 2023/24 as listed in the agenda, without any amendments.

RG176 Estimates

The Town Clerk advised the Committee on the preliminary Resources and General Services Committee Estimates report.

The Committee reviewed and AGREED the estimates of income and expenditure and levels of ear marked funds for 2023/24 as listed in the agenda, subject to the understanding that there may well be further changes, given the difficult ongoing financial pressures.

RG177 Emerging Epping Forest District Local Plan – Further Main Modifications

The Committee no longer needed to discuss this agenda item as it had been reviewed and AGREED at the preceding Planning and Licensing Committee meeting on 5 December 2022.

RG178 Future work of Committee

No items were raised for future discussion.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.15 pm.

Signed:
Date: 11 January 2022

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 11 January 2023 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 W Kauffman
S Murray M Stubbings
C P Pond (as substitute for B Cohen)
C C Pond (as substitute for J Jennings)

Also Present D Wixley
Councillors: S Fontenelle

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

There were no members of the public present.

RG179 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Cohen and Jennings. Cllr C P Pond had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Cohen and Cllr C C Pond as substitute for Cllr Jennings. Cllr Owen (Vice Chairman) would chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Jennings.

RG180 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

RG181 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2022 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG182 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG183 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk and Chairman had nothing to report.

RG184 Notification of external auditor appointment for 2022-23 to 2026-27

The Committee NOTED that the SAAA (Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments), have announced following the conclusion of its procurement process, the

appointed auditor for the 5-year period from 2022-23 – 2026-27 is PKF Littlejohn LLP.

RG185 Policies Review

Cllr Fontenelle arrived during this agenda item.

Members AGREED and RESOLVED to sign up to the Civility and Respect Pledge and requested that this protocol forms part of the Councillors induction pack.

The Committee NOTED the Local Government (Disqualification) Act 2022 change April 22.

RG186 Internal Financial Check

The Committee NOTED that Cllr Murray visited the office on the 15 December 22 and undertook a financial check on the Purchase Invoices and Cheques from the beginning of the 2022/23 financial year to date. The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for his support.

RG187 Financial Assistance Working Group

The Committee AGREED that the members of this working group will be Councillors M Owen and S Murray. Cllr C C Pond will confirm the third member imminently. * 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 2023/24 financial year.

RG188 Council-wide Priorities 2023/24

The Committee discussed and NOTED the Council-wide priority lists for 2023/24, with the ongoing status of priorities and areas of focus to be considered / recommended by relevant Committees.

RG189 Considerations for 2023/24 Estimates following the Strategy & Staffing Group meeting of 19.12.22.

The Town Clerk provided some background, highlighting the key details and recommendations.

The Committee discussed and NOTED the salient points and recommendations from this meeting and requested that potential 'sponsors' are sought to support the forthcoming Town Council events.

*Subsequently Cllr G Wiskin confirmed as the third member.

RG190 Estimates for 2023/24**190.1 Budget Review**

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

190.2 Services Recharges

The Committee NOTED the report.

190.3 Tax Base

The new restated Tax Base for 2023/24 for Loughton Town Council, was NOTED by the Committee.

190.4 Committees' Estimates & RECOMMENDATIONS for Precept to Council

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

The Committee NOTED the draft estimates and RECOMMENDED to Council that the precept for 2023/24 be set at £904,300, with the budget details (preservice recharges) as follows:

| Committee | Income | Expenditure |
|---|----------------|--------------------|
| | £ | £ |
| Resources and General Services | 2,000 | 575,121 |
| Environment and Heritage | 19,345 | 104,778 |
| Recreation | 151,862 | 482,972 |
| Planning and Licensing | 0 | 200 |
| | 173,207 | 1,163,071 |
| Interest | 7000 | |
| Increase / Decrease in Earmarked Reserves | | |
| Resources & General Services | | -9,624 |
| Environment & Heritage | | -13,000 |
| Recreation | | -55,940 |
| Planning and Licensing | | 0 |
| | | |
| Total | 180,207 | 1,084,507 |
| Net requirement | 904,300 | 71.39 |
| Final Net Requirement | 904,300 | |

This results in charges to band D increasing 9.56% from £65.16 (2022/23) to £71.39 (2023/24), (still comparably low) which equates to a rise of £6.23 annually, £0.12 weekly. Members reiterated that the Council has worked intensively to keep this increase as low as possible.

