

Framlingham Town Council
Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held via Zoom
on Thursday 10th December at 7.00pm

All documents relating to this meeting were made available to Councillors (Cllr) in advance

1. APOLOGIES:

None, all present.

Present:

Cllr D Carter (Chair), Cllr P Collins, Cllr C Eastwood, Cllr S Garrett, Cllr J Jones, Cllr G Kitching and Cllr P Wraight

In attendance:

Mrs E Coe (Town Clerk/RFO)

2. Declarations of Interest:

None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting:

31101220 - Cllr Carter proposed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12th November (circulated in draft form prior to the meeting), be approved as an accurate record with one minor amendment which was seconded by Cllr Eastwood and with one abstention due to absence was agreed.

Cllr Carter signed the file copy of the minutes.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

5.1 Alpha Finance Report of Income and Expenditure to date:

The Town Clerk/RFO provided the Alpha Report of Income and Expenditure to date which was considered and the detail noted.

The Town Clerk/RFO apologised for an error on the precept budget for which the numbers had been transposed in error. Therefore the precept received was £157,196 instead of the budgeted £157,916, the shortfall would be made up from general reserves.

The Town Clerk/RFO advised on budgets which had a variance to date both under-spent and over-spent and advised of where transfers could be made.

A copy would be attached to the file copy of these minutes.

It was noted that the Town Clerk/RFO had published a copy of the Payments Sheet approved at Full Council on the website, in accordance with the Transparency Code.

5.2 Bank balances and bank reconciliations to date:

The Town Clerk/RFO provided an HSBC printed copy of the bank balances to date, which was noted and a copy attached to the file copy of these minutes. The Town Clerk/RFO noted that all the reconciliations were complete and up to date.

It was noted that a transfer of funds would need to be made from the CIL account to the Current account to support the CIL expenditure for the year to date.

5.3 Ear Marked Reserves:

It was noted that there were no changes to date.

5.4 Reserves and FSCS:

It was noted that further clarification had been sought from SALC as to when the Town Council would be covered under the FSCS (Up to £85k for each Bank/Building Society) but the response was still not clear and it had been suggested to contact the FSCS directly for a definitive answer.

Cllr Carter noted that it appeared that the Town Council would be covered under the FSCS scheme from 1st April 2021, but he and the Town Clerk/RFO would contact the FSCS prior to the next meeting for a definitive answer.

The list of funds invested with HSBC had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting.

It was noted that two investments would mature on 21st January and one on 11th February.

It was noted that the meeting with Barclays scheduled for 18th December had been cancelled for Covid-19 reasons and no face-to-face meetings were available until at least February or March next year.

Cllr Carter noted that this meeting may not be necessary if the Town Council were covered by the FSCS scheme as funds could then be deposited with other banks/building societies, although there were quite a few not taking on new customers at this time.

It was agreed for the Town Clerk to obtain information and up to date interest rates from the Ipswich, Cambridge and Yorkshire Building Societies as a starting point, and any others suggested by members of the committee.

It was agreed for the Town Clerk to obtain current interest rates from HSBC for re-investment options, which would be considered along with the above at the next meeting.

6. EMPLOYMENT MATTERS:

A resolution to exclude the press and public will be passed by virtue of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 (2) for the next two items because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Members of the Public and Press will be requested to leave the meeting

No public present.

6.1 Annual Staff Appraisals:

It was noted that the remaining staff appraisals would be held on 15th December

6.2 Annual review of contracts and salaries:

It was noted that Cllr Collins and Cllr Carter had reviewed the staff contracts and salary scales. There following some discussion on home working and HMRC payments to support this and also H&S obligations to staff relating to contributions towards eye tests and spectacles.

61101220 Cllr Jones proposed that the Town Clerk investigates to see if there is specific statutory guidance for local government and also approach with East Suffolk Council to see what policy they have in place ,and what guidance they can provide, which was seconded by Cllr Carter with all in favour.

