

Framlingham Town Council
Minutes of the Finance and HR Committee Meeting held in the Town Council Meeting Room
10c Church Street on
on Thursday 10th June 2021 at 7.00pm

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

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Jones who would be arriving late

Present:

Cllr D Carter (Chair), Cllr P Collins, Cllr C Eastwood, Cllr S Garrett, Cllr M Hine and Cllr J Jones.

In attendance:

Mrs E Coe (Town Clerk/RFO) and three members of the public via zoom.

2. Declarations of Interest:

None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting:

3110621 Cllr Carter proposed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8th April 2021 (circulated in draft form prior to the meeting) be approved as an accurate record, which was seconded by Cllr Eastwood and with one abstention due to absence all were in favour.

Cllr Carter signed the file copy of the minutes.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Cllr Carter proposed an adjournment for public comment, which was agreed.

A member of the public attending via Zoom welcomed the diversification of the Council's funds through the opening of a deposit account with Nationwide Building Society and the transfer of funds to it. Two further people in attendance via Zoom noted they were observing the meeting and had no comments to make.

Cllr Carter proposed to reconvene the meeting, which was agreed.

5. Financial Matters:

5.1 Income and Expenditure Report to date:

The Town Clerk/RFO provided a report of income and expenditure to date in the new excel format which was agreed as being much clearer than the Alpha Reports. A copy would be attached to the file copy of these minutes.

5.2 Ear Marked Reserves:

The Town Clerk/RFO provided a copy of the EMR's and transfers to date were noted.

5.3 Bank balances and bank reconciliations to date:

The Town Clerk/RFO provided an HSBC and Nationwide BS printed copy of the bank balances to date, which was noted, and copies attached to the file copy of these minutes.

The Town Clerk/RFO noted that all the reconciliations were complete and up to date.

5.4 Investments:

Update on Nationwide Building Society account.

The Town Clerk/RFO confirmed the agreed transfer of £70,434.67 from HSBC C/A to Nationwide Savings Account had been completed on 27th May 2021.

5.5 Transfers:

The Town Clerk/RFO noted the transfer of funds from CIL Account to Current Account to support CIL expenditure up to 31st March 2021.

5.6 Internal Audit Report:

The Internal Audit report was considered and the recommendation to move funds from the General Reserve to the Ear Marked Reserves was noted.

The Town Clerk/RFO suggested transferring all CIL funds in the General Reserve to EMR's, which was agreed.

5110621 Cllr Carter proposed to approve the Internal Audit Report, which was seconded by Cllr Garrett with all in favour.

5.7 Asset Register:

The contents for the beginning of year 1st April 2021 were noted. The Street lighting and Wifi equipment would be added to the Register.

Cllr Jones joined the meeting at 19.23

6. Town Council Office:

6.1 The purchase of a large monitor screen for the Town Council Meeting Room was considered.

Cllr Garrett noted his research on this matter and there followed some discussion.

6110621 Cllr Garrett proposed to recommend approval to Full Council to purchase a 65 inch screen and webcam for the Town Council Meeting Room using EMR 337 for a combined cost of up to £1,000, which was seconded by Cllr Carter with all in favour.

7. Correspondence:

The following items of correspondence were considered and responses agreed:

1. Can the TC explain how they can justify this response? (answer to question at SP meeting that the TC would be obliged to consider a request for further funding on its merits.) when a Legal Funding Agreement, signed in November 2019 states and I quote "under no circumstances will the grant sum be increased by the Funder" and yet in October 2020 the TC agreed a further £56k with the same clause.

The answer to the question is the same as the answer provided by the DSP Committee at its May meeting. The Town Council must consider any reasonable request from any organisation and decide whether to grant that request on its merits.

An agreement binds two parties unless they agree to change or revoke the agreement by mutual consent. Equally they can choose to enter into another agreement.

2. Does the TC not feel that with our expanding Town and extra amenities and facilities needed the PCC has received more than its fair share when so much more is needed?

If the project were not to proceed the Town Council would save the neighbourhood CIL money referred to above but the town would lose a community facility.

