



Watton Town Council

Meeting of the Finance Committee of Watton Town Council ,Thursday 16th November 2023

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Tina Kiddell

2. Declaration of Members personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda

None

3. Minutes of previous meeting

(i) To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26.10.23

Minutes accepted as accurate record

(ii) To receive update from items in the Minutes of the Meeting held on 26.10.23

The small skip is in place in the cemetery

Work has been completed on the base to the plinth in Chaston Place and a quote accepted for the railings around the base. The Council agreed the purchase of a cascading plant container for the Summer Months.

No further information yet available on English Heritage's view of electric motor for the clock in the Clock Tower.

The play area at Hares Green is now open.

The recommendation for the quote re the Wayland Hall Quinquennial review was accepted by Council.

Amendments to the Financial Regulations document were accepted by Council.

The recommendation to increase the expenditure limit on the WTC Lloyds Commercial Credit Card from £500 to £1000 was agreed by Council

The Council agreed to include the High Street Bike Event in the calendar of events (August Bank Holiday weekend annually).

The Council agreed a temporary increase in hours for the admin clerk, (from the £6,000 for additional staffing costs)

Council confirmed the request for and use of s106 funding for re-furbishment of Lovell Gardens play area.

Council agreed policy of considering appropriate land purchase should opportunities arise.

Council agreed review of Allotment, Cemetery and Market fees as recommended.

Noted public toilets not yet reopened. Still in discussion with the Insurance Company.

(iii) To consider items raised by Full Council not already agenda items

The Committee discussed issues relating to the Events carried out by WTC. Committee noted that a joint HR/Finance Cmt meeting is to be held on 21st November to discuss Events provision. It was agreed that the agenda should contain 3 elements. 1. A consideration of which events should be deemed as part of CPO role, and which delivered by other means; 2. A consideration of delivery of these events; 3. Recommendations to Full Council.

The importance of maintaining links between Finance and HR Committees was discussed.

The Committee noted the reviews carried out by SD on the Fireworks and Remembrance Events. It was agreed these were very thorough and helpful.

Maintenance of Heritage Park - it was agreed that Committee recommends that Council opens discussions with Carbrook Council about a contribution towards maintenance. It was also agreed that a recommendation is made to Council that there is a discussion re boundary considerations around the Blenheim Grange area. This recommendation to be considered after the exclusion of public.

4. To receive bank reconciliation for November and consider current expenditure against the budget position.

Agreed defer item re bank reconciliation due to staff absence.

Noted WTC has agreed to financial of around £22,000 since last Finance Committee meeting.

Noted that due to staff illness the Internal Audit has been postponed until next week.

5. To consider Grounds Maintenance work needed. It was felt that given the increase in grounds to be maintained both within the TO's role and ground maintenance contract, this area needed further discussion. It was agreed that Committee should recommend that HR Committee considers this area.

6. To begin consideration of budget needs for 2024 /25

Events: the allocation required will depend on discussions to be held next week, and decision of Council. In The 4 year plan provision for increase in staff costs is made - as the former PEPSO has moved into the CPO role, there is some possibility of offsetting to set against Events delivery.

Grounds Maintenance: agreed increase will be needed given the increase in sites.

Income: more information needed on status of some of income streams

Neighbourhood Planning: noted this should be concluding in 2024. Question raised re Consultancy fees for Heritage Park. This will need representing in the Budget and/or 4 year Plan.

Premises: energy costs - further discussion needed

Staffing: Noted - the financial plan covered in the 4 year plan which should underpin staffing review. Noted in terms of 23/24 Budget there may be a shortfall in staffing budget, but it has

previously been agreed this will be supported through General Reserves. Question raised as to how will this be shown in Budget documents. Question raised re covering for absences - is there an appropriate insurance scheme and a pool of temporary staff which can be used?

Other areas were considered, but it was felt unlikely there would need to be a change in levels set previously.

It was noted that last year the increase approved by Council represented a 1.78% increase on Band D (£2.50) and showed an overall increase in precept of 4.3%.

7. To review the four year forecast

Staffing plan noted.

Increase in Play Areas maintenance is needed for 24/25 - an estimated figure would be useful.

8. To review Finance Strategy

Agreed defer till December meeting

9. To confirm dates for next Finance Committee Meetings –

November 21st and December 14th

Recommendations for Full Council

1. Grounds Maintenance - Finance Committee recommends that the HR Committee be asked to consider the impact of increased site ownership on TO work load and Maintenance contracts

2. Maintenance of Heritage Park - Committee recommends that Council opens discussions with Carbrook Council about a contribution towards maintenance

3. Finance Committee recommends that Council opens discussions with Carbrook Council about a contribution towards maintenance.

4. To be taken after exclusion of public: Finance Committee recommends that Council initiates a discussion re boundary considerations around the Blenheim Grange area.

KS 16/11/23

