



## Wivenhoe Town Council

MINUTES of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held in the Council Chamber, 77 High Street on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 at 7:00pm **CHAIR APPROVED**

Present: Cllr Guy (Chair), Cllr Burke, Cllr Hailes-Morley, Cllr Hutchings, Cllr Widgery, Cllr Andrews, J Beighton-Emms (TC) & E Buckley (RFO)

**07.22/01 Apologies for absence:** Cllr Wenaden and M Howard, apologies received and accepted.

**07.22/02 Declarations of Interest:** None

**07.22/03 Minutes of the last meeting:** Cllr Hutchings requested additional information to be added to the minutes about the asset register. The approval of the minutes for the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 22 May 2024 were proposed by Cllr Widgery and seconded by Cllr Hutchings with all in agreement.

**07.22/04 To adopt a training policy:** As part of the Local Council Award criteria, a training policy is required. Discussions about the policy which has been presented to the committee were had and how to encourage Cllr's and staff to attend training to help develop their knowledge. It was proposed to adopt and recommend the policy to be approved at FTC by Cllr Hailes-Morley and seconded by Cllr Andrews with all in agreement.

**07.22/05 Budget reports for presenting:** Cllr Hutchings presented his report to the committee (Appendix A). He raised concerns about the current budget suitability and the need for all non-finance members to be able to understand the figures being reported. Cllr Guy discussed changes to the year-end reports, which will help the members and present the figures to all in an understandable manner. There were discussions about the suitability of the suggested report and if it would be possible for a forecast column. The RFO will investigate if this is possible with the current Rialtus system. Cllr Hutchings proposed that the current budget report is replaced with the detailed and summary income and expenditure report, this was seconded by Cllr Andrews, with all in agreement.

**07.22/06 Mede Way project and funding:** It was reported that some repairs were needed to the park this year, which have been actioned and paid for. The committee discussed possible grants, donations or sponsorship which may be available and the funding officer is currently working on this. It was discussed that about £20,000 would need to be made available from the Councils reserves. Cllr Cory has been interested in the project and a meeting will be held with him next week. If the Council was to apply for a grant with Enover, this needs to be submitted by 6<sup>th</sup> September. This will be discussed at the next Estates committee meeting.

A Community fund application has been received from the Nottage, they are planning on a booklet with local information. The committee had a few questions as it was unclear if this will be sold for profit. The RFO will ask the Nottage for further information to help with the committee's decision and report back.

Discussions were had about the Community fund and changes to the policy and the current budget figure. It was discussed that a virement could be made for 50% of the Community fund to the Community events budget. There are concerns that the Community fund is helping towards running expenditure, which is not

suitable for the fund. The committee will look at the policy and discuss changes next meeting, which would need Full Town Council approval.

**07.22/07 William Loveless Hall and VAT:** The RFO reported that the limit for claiming VAT on exempt business, has a yearly limit of £7,500. This threshold will be reached during 2024/25, with the installation of solar panels at the WLH. MH has been working on the VAT figures over the past three years and the limit of £7,500 had not been reached in the past. Based on the understanding the Council can apply for a partial exemption on the VAT during 2024/25. RFO reported that the council will not need to opt to tax the WLH and will enquire about the process for the partial exemption.

**07.22/08 Energy Contracts:** The energy contracts are expiring on 30 July 2024, the current contract is with Octopus Energy. The RFO had compared three contracts and the best value for money would be to stay with Octopus Energy, with another two year contract. Cllr Hutchings proposed to recommend to FTC, to renew the energy contract with Octopus for two years, this was seconded by Cllr Hailes-Morley with all in agreement, except Cllr Burke who declared an interest.

**07.22/09 Internal Auditor:** The internal auditor for 2023/24 was carried out by Heelis and Lodge. The RFO discussed with the committee how thorough the audit had been and the reports being received on the day of the audit. TC had enquired with other local councils and Heelis and Lodge had come highly recommended, it has also been hard to seek an internal auditor in the past. The charge for the internal audit from Heelis and Lodge for 2024/25 is £740. Cllr Burke proposed to recommend to FTC that Heelis and Lodge be appointed for the 2024/25 internal audit, this was seconded by Cllr Widgery with all in favour.

**07.22/10 Bank Signatories:** The RFO reported that the bank signatories need to be updated. MH who is currently a signatory, will be leaving the Council in September 24. It was discussed that Cllr Burke could be the replacement for MH. It was recommended to the committee that MS be added as an administrator, as going forward MS role will include more finance work. It was proposed by Cllr Hailes-Morley, that M Howard be removed as a signatory, Cllr Burke be added as a signatory (with online access) and M Smart be added as an online administrator. This was seconded by Cllr Hutchings, with all in agreement.

**07.22/11 Update from the Personnel & Finance meeting held on 22 May 2024:** Work on the asset register has been started on by the Estates committee. Work is required ongoing with the financial regulations, financial plan, asset register, payroll budget, new employment contract, risk assessment, cyber cover and internal controls. There has been no update on these items since the last meeting and these items will stay on the agenda until completed.

**07.22/12 Office & Yard:** The committee was informed that the retention payment will be due in September for the office build to Cadmans and the final invoice to Duncan Clark Beckett. The final check will be arranged in September for the final completion certificate and any snags will be reported. This will also be discussed at Estates committee. The final amount due to Cadmans is £14,969.68 (net) and £960 (net) to Duncan Clark Beckett.

**07.22/13 Date of next meeting:** The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 August at 7pm.

**07.22/14 Exclusion of Press and Public:** In accordance with Paragraph 1 (2) of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Council is invited to consider if the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items(s) owing to the confidential nature of the business.

Part A of the meeting was closed at 20:08