

Minutes of the virtual meeting of WATTON TOWN COUNCIL Finance Committee

held on Friday 25th September 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 21.08.20 were accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3(ii) **UPDATE FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 21.08.20**

- The Town Operative is investigating purchase of a new mower as agreed.
- Wayland House energy use continues to be monitored and the Museum4Watton will be approached to share information relating to electricity use in the Museum. 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.

The gas boiler has been turned down as the Town Council Office is being used only infrequently, with office staff generally working from home at present.

It was recommended that the Council should consider commissioning an audit of energy use in all Council premises with a view to improving energy efficiency and reducing the Council's carbon footprint.

- Hosting of the Town Council website has been moved to Broadland Digital.
- It was felt it could be useful to bring together all reports commissioned by the Town Council through the Neighbourhood Plan to look at what are the priorities for the town. It was noted that the weekly market is important to Watton and the Council could begin to look for funding to deliver suggestions within reports received. The Town Council has already committed to investigate provision of Heritage Maps around the town.
- Peter Bishop will make an appointment to visit the Town Council Office to review and sign monthly Bank Reconciliations which have been produced during lockdown.
- The Clerk has submitted a request to Swaffham Town Council for consideration to be given to extending the hours the PEPSO works for Watton Town Council within the current SLA agreement.
- Swaffham Town Council has withdrawn from the joint contract to erect gazebos at the town markets but Watton Town Council has decided to continue with the current contractor to supply the gazebos to market traders until March 2021. Swaffham Clerk is requesting that Breckland District Council finance the purchase of 5 new gazebos and a trailer. This should be possible as not all the Market Town Initiative money allocated to the original project has been claimed and it would result in 15 gazebos available for both towns should they have need to use that number for events in the future. [BDC support for the project was to help both towns to deliver more events.]

The Finance Committee noted that it had been suggested that the new gazebos and trailer could be kept at Swaffham, but felt that there should be more parity in distribution of new resources.

- The Finance Committee had been tasked by the Full Council to establish a timetable for review of the charges for the weekly town market. A report will be compiled from the review with a recommendation to be presented to Full Council.

It was agreed that the proposed framework, as set out below, would be presented to Full Council with items 1 to 5 to be brought to the next Finance Committee meeting.

Review of Market Charges

1. Background (Kathryn Stallard to compile)

Why the report? Note Payment suspension re gazebos then lockdown. Re-location of stalls. Width of stalls.

2. What are our charges?

3. Charges in other areas.

4. What area do the following cover?

a. Gazebo pitch

b. Vans (currently Pie Man and Fish van)

c. Extended pitches (currently Wells, the Flower stall and occasionally the Clothes stall.

Impact of social distancing)

5. Any other considerations

6. Proposal/Recommendation from Finance Committee

Noted that the Clerk has requested the Parking Wardens to visit Watton on Wednesdays to deal with vehicles which may be parked within the suspended parking bays.

- It was noted that the Town Council has both sent a letter and completed the Charity Commission online form to report a serious concern to the operations of the Watton Sports Association (WSA) Charity. An automated acknowledgment has been received from the Charity Commission but no update on the status of the issues raised.

The Finance Committee recommends that at this time, the Town Council should not donate any further funding to the WSA.

4. BUDGET POSITION

Members of the Committee had previously been presented with an updated budget position and Bank Reconciliation dated 27.08.20.

The only additional expenditure made since payments were presented to the Full Council meeting on 22.09.20 is for a puncture to be repaired on the town van.

It was noted grounds maintenance works have been undertaken at the Thetford Road allotments site, including grubbing out and clearing the hedge to the Thetford Road side of the site. Site neighbours will be informed of the work undertaken and a report will also be published in the Wayland News to inform residents of the money spent at the allotments.

There has been agreement on the National Joint Council pay scales for 2020 which will impact on the Town Council budget. There is a possible shortfall within the budget cost code for staff payments but money could be vired within the Cost Centre and if there still remains any shortfall this could be taken from general reserves.

5. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

To assist in preparation for the ground maintenance contract which will be reviewed in 2021 plans and a timetable will be compiled for future predicted grounds maintenance works. A draft will be presented at the next Finance Committee meeting.

6. E-MAIL ADDRESSES

It has been established that the Town Council cannot hold two .gov.uk e-mail addresses and it was felt that it is not an appropriate time to move current e-mail hosting and therefore e-mail hosting should remain with the current IT provider.

However it will be recommended to the Full Council that consideration be given to providing a .gov e-mail address for the Town Operative and the Market Supervisor. Should the Council wish to consider provision of a .gov e-mail address to all Councillors it is estimated this would cost £6.50 per e-mail per month (approx. £1500 p.a.)

7. DATE OF NEXT FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING: Friday October 30th 2020 @ 10.00am

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETING:

- 1. It was recommended that the Council should consider commissioning an audit of energy use in all Council premises with a view to improving energy efficiency and reducing the Council's carbon footprint.**
- 2. The Finance Committee recommends that at this time, the Town Council should not donate any further funding to the WSA.**
- 3. The Finance Committee recommends that The Town Council should provide a .gov e-mail address for the Town Operative and the Market Supervisor.**