

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