

WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
held on Monday 10th January 2021 at 7 pm in Russell House,
Market Square, Westerham

Present: Councillors: Mrs S Sheen (SS) – Chairman
Mr E Boyle (EB)
Mr Elsdon-Wortley (ECW)
Dr S Kay (SK)
Mrs H Ogden (HO)

In attendance: Town Clerk: Mrs A Howells (AH)
Finance Officer: Mrs D Marshall (DM)

| Item | | Action |
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| 1. | <u>Apologies for Absence</u> None. | |
| 2. | <u>Declarations of Interest not previously declared</u> None | |
| 3. | <u>Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd November 2021</u> Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 nd November were approved at Council on 6 th December. | |
| 4. | <u>Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda</u> 5.8 The Deputy Clerk had received a response from Castle Water stating that a correct water consumption calculation had now been created for WTC for the period up to 31 st March 2022 of £384.20. Castle Water also confirmed that they were prepared to back date the reduced return to sewer allowance from 1 st September 2020 to 15 September 2021; the total credit of £597.46 would leave the account in credit by £213.26. However in the meantime Castle Water had generated a Direct Debit from the WTC bank account of £1,600 without any explanation or providing an invoice. This was being followed up as a matter of urgency. 8 Website Brief – The Clerk reported that a meeting had been held with the web designer and Cllr Elsdon-Wortley to discuss the new website. A draft website would be circulated for Cllrs/staff to comment on. 5.6 Insurance claim for the motor vehicle damage to the Fountain – The Clerk reported that the Insurance Company would not accept the two videos that had been sent to them. The Clerk had now sent a photo of the damage and was awaiting a decision. | DM/DR AH AH |

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| | <p>6.4 Public toilets – The Clerk had checked with the WTC Insurance Company who had no issue with the agreement and use of the unused space. Westerham Town Partnership agreed with the proposed changes and would update the agreement ready for signing.</p> <p>9 Cllr Sheen reported that a meeting had been held with Cllr Ogden and following this meeting the Action Plan had been updated. This would now be sent to the Working Group for any comments.</p> <p>11.1 Compassionate Leave policy – Cllr Sheen and the Clerk had updated the Policy as agreed.</p> | <p>AH</p> <p>AH/SS</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Finance</p> <p>5.1 RFO's report – The Report was received with thanks.</p> <p>Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) – Grant funding from Central Government towards additional cost incurred between November 2020 and 31st March 2022. The Finance Officer (RFO) reported that on gathering the information to apply for this funding, WTC's additional costs were mostly incurred between March 2020 and September 2020. This was not unexpected as, along with other Councils, WTC adapted facilities and procedures promptly in response to Government guidance. It is difficult to understand therefore why the funds were not available for additional expenditure incurred before November 2020. The RFO would email KCC Cllr Nick Chard and KALC regarding the restrictive dates and to ask why the start date was over seven months after the start of the pandemic. The RFO would put all relevant WTC's costs and submit by the deadline of 31st January.</p> <p>Amazon business account -Throughout the pandemic staff have ordered considerably more online, with the Clerk often using her own Amazon prime account to access next day deliveries, using her WTC debit card. From an operational point of view this had been very helpful, however it had been extremely time consuming for the RFO to administer financially. The RFO recommended WTC opening an Amazon Business Account for 1 user with Prime, at a cost of £40 per annum. Following discussion this was agreed.</p> <p>Investments – The RFO had previously sought a fifth banking establishment to spread WTC funds with the aim of all monies being covered by the Financial Compensation Scheme (FCS), to no avail. The RFO was concerned that WTC still had considerable funds on account with Santander, which were outside of the FCS limits.</p> <p>As an alternative the Committee could reconsider exploring the option of investing money in the Public Sector Deposit Fund, managed by CCLA. This fund had become well established and was now widely used by Parish and Town Councils. Following discussion it was agreed that the RFO would explore the terms offered and report to the next meeting.</p> <p>King George's Field re-development</p> <p>The public consultation on King George's redevelopment had been completed. The number of questionnaires returned by the under 18s had been improved by going to the sea cadets, scouts and free food Friday. WTC would need to continue to seek feedback from Churchill school children and Valence School, which we could use to help inform the decision making. The RFO had completed the analysis of responses and Councillor Elsdon-Wortley had agreed to create a visual presentation of the results that could</p> | <p>DM</p> <p>DM</p> <p>DM</p> |