The Town Clerk advised of the cost of the annual renewal the SLCC membership due in January of which she had been a member for the last 19 years. She outlined the benefits to Clerks and Councils, which included the bi-monthly Clerks Magazine, experienced advisors for answers to professional queries, professional forum, access to documents, latest legislation and attendance at a continuous professional development (CPD) courses at a discounted rate, as well as networking with fellow clerks and a 24hr counselling service for any personal issues. She noted that some of these benefits could be shared with the Deputy Clerk. There was a joining fee for new memberships but clerks could join at any time whether qualified or not.

It was agreed to put this forward for payment at the January Full Council meeting with a view to budgeting for the Deputy Town Clerks membership as well, in the next financial year.

The Town Clerk advised on the current staff working days and holidays to be taken over the Christmas period.

7. Budget 2021/2022:

There followed some discussion on the Budget and it was noted that ESC had advised that due to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic the calculation of the tax base is subject to a high degree of uncertainty both in respect of the factors affecting the tax base and the Government's response to these.

The two key areas of concern that will reduce the tax base are rising numbers of Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme reliefs and reduced collection rates, which is very difficult to forecast therefore the letter formally requesting the precept will not be issued until the tax base is confirmed in early January.

ESC has advised all Parish and Town Councils to set their precept between 8th and 29th January 2021, and the deadline for submission of precept requests is no later than 31st January.

It was noted that the next Full Council meeting is scheduled for 7th January, but in order to request a precept on the basis of the most accurate and timely information then an extraordinary Full Council meeting may need to be held.

There followed some discussion on the budget figures and it was noted that the review of the Neighbourhood Plan expenses could be funded via Local CIL, therefore that budget was reduced. Further discussion on the use of ear marked reserves to make up shortfalls was also considered resulting in a provisional budget and precept requirement of £164,038.

71101220 Cllr Jones proposed to recommend approval to Full Council on 7th January to approve the Budget figures for 2021/2022 and to request a precept of £164,038, subject to the receipt of the precept letter from ESC, with a view to holding an extraordinary Town Council meeting on 14th January at 7pm for one item only which would be the Budget and Precept, to be followed by Finance Committee at 7.30pm, which was seconded by Cllr Carter with all in favour.

8. Annual review of Town Council Policies and Documents:

Legionnaires Disease Policy - reviewed and agreed
Terms of Reference for Committees – reviewed no amendments
Equal Opportunities – reviewed with one amendment
Equality Policies. – reviewed no amendments

81101220 Cllr Carter proposed to recommend approval to Full Council all the reviewed policies and documents, which was seconded by Cllr Kitching with all in favour.

9.TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE:

Cllr Garrett reported information on suitable laminators.

91101220 Cllr Carter proposed to approve the cost of £150 for a replacement Laminator for the Town Council Office, from Budget 1126 including a transfer of £150 from Budget 1202, to support the expenditure, which was seconded by Cllr Kitching with all in favour.

Cllr Garrett reported information on suitable monitors, mice and keyboards.

The Town Clerk/RFO advised that transfers of funds would be needed to support this cost as Budget 1126 (Office Equipment and Computers) was already over-spent due to the recent agreed purchase of the processor and hard drives.

92101220 Cllr Carter proposed to recommend approval to Full Council to approve the cost of approximately £400 for 2 x 27inch monitor, Mouse, and keyboard for the Office from Budget 1126, including a transfer of £200 from budget 1127, £500 from budget 1137, £500 from budget 1138, £200 from Budget 1131 and £300 from Budget 1133 to support the costs and recent expenditure, which was seconded by Cllr Garrett with all in favour.

Cllr Garrett updated the committee on options and costs for suitable mobile phones for the Town Clerk/RFO and DTC/Office Assistant, the expenditure of which had already been approved by Full Council.

It was agreed to proceed with the purchase.

10. CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

11.ACTION PLAN:

Updates - None

12. MATTERS OF REPORT OR ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA:

Direct Debits and Standing Orders – Annual review
Assets and Depreciation Register – Annual review
Investment Strategy- Annual review

Cllr Garrett – reported that there was a danger on 16th December that Suffolk may rise to Tier 3

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Thursday 14th January 2021 at 7.00pm

Meeting closed at 21.03