

Minutes of the virtual meeting of WATTON TOWN COUNCIL Finance Committee

held on Friday 21st August 2020

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

Officers Present: Jane Scarrott Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk Michelle Thompson

1. NO APOLOGIES

2. NO DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST MADE

3. MINUTES

3(i) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 06.03.20 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. UPDATE FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 06.03.20

- The Town Operative does not feel there is a need for further storage racking to be obtained for the Unit at present, but it was suggested a skip could be hired again at some point if it is necessary to clear any rubbish from the Unit. It was noted that a new mower is needed for use by the Town Operative as the current machine has a broken handle.
- Norfolk County Council has been approached regarding repair of the brick tree surrounds in the pavement outside Wayland House but to date only an acknowledgment of the e-mail sent has been received.

4 (i) Due to current uncertainty around the impact to service provision, as result of the Covid 19 pandemic, it was felt that the proposed move of payroll services from Arden Kendall to Charity Background Services should be postponed until the start of the 2021 financial year.

4 (ii) Utilities costs for Wayland Hall have been collated in an attempt to understand the apparent increase in usage/cost of electricity in particular.

It appears that electricity costs for Wayland Hall have increased and this could coincide with the time the Museum4Watton has been using half the building.

Further investigation and monitoring of electricity usage will be undertaken and the settings of the gas boiler will also be checked to ensure the heating is not on longer than necessary, especially when the building is not in use.

4 (iii) Consideration will be given to undertaking research into the cost of refurbishment of the public toilets with provision to be made in future budgets once some idea of the possible cost of refurbishment is known.

4 (iv) Hosting of the Town Council website is to be moved to Broadland Digital. The current town council .gov. uk e-mail addresses are hosted by Anglia IT and it would prove expensive if Anglia IT were to host additional e-mails for all councillors (£6.50 per e-mail per month) but it would also be inconvenient to host the current staff e-mails elsewhere and possibly unwise if no anti-spam anti-viral provision is on offer. As e-mail addresses cannot be split between hosts the Clerk will investigate obtaining a second .gov.uk e-mail address to be hosted by Broadland Digital and used by Councillors.

5. BUDGET POSITION

Councillors were presented with a budget position dated 31.07.20.

- Some discussion took place regarding the use of a consultant to assist with future regeneration plans for the town and what work should be commissioned. It is possible that expert advice may be required if any plans to work together with local partners progresses but until any way forward is agreed it is not possible to commission the relevant assistance.
- It was noted that the SLA agreement with Swaffham Town Council to provide the service of the PEPSO is due to end in June 2021. It is possible the Town Council would consider making its own arrangements to employ the PEPSO in future years.

5(i) Councillors were presented with a Bank Reconciliation dated 31.07.2020. It was noted that as part of internal audit control Cllr Bishop usually checks and signs the monthly bank reconciliation. To date bank reconciliations which have been produced during Covid 19 lockdown have not been verified and arrangements will be made for Cllr. Bishop to check and sign the unverified bank reconciliations.

5(ii) Outline reports of the 19/20 and 20/21 will be published on the Town Council website for public information.

6. s106 UPDATE

Councillors were made aware of the current list of s106 money held by Breckland District Council which can be applied for.

It was suggested the Charlotte Harvey Trust may be able to apply to use some of this money.

7. MARKET GAZEBOS

- Swaffham Town Council has withdrawn from the joint contract to erect gazebos at the town markets and Watton Town Council is therefore left to arrange a contract for erecting the gazebos each Wednesday for the town market. It was noted that the cost to erect the market gazebos is currently £150 per week and further consideration may need to be given to the contract for erecting the gazebos in the future once the current contract ends in March 2021. Insurance cover is to be confirmed and consideration as to how the gazebos are to be shared with Swaffham is still uncertain. A meeting with representatives from Swaffham Town Council is planned for October 15th.

At present the Town Council makes no charge to traders for use of the gazebos but with the decision to re-introduce market fees as from September 1st (fees withdrawn during Covid-19 lockdown) it was felt this position needs to be reviewed. Should a fee for the gazebos be introduced the Town Council will need to register to charge VAT for the service.

It was felt that it was not clear to Councillors whether traders could continue to receive gazebos at no charge, and that if charging was introduced for the use of gazebos this would have to include a VAT payment.

Therefore, it is recommended by the Finance Committee that the TC revisits the decision regarding the reintroduction of charges for market pitches and gazebos. It is further recommended that the charge for market pitches should include the use of gazebos.

8. DATE OF NEXT FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING: Friday September 25th 2020 @ 10.00am