190.5 Public Loans Outstanding's

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 7.42 pm.

Signed:
Date: 8 February 2023

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 Wiskin.

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 at 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

LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND GENERAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held on Wednesday 12 April 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)

S Murray

J Riley (as substitute for B Cohen)

S Fontenelle (as substitute for R Brookes)

M Stubbings

D Wixley (as substitute for J Jennings)

Officers:

M Squire (Town Clerk)

K Lumb (Deputy Town Clerk / RFO)

There was 1 member of the public present.

RG208 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jennings, Cohen and Brookes. Cllr Fontenelle had been nominated as substitute for Cllr Brookes, Cllr Riley for Cllr Cohen and Cllr Wixley for Cllr Jennings. The Town Clerk reported that Cllr Owen (Vice Chairman) would chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Jennings.

RG209 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Murray declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 5, as a Trustee of Citizens Advice – Epping Forest, and Cllr Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5, as a member of Citizens Advice – Epping Forest.

RG210 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

RG210 Public Representations

There were no public representations.

RG211 Citizens Advice – Epping Forest District

Councillors NOTED the presentation given by Jenny Skinner, The Deputy Chief Executive of the Citizen's Advice – Epping Forest District, on their work. The update included information on:

- their history.
- their work and client base in terms of the types of problems encountered.
- colleagues and changing ways of working both through and post COVID pandemic.
- statistics and the types of enquiries and issues,
- confidentiality

Following discussion and questions, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Jenny for the update.

Cllr Fontenelle arrived during this item.

RG212 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk provided the following updates:

- The Committee were asked to note the changes to the employers' pensions rate for 2023/24, which has increased to 24.8% from 23.3% previously.
- A Town Councillor has requested a distinct Loughton Town Council (LTC) email address. The Town Clerk advised this will be put on the agenda for discussion at the next Resources and General Services (R&GS) Committee meeting.

The Chairman had nothing further to report.

RG213 Annual Town Meeting

Members NOTED the draft minutes for the 2023 Annual Town Meeting held on the 15 March 2023, had been circulated, and no issues had arisen requiring further consideration by the Town Council.

RG214 Staff Salaries 2023/24

The Town Clerk advised that the 2023/24, National Employers pay offer of an increase of £1,925 for salary scales (SCP 2-43) or 3.88% for salary scales (SCP44 and above), both paid pro rata, has not yet been accepted, and it is likely that it will be some time before the outcome is known.

The Committee NOTED the update.

RG215 Staff Appraisals

Members NOTED that all staff appraisals have now been completed.

RG216 Meetings Schedule

The Town Clerk confirmed that Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), will be imminently publishing their schedule of meetings for 2023/24, following which he will publish and distribute (subject to members approval) LTC's schedule of meetings for 2023/24, at the earliest opportunity.

EFDC's Full Council meeting dates would be avoided, as well as EFDC's Area Planning Sub-Committee South and the Development Control Committee dates.

RG217 Financial Assistance 2023/24 – Application 15b – St Mary's Church

The Committee AGREED that the original 2023/24 grant award for St Mary's Church defibrillator still applied.

RG218 Finance

218.1 Current Financial Position

The Committee's financial position as at the 28 February 2023 along with available funds in ear marked reserves as at 28 February 2023 were NOTED.

218.2 Accounts Paid

The Committee NOTED that payments totalling £399,026.62 as detailed on payment schedules nos. 368-371 have been made since the report to

the meeting on 8 February 2023, and that schedules and accompanying invoices are available for inspection at the Council offices.

RG219 Internal Financial Check

Members NOTED Cllr Murray had visited the office on 30 March 2023, and undertook an internal financial inspection on invoices and payment/cheque runs from 01 April 2022 to date.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Murray for his support.

RG220 Annual Insurance

The Committee NOTED the annual insurance premium for 2023/24 (year 2 of a 3-year contract with Zurich), which also includes fully comprehensive insurance for the Council's new lease van

RG221 Governance and Accountability

The Committee NOTED and AGREED the following reviews and risk assessments.

