

## Minutes from the Finance Committee Meeting held on October 10<sup>th</sup> 2024 at Wayland Hall

Present: Kathryn Stallard (Chairman), Peter Bishop, Stan Hebborn, Don Saunders.  
Officers Present: Jane Scarrott and Michelle Thompson

Presentation given by Auxilio IT prior to the start of the meeting. Noted that once costs have been received from Auxillio a comparison will be made with the current IT service contract.

1. Apologies received from Tina Kiddell.
2. Declarations of Interest made by Stan Hebborn as Auxillio are known by him.
3. Minutes from the previous meeting
  - (i) The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 26.09.24 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record of the meeting.
  - (ii) Update from the previous meeting:
    - The Town Operatives have begun clearing and cleaning Walsingham Gates in preparation for painting.
    - The possible ongoing costs of further investigating the proposed transfer of the Thetford Road allotment site to the Town Council was considered and a **recommendation** will be made to Full Council that once clarification has been received regarding possible termination of the current lease of the allotment land the Town Council will advise the solicitor that if the owner is unable to transfer the land to the Town Council it will withdraw from the process.
    - A third skip will be booked to complete the clearance of rubbish from the Thetford Road Allotment Site.
    - As the Town Operatives were on leave, the Council's preferred contractor was contracted to undertake a one off set up of the market gazebos at a cost of £250. Following discussion with the Town Operatives further investigation may be undertaken regarding using the preferred contractor to regularly assist with the market gazebos. However, figures need to be produced to establish the cost of running the weekly market so fully informed decisions can be made.
    - Quotes are to be sought to clean the gutters at Wayland Hall.
    - The cost of providing two laptops for use by Councillors is being investigated.
    - A fuel card is to be arranged for use by the Town Operatives.
    - Ground Maintenance tenders for 2025 have been posted on Contracts Finder. Tenders received will be considered by the Finance Committee at its meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> November. Noted that the grass cutting at Jubilee Garden and Memorial Garden has been taken out of the contract as work is to be undertaken by the Town Operatives.
    - A suggestion made for a High Street Halloween event to be undertaken in 2025 was considered but it is felt there is already commitment to events at the end of the year and if a new event is to be added to the calendar the focus should be on the spring time diary.
  - (iii) Items raised by Full Council

Agreed by Full Council 08.10.24:

- The current grounds maintenance arrangements with Watton Sports Association will remain the same. Noted that any Memorandums of Understanding held should be reviewed in March ready to be presented to the Council at its annual meeting in May.
- £300 grant for Watton 2<sup>nd</sup> Brownies.
- Not to charge 1p per person entry fee for the 2024 Fireworks Event.
- Notes and recommendations from the Museum4Watton Working Group Meeting held 04.10.24 accepted by the Full Council. In response to recommendations it was agreed to accept the price of £435 plus VAT to undertake a service of the control panel for the heating system at Wayland Hall.
- In light of new information received the Full Council is prepared to re-visit a previous decision made regarding the support for footfall cameras to be installed in the High Street.

A **recommendation** will be made to Full Council to support the installation of the footfall cameras as proposed by Breckland Council. Review to be undertaken after an initial 3 year period.

- Charges for the Wednesday Market are to remain the same until 31.03.24, but fees will be considered as part of the 2025/6 budget setting.
- Possible staffing adjustments as suggested by the HR Committee will need to be costed. A **recommendation** will be made to Full Council to establish a working group to prepare a long term staffing strategy. The Working Group would comprise of members of the Finance and HR Committees.
- It was noted that there could be associated costs to be considered relating to possible re-location of staff work areas.

Item 5.1 was considered at this point of the agenda: The Events & Marketing Officer (EMO) was thanked for producing the Sustainability & Climate Change Awareness Report. It was agreed to proceed with the recommendation in the report to make improvements to the lighting at Wayland Hall and the quote of £699.96 plus VAT to undertake the works was accepted.

#### 4. Bank Reconciliation

The Bank Reconciliation dated 30.09.24 was presented to the Committee and checked and signed by the Internal Control Officer.

[Finance Committee members had been issued with net position figures with the agenda.]

#### 4.1/5 2025/25 Budget

Initial discussion took place regarding the possible budget need for 2025/6:

- It was agreed that the legal costs budget should be increased up to £15000 and should the Council need advice on any future major concern a meeting will be arranged to speak with the solicitors to reduce the need for continual e-mail correspondence.
- A new line will be included within the budget for 'Public Relations' - suggested £5000.
- An increase will be needed for the Fireworks budget as the contract with Titanium Fireworks is to rise by 5% pa.
- The Council is in the final year of its contract for Christmas lights and ongoing costs need to be considered.
- An increase in provision for maintenance of the High Street clock and Wayland Hall will be included within the four year plan. Investigation will be made regarding the possibility of grant funding to assist with improvements to Wayland Hall.

- It was agreed the Council should investigate whether to sell the trailer which has housed the gazebos. The EMO will be tasked with putting a report together outlining how to achieve best value before any decisions are made to sell the trailer.
- Noted that £60,000 is to be added to the staffing budget for the next financial year with £20,000 to be included from the precept with £40000 to be taken from reserves.

6. Date of the next meeting of the Finance Committee: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 1.00pm

Recommendations to Full Council:

1. once clarification has been received regarding possible termination of the current lease of the Thetford Road allotment land the Town Council will advise the solicitor that if the owner is unable to transfer the land to the Town Council it will withdraw from the process.
2. to support the installation of the footfall cameras as proposed by Breckland Council. Review to be undertaken after an initial 3 year period.
3. to establish a working group to prepare a long term staffing strategy. The Working Group would comprise of members of the Finance and HR Committees.