

Minutes of Watton Town Council Finance Committee Meeting

held on October 26th 2023, at Wayland Hall.

Committee members present: Kathryn Stallard – Chairman, Peter Bishop, Tina Kiddell.

Staff present: Jane Scarrott and Michelle Thompson

1. Apologies for absence received from:
Stan Hebborn, Sue Hebborn and Don Saunders

2. No Declarations of Interest made.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

(i) The Minutes of the meeting held on 28.09.23 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

(ii) Update from items in the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28.09.23:

- An electronic blind has been fitted on the large end window in the Council Chamber at Wayland Hall.
- The Council's preferred grounds maintenance contractor has stated that he can provide a small skip to hold excess soil from grave excavations.
- Work is in progress to the plinth at Chaston Place ready to position the new artificial Christmas Tree for 2024. A quote has been requested for railings to be erected around the plinth.

It will be recommended to Full Council to purchase a cascading plant container to be sited on the plinth during the summer months.

- English Heritage is still to be approached regarding the possibility of using an electric motor to drive the clock in the clock tower.
- The Play Area at Hares Green remains closed due to a problem with discolouration coming from the rubber surfaces. The Town Council has informed the contractors who arranged installation of the safety surface of a compensation claim received by the Town Council.
- At the previous Finance Committee meeting it was agreed that the current service provider for the photocopier will be contracted to supply a new Konica device with an estimated quarterly rental price of £325. The old copier will be removed and the memory cleansed. The price quoted has since been rescinded so no further action will be taken at this time.

4. **A recommendation will be made** to Full Council to accept the quote received for £600 plus expenses and VAT in order to: review the existing Wayland Hall quinquennial report (includes a site visit), produce a programme of repairs, review with the town council over email/telephone and then finalise the report.

5. **Financial Regulations**

The National Association of Local Councils is currently reviewing the model Financial Regulations and it is expected a revised version will be ready for the 2024 financial year. Therefore the Town Council will need to look to adopting the new Regs. when they are available.

However, until then it is suggested that the Council acknowledges there are some current rules which have become obsolete, and which could therefore be removed from the current regulations.

A recommendation will be made to Full Council to accept removal of the Financial Regulations as suggested by the clerk.

5.1 **A recommendation will be made** to Full Council to increase the expenditure limit from £500 to £1000 on the Town Council Lloyds Commercial credit card.

6. **High Street Bike Event**

Management of all Town Council events is to be the sole agenda item at the Finance Committee meeting scheduled for November 21st.

The Council needs to be clear with instructions to any potential event organisers.

It will be recommended to Full Council that the High Street Bike Event becomes a regular feature each August Bank Holiday weekend.

7. **Bank Reconciliation**

Bank reconciliation for 09.10.23 presented and accepted. Checked and signed by Cllr Bishop as Internal Control Officer.

Councillors were presented with updated budget figures. The 2023/24 Budget remains on track.

It was noted that cost for the agreed temporary increase in hours for the Administration Clerk to help cover staff absence will be covered from the budgeted figure of £6000 set in the 2023/4 for additional staffing costs.

Money from reserves has also been allocated within the proposed four year financial forecast to support staffing levels as may be suggested by the HR Committee.

It will be recommended to Full Council that the Town Council requests the use of currently available s106 monies to fund the current re-furbishment of Lovell Gardens Play Area. Total request will be for £86924.03.

Budget 2024/5

It was noted that a higher budget figure may be needed for events in 2024 if event management is no longer to be in house. This will be offset however against the cost of staffing hours which will no longer be needed.

It will be recommended to Full Council that a policy should be agreed for the Town Council to consider purchase of land in the parish should it become available.

8.1 Review of fees

Recommendations for Full Council:

- I. To increase annual allotment fee for 2024 to £25.00
- II. To raise cemetery fees by 10% from April 1st 2024
- III. To reduce fees for the weekly market by half for an initial 6 months starting from December 1st :

- Small pitch to be free of charge
- Medium pitch to be £10
- Large pitch to be £15

9. **Four Year Forecast**

The Four Year Forecast will be considered as part of the budget discussions at the next Finance Committee meeting.

10. **Dates of future Finance Committee Meeting:**

Thursday 16th November at 1.00pm (Interim Internal Audit taking place)

Tuesday 21st November at 1.00pm (provisional depending on staff availability)

Thursday 14th December at 1.00pm

Recommendations for the next Full Council Meeting:

- to purchase a cascading plant container to be sited on the plinth at Chaston Place during the summer months.
- to accept the quote received for £600 plus expenses and VAT in order to: review the existing Wayland Hall quinquennial report (includes a site visit), produce a programme of repairs, review with the town council over email/telephone and then finalise the report.
- to accept removal of the Financial Regulations as suggested by the clerk.
- to increase the expenditure limit from £500 to £1000 on the Town Council Lloyds Commercial credit card.
- that the High Street Bike Event becomes a regular feature each August Bank Holiday weekend.
- that the Council requests the use of s106 monies to fund the current refurbishment of Lovell Gardens Play Area. Total request will be for £86924.03.
- that a policy should be agreed for the Town Council to consider purchase of land in the parish should it become available.
- To increase annual allotment fee for 2024 to £25
- To raise cemetery fees by 10% from April 1st 2024
- To reduce fees for the weekly market by half for an initial 6 months starting from December 1st:
 - Small pitch to be free of charge
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