

Minutes of the meeting of WATTON TOWN COUNCIL Finance Committee held on

August 16th 2019 at

Wayland Hall, Middle Street, Watton, Norfolk IP25 6AG

Councillors Present: Kathryn Stallard (KS) – Chairman of the Committee, Peter Bishop (PB) and Pat Warwick (PW).

Officers Present: Jane Scarrott Town Clerk

**1. APOLOGIES RECEIVED FROM:** Sue Hebborn

It was noted that Tina Kiddell has resigned from the Finance Committee and it will be a Full Council agenda item to agree a new Committee member.

Councillors will be made aware of the vacancy and the Terms of Reference of the Committee. Tina Kiddell will be thanked for her input as a member of the Finance Committee.

It was felt it could be helpful, particularly for new members, if information could be provided to explain which meetings held by the Town Council are Committee meetings and which are Working Group meetings.

It will be recommended to Full Council that a training session is put together, to be held towards the end of October, to look at the roles and duties of a Watton Town Councillor. The session to be run by the Chairman of the Finance Committee, the Chairman of the HR Committee, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.

**2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE**

**3. MINUTES**

3(i) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11.07.19 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3(ii) Update of matters from the minutes not covered elsewhere:

- Breckland District Council (BDC) has agreed an officer will attend a future Town Council meeting in September 2019 to explain why special expenses for Watton are higher than in other Breckland towns. BDC will be reminded of this and asked to confirm the date.
- The SAAA has responded to the Town Council's letter which reported that the TC has no confidence in the external audit service provided by PKF Littlejohn. The SAAA will be raising concerns with PKF.
- Signage recommended in the Market Safety Report commissioned by the Town Council will be considered as part of the overall evaluation of signage in the High Street, which it is envisaged will result from further Master Planning to be undertaken by Aecom through the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- It was noted that the request to consider the possibility of providing space for erecting a storage facility for the TC was discussed by the CHT with a positive reception. It was suggested by the Finance Committee that the Town Council could also investigate alternative storage, such as garages, rather than look for

another industrial unit. This could replace the use of the Linmore unit and may provide a more viable cost effective facility.

#### **4. EXPENDITURE MADE SINCE THE LAST MEETING AND CURRENT BUDGET POSITION**

- Budget position as of 13.08.19 had been previously shared with the Full Council on the meeting held on 13.08.19.
- Noted that expenditure was agreed at the meeting held on 13.08.19 for donations to be made to organisations which assisted at the Antiques Fair on 07.07.19, to book a farm to attend the 2019 Festive Market, to pay for opening of the public toilets for the 2019 carnival and to pay for internal audit work 2018. It was also agreed at that meeting to accept a quote of £2664 to undertake remedial electrical circuit work at Wayland Hall. Payment for the Wayland Hall work to be taken from the Wayland Hall maintenance budget.
- It was noted that the Town Council has agreed to commission legal advice relating to the partnership work between the TC, the CHT and the Benjamin Foundation. This will be met from within the increased 2019/20 budget for legal support.
- The Town Council has made the decision to offer the market gazebos free of charge until Christmas 2019. The Finance Committee suggest that once the free period has ended it would be reasonable to introduce a small charge of no more than £10 per occasion to hire a gazebo.
- A recommendation will be made to Full Council that the Watton Carnival Committee should be approached with a view to the market gazebos being used at Watton Carnival and that the gazebos should be used at the Festive Market.
- A recommendation will be made to Full Council that live streaming of Town Council meetings should be suspended until a more effective sound system can be introduced and, to ensure appropriate data management, links are made to include streaming within the Council's Communications Policy.

#### **5. TREE REPORT**

A report of trees in Church Walk was undertaken in April 2019 and it will be recommended to Full Council that a risk assessment of all other trees on land managed by the Town will be commissioned to enable quotes to be obtained for any suggested works.

#### **6. CYBER INSURANCE**

Further investigation will be made regarding cyber insurance and the Town Council's IT provider will be approached regarding the insurance they have in place before any recommendation is made as to whether cyber insurance should be purchased.



**7. IT SERVICES**

The Town Council has been approached by an IT firm offering a less expensive service than the current providers. The current providers will be made aware of this to see what they may be able to offer in comparison.

It was noted that two contracts are currently in place with BT, one for the provision of the Office phone and the other for Broadband services. To make future review of these services easier the two contracts will be merged to give one end date which would assist the ability to possibly change provider at a future date.

**8. EXPENSES POLICY**

It was noted that the amended Expenses Policy was implemented from April 2019 and will be reviewed again in April 2020.

**9. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Neighbourhood Plan has taken longer to achieve than first anticipated but is now nearing its final stages, although there is no target date set for publication. Planning policies and a wish list for Watton are being written, based on evidence obtained, to help shape future plans.

It was suggested that heritage maps for the Town could be investigated as part of a Heritage and Promotion Project. There may be funding available and also sponsorship from local businesses. It was felt this was a project which could be advanced currently. It was agreed that it should be recommended to Council that the PEPSO be directed to research and organise planning for the funding, construction, erection and promotion of Heritage Maps and signage for Watton.

**10. CIF POSITION**

The Community Improvement Fund remains at £96500.

It was noted future unplanned grounds works may need to be financed through the CIF.

**11. INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Investment Strategy will be recommended to Full Council as presented.

**12. BANK BALANCE**

The Bank Balance dated 08.07.19 had previously been presented to Full Council and was signed by the Internal Control Officer.

**13. DATE OF NEXT FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING:**

**Friday September 13th 11.00am**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. H. H. H.', is located at the bottom right of the page.

Future meetings of 2019:

Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 11.00am

November 15<sup>th</sup> 11.00am

December 13<sup>th</sup> 11.00am

Recommendations to be made to the Full Council:

1. that a training session is put together, to be held towards the end of October, to look at the roles and duties of a Watton Town Councillor. The session to be run by the Chairman of the Finance Committee, the Chairman of the HR Committee, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk.
2. that the Watton Carnival Committee should be approached with a view to the market gazebos being used at Watton Carnival and that the gazebos should be used at the Festive Market.
3. that live streaming of Town Council meetings should be suspended until a more effective sound system can be introduced and, to ensure appropriate data management, links are made to include streaming within the Council's Communications Policy.
4. that a risk assessment of trees on land managed by the Town will be commissioned to enable quotes to be obtained for any suggested works.
5. HERITAGE & PROMOTION PROJECT: that the PEPSO be directed to research and organise planning for the funding, erection and promotion of Heritage Maps and signage for Watton.
6. to accept the Investment Strategy as presented.

