

## Minutes of Watton Town Council Finance Committee Meeting

held on April 13th 2023, at Wayland Hall.

Present: Kathryn Stallard – Chairman Peter Bishop and Don Saunders

1. Apologies for absence received from Pat Warwick and Sue Hebborn
2. No Declarations of Interest made.
3. Minutes of the previous meeting
  - (i) The Minutes of the meeting held on 16.03.23 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.
  - (ii) Update from items in the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16.03.23
    - Updates covered under item 7.
    - **Staff Handbook** – to be amended and presented to the HR Committee following the May 23 local elections.
  - (iii) Matters considered by Full Council: agreed to engage consultant at a cost of £2500 to assist with planning for refurbishment of the equipment at Lovell Gardens Play Area to ensure s106 funding allocated for Lovell Gardens is spent.
4. **Bank Reconciliation**

Bank reconciliation for 13.03.23 presented and accepted. Checked and signed by Cllr Bishop as Internal Control Officer.
5. **Expenditure made since last meeting**

Nothing reported
6. **Budget Position**
  - Noted that the overall expenditure for 2022/23 should remain within budget. The position will be confirmed once final payments for the current financial year have been made in March and April. The accounts are in a healthy position and there is potential for future project development.
  - Cost Centres which show a negative balance are:
    - Grants and Donations** as donations would be expected to be taken from reserves.
    - Grounds Maintenance**– ‘contingency’ includes payment for grave digging fees which comes back as Cemetery income, the cost of the new High Street planters and a contribution towards the Thetford Road trod. The planters and trod funding would also be expected to be taken from reserves.
    - Premises** – the deposit for the refurbishment of the public toilets has pushed the expenditure up in this cost centre but again this would be expected to come from reserves.
7. **Projects and Financial Planning Update**

The four year financial planning document will be updated and presented to the new Council for ratification and subsequent guidance.

Current positions with projects:

Wayland Hall - Works to install pigeon deterrent on the roof at Wayland Hall has been agreed and will be undertaken from April 17<sup>th</sup> 2023.

Legionella Report undertaken and works suggested completed during 2022/23.

The heating system at Wayland Hall continues to cause issues and a meeting with the Museum 4Watton has been suggested to update on all aspects re. Wayland Hall maintenance and refurbishment.

Present position re. boiler: Swift boilers are to be asked to take a look at the boiler to determine whether it is running all the time and if it is why? The boiler cupboard in the Clerk's Office is to be sound proofed. It was suggested research should be undertaken to locate a suitable professional who can provide a report of the heating and plumbing system at Wayland Hall. Breckland Historical Buildings Officer will be approached for advice.

Recommendation from the agent used to research energy costs has resulted in a change of electricity supplier for Wayland Hall. The Council has moved from Green Energy (expensive!) to take a years contract with British Gas. Prices will be reviewed again in a year's time.

Heritage Maps – Project near completion.

Walsingham Gates – To be painted summer 2023.

Clock Tower maintenance - suggested works from the quinquennial report have now been commissioned with the contractor expecting to be on site June/July 23.

Clock – The mechanical clock in the Clock Tower is in need of major repair work, or conversion to an electronic movement. No decisions have been made as to how to proceed and, as the building is listed, investigation will be undertaken whether an electrical movement is acceptable.

Cemetery – Quote requested to create a compound to hold rubbish skips. Fence posts, gate and notice board may need substantial maintenance.

Christmas Lights – The grounds maintenance contractor has informed the Office that he will not be able to supply the 2023 Christmas Tree for the High Street. The Christmas lights contractor has been approached to provide a quote to supply an artificial tree.

High Street – Seats painted, planters and bins replaced during 2022/23. Norfolk County Council planning to upgrade the bus stop and shelter on the north side of the High Street. A request will be made to place a copy of the Heritage Map on the new bus shelter. The grounds maintenance contractor has been asked to undertake necessary repair work to the plinth of the town sign.

Open Spaces – Open space and play equipment at Hares Green has now been passed to Watton Town Council. Initial installation concerns with the play equipment have been addressed apart from the issue with the safety surface where voids have appeared underneath in places. The installers and developer are following this up.

As suggested hedging will be commissioned in the autumn to replace the knee high fencing around the front of the attenuation tank green space area to the rear of the Hares Green site. If successful this might be an option for other sites such as Shire Horse Way as the fencing fails around the green space areas. However works to address flooding at Shire Horse may result in other options for the open space areas.

A consultant has been engaged to help deliver refurbishment of the play equipment at Lovell Gardens using s106 money allocated for this area.

Bridle Road Play Area – planters have been installed around the site to deter vehicles from parking on the grass. Yet to be planted.

Thetford Road Allotment land – initial talks held with the owner of the Thetford Road allotment land re. the land being passed to a Charity. No follow up to date.

Officers Mess Alternative Community Land – no update to date re. the transfer of the open space land to Watton Town Council. Solicitors will be chased! Meeting date to be arranged with Dereham Town Council to learn of their experience creating a public park.

Benches – A replacement programme for benches at Memorial Garden and other locations will be considered, favouring the use of recycled plastic benches. In the meantime the benches at Memorial Garden will be re-painted.

IT - Quotes are being obtained to transfer IT services to a different provider and to add .gov e-mails for Councillors to the IT package. This matter is to be an agenda item for the Full Town Council Meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Public Toilets – Refurbishment underway with expected re-opening date to be in May 23.

Staffing – The Clerk is to undertake review of all staff job descriptions to determine if further staffing hours are needed.

Mayors Chain – The chain is in need of repair and has been passed to a contact who may be able to undertake the work. The Heritage Group and Finance Committee have been tasked with researching possible options for a new chain.

#### **8. Date of next Finance Committee Meeting:**

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May at 1:00pm**

Noted that Cllr Saunders will check payroll quarterly at Finance Committee Meetings.

Recommendations for the next Full Council Meeting:

1. To accept best value quote received for IT services for the Council to include .gov.uk e-mail addresses for all councillors.