The funding being provided by ESC via District CIL (which is substantially greater than the funding provided by the Town Council) is not ring-fenced to Framlingham and not transferrable to other projects in Framlingham. If the project were not to proceed, the District CIL funds would be used by ESC according to its current strategy anywhere in the District.

Under this strategy if a project is not in the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) it is very unlikely to succeed.

In the new NP a new priority may come forward which could attract District CIL funding as well as neighbourhood CIL.

The Town Council via the DSP Committee has been proactive in bringing forward the NP review, which will take into account other projects coming forward. In recognition of the above all community projects will be subject to public consultation and community engagement in gaining evidence of support and all projects should be presented with a full business plan if CIL funding is requested.

3. Does the TC feel it should consider a more professional approach to grant funding as there appears to be some inconsistency with how funding is considered and I will give how the Scout request was dealt with and how the PCC's has been dealt with as an example?

It was noted that a professional approach is always taken both in relation to the project being discussed and other projects which are put forward.

4. For the benefit of the finance committee meeting, that will be discussing the points raised by myself and others at the full town council meeting last week, I would like to know where the council stands on further funding for St Michaels rooms should the tender documents come back with a figure that exceeds the £1,067,000 on which your last grant was based, bearing in mind that in two legal documents, one for £70,000 and one for £56,000, it states that "under no circumstances will the grant sum be increased by the Funder".

The answer to this question is the same as for question 1 above.

5. Firstly, did the council take legal advice on the second document, prior to signing it as it would appear to be a mirror of the first document, and the legal advice i have taken, suggests that the second document should be an addendum to the first and not just a mirror of the first.

The Town Council took legal advice in relation to the second document and the document entered into was prepared by its legal advisers. The Town Council also took advice (including legal advice) from ESC.

6. Secondly, will the Town Council give an undertaking not to provide any further funding for the project as stated in both of the contacts with the PCC., clause 4.2, "under no circumstances will the grant sum be increased by the Funder"?

This point has been covered in the answer to question 1 above.

Cllr Carter noted that two FOI requests had been received concerning the agreed local CIL funding for St Michael's Rooms and the request for £2,000 funding for a thank you event for volunteers. Both requests were being addressed.

Cllr Carter proposed to re-order the Agenda to consider item 8 at the end of the meeting, which was agreed.

9. HR Sub-Committee:

9.1 Minutes of meeting held on 27th April:

It was noted that the minutes had been circulated.

9.2 To approve the revised Job Descriptions for all staff:

9110621 Cllr Carter proposed to recommend approval of the revised job descriptions for all staff to Full Council, which was seconded by Cllr Jones with all in favour.

9.3 To appoint HR sub-committee members:

It was agreed to defer this item to the next Full Council meeting to enable all councillors to consider whether they wished to join.

9.4 SALC webinar ‘Managing Good Performance’:

The Town Clerk/RFO and Cllr Carter reported that they had both attended the webinar and felt this was a good refresher with an interesting question and answer session. The Town Clerk noted the recommendation of a Performance and Improvement Policy.

9.5 Staff working Hours (OARs sub-committee)

Cllr Jones reported on the results of staff questionnaire and the balance with working in the office, working at home and being open to the public, which had been agreed with all staff satisfactorily.

9.6 Excel Training- further costs:

9210621 Cllr Carter proposed to support the cost for 5 extra hours excel training at £50 per hour from Budget 1130, with a transfer of funds to support the cost being considered prior to year-end, which was seconded by Cllr Jones with all in favour.

10. Action Plan:

Updates completed.

11. Matters of report or items for next agenda:

Cllr Hine reported on the SALC Chair training – The Town Clerk/RFO to action.

Cllr Carter reported that the new Suffolk Code of Conduct was still awaited and this item would be on the agenda once information was available.

Cllr Carter reported that Invoices were arriving late for Full Council – The Town Clerk/RFO would re-advise contractors of the need to provide invoices a week in advance of the first Thursday of the month where possible.

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 item 8 because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

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

None present at this point.

8. Employment Matters:

An email relating to staff matters was noted.

12. Date of next meeting:

Thursday 8th July 2021 at 7.00pm

Meeting closed at 20.25