221.1 Internal Audit

221.1.1 Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit

221.1.2 Review of the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Control.

221.2 Risk Assessment and Management

RG222 Year End 2022/23 Accounts

Members NOTED the tight time frame to complete the Year / End Financials for 2023/24.

The Town Clerk reported that the financial challenges as previously discussed in the preceding Committee budget meetings were coming to a head. The sharp increases in utility costs were of particular concern (typically gas charges rising c3 to 4 times and electricity costs increasing 4-5 times) on the previous year's costs.

These increases were being 'felt across the board,' and the busy Murray Hall is heavily impacted. The Town Clerk advised that all Murray Hall utility bills will be dissected to identify any potential savings. If necessary, an independent energy survey on the existing heating system, and scope for potential utility cost savings would be sought. As previously discussed, in the longer-term, solar panels may be a route that the Town Council may wish to consider.

Another area highlighted was the expense of tree management and this budget area may need to be increased in future years.

RG223 2023/24 Fees for Hall Hire; Football Pitches and Licence Fees

The Committee NOTED the report.

RG224 2023/24 Cemetery Fees
The Committee NOTED the report.

RG225 2023/24 Chamber Room, Buckingham Court Fees
Members reviewed and AGREED to set the following 2023/24 hire fees for the Chamber Room at Buckingham Court:

- Charity Rate £15.00 plus VAT per hour
- Standard Rate £31.00 plus VAT per hour
- Commercial Rate £50.00 plus VAT per hour

The Town Clerk provided an update on the National Health Service (NHS) enquiry and confirmed that NHS Hertfordshire will be using the Chamber Room in Buckingham Court, as agreed, on a Saturday (and potentially Sunday) from 22nd April 2023 to approximately mid-June 2023 (excluding the Coronation weekend) at a rate of £15.00 plus VAT per hour. This charge aligns with the levies that the NHS are paying elsewhere. Should the booking be extended past mid-June, a mechanism to cover any additional utility costs accumulated, will be investigated and discussed.

Officers have also secured a booking for the Chamber Room in April 2023 for an Annual General Meeting and a further booking in December 2023.

RG226 Policy Review
Loughton Citizenship Awards ‘LCA’
The Committee reviewed and AGREED the criteria for the Loughton Citizenship Award, making the following additions:

- Adding a “certificate of recognition” to be awarded, as appropriate
- To include the previous year’s Town Mayor on the award panel to ensure a majority vote can be obtained, if required.

RG227 Electric Vehicle Charger
The Town Clerk provided further background information and options, on the installation of a permanent electronic vehicle charger at Murray Hall, for the new electronic Council van. He also shared a message received from Essex County Cllr M Vance.

The Town Clerk also advised that since the issuing of the agenda, he is continuing discussions with Clarke Hillyer (immediate neighbour), to see whether there is a potential for an electronic vehicle charge point to be installed within Buckingham Court for general use. In the meantime, the team will be using the facilities at Morrisons, to re-charge the van.

Following detailed discussions Members AGREED to put on hold a decision, whilst the outcome of discussions with Clarke Hillyer are understood. Further research will be undertaken as a separate project, to understand whether there is a demand for the potential installation of public use charger at Murray Hall, the implications, and whether this project could be feasible and cost effective.

The Town Clerk also confirmed the new defibrillator was being installed at Murray Hall on the 13 April 2023. As highlighted by a member, further defibrillator training could be beneficial.

RG228 COVID-19 Memorial

The Town Clerk shared with members a message received, from Essex County Cllr M Vance.

The Committee discussed potential ideas for a memorial, with the Memorial Garden; Kings Green and St John’s Church being identified as possible locations for a suitable memorial.

The Town Clerk agreed to explore the following 2 options, to be considered at a future R&GS Committee meeting:

- The cost / possibility of a commemoration plaque on the bench at Kings Green; or a new bench and plaque at a location to be agreed
- The cost / possibility of a tree and plaque at a location to be agreed

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.11 pm.

Signed:

Date: 27 June 2023