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| <p>be used to provide feedback to Council and to the public. The next step was to seek planning advice from SDC, followed by funding advice.</p> <p>5.2 Payments and receipts list to 31st December 2021 – Cllr Sheen had no issues to bring to the Committees attention and no items were raised.</p> <p>5.3 Committee Accounts to 31st December 2021 – Cllr Sheen reported that she had nothing of concern to bring to the Committee's attention and no items were raised. The Accounts would be recommended to Council for approval.</p> <p>5.4 Internal Auditor report – The report from the Internal Auditor had been circulated and there had been no issues raised. Thanks were given to the RFO for an excellent result.</p> <p>5.5 Santander IT issue – The RFO reported that at the end of November two transfers had been made of £20,000 from the Santander business reserve account to the Santander current account in readiness for paying some large bills. This would normally be shown as a transfer from WTC to WTC on the bank statements. Instead the two transactions show the detail as 'Transfer to the name of the RFO' even though the money had actually transferred into the WTC current account and was showing on the current account statement but with an incorrect description.</p> <p>The RFO raised the issue with Santander on Monday 29th November, who said they would pass to their IT department for investigation. No response or remedial action was received so this was raised with Complaints on Wednesday 15th December. Santander acknowledged that they had an IT problem that had affected a number of customers and they were still working on a fix. As any further funds transferred between accounts would also show as being transferred to the RFO personally the current account had been set up as a new payee to avoid this.</p> <p>The RFO had been advised that nothing could be done to amend the incorrect details on the statement as it was 'against banking regulations' for statements to be amended after printing. A letter had been received to explain how/why this had happened which could be kept with the incorrect bank statement issued. WTC had six months to complain to the Ombudsman. Following discussion it was agreed that</p> <p>Cllr Sheen would review Santander's response to see if it was sufficient. The Committee did not feel that it was appropriate to complain to the Ombudsman as there had been no financial loss but were very disappointed in the response from Santander.</p> <p>5.6 Parking Project – The RFO reported the works at Madan and Hartley Road had been completed and the white lining had been undertaken. The works at Costells Meadow were almost complete – the height barrier was being replaced and there was some snagging work to do. Crockham Hill had progressed considerably between Christmas and New Year with groundworks completed and top dressing scheduled for completion w/c 10th January. There had been no major issues on any of the sites that had necessitated use of the contingency set aside, although the lining works were not included in the groundworks quotations and would incur an additional charge. As WTC had not been informed of this additional expense this would be escalated with Amey on receipt of the final invoice.</p> <p>Site visits were undertaken before Christmas to identify which areas of green space would need protecting with fencing and where planting would be</p> | <p>DM</p> <p>SS</p> <p>SS</p> |
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| | <p>needed. The RFO requested that in view of the immediate security issues at both Crockham Hill and Costells Meadow that the Committee agree to waive the Financial Regulations 10.3 in respect of obtaining 3 separate quotations and complete the fencing as soon as possible. An approved WTC contractor would be instructed and following discussion this was agreed. It was agreed that final project costs would be presented to the next meeting. Resolved: To waive WTC Financial Regulations 10.3 in view of the security issues and obtain one quote from an existing local contractor on WTC approved list. The RFO had inspected the completed works on 10th January and taken 'after' photos for use in TN16/Facebook/website 5.7 CIL Report – The RFO had circulated an updated CIL report. An updated report to be circulated at the next meeting. 5.8 Chamber IT technology – Cllr Elsdon-Wortley had researched a stand for the TV at a cost of £158, this was approved. A Microsoft Business Basic Licence would be required at a cost of £3.80 per month together with an Audio Conference Licence of £3.30 per month. The cost of the two Licences was agreed, to be paid as an annual cost. Thanks were given to Cllr Elsdon-Wortley for all the equipment he was donating.</p> | <p>DM</p> <p>AH</p> |
| 6. | <p>Precept 6.1 Draft Budget 2022/23 – The Committee draft budgets had been circulated. 6.2 Precept report – The RFO was thanked for her very helpful report giving various options for consideration as the tax base for 2022/23 had increased. Following discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council that the precept be increased by 9p a week; a Precept of £267,000.</p> | |
| 7. | <p>Land Issues 7.1 Doctors Surgery – Cllr Sheen and the Clerk were meeting this week to annotate the current and NHS leases in preparation for a meeting with the Drs Surgery next week. 7.2 Bloomfield Allotments lease – No further update. 7.3 Land North of King George's Playing Field lease – Cllr Ogden reported that she had attended a virtual meeting with a legal adviser together with Cllr Sheen and the Clerk. Information from the meeting had been conveyed to the Landowner who agreed to gift the land on the terms outlined. The Clerk had confirmed with the Legal Adviser that WTC wished him to proceed but a response had not yet been received, the Clerk to chase.</p> | <p>SS/AH</p> <p>AH</p> |
| 8. | <p>Russell House 8.1 Anti-social behaviour issues – The Clerk reported minor litter issues. 8.2 ECO cleaning materials – The Clerk had approached the Cleaning Contractor for the cost for using eco cleaning products. A response had been received but the Committee requested further details. The Clerk to investigate and report back to the next meeting.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>Policies and Procedures The following Policy had been circulated: - 9.1 Internal Controls Policy – Following discussion it was agreed to</p> | |

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| | recommend approval of the Policy to Council subject to minor amendments. 9.2 Investment Policy – Following discussion it was agreed to approve the Policy subject to minor amendments. | DM DM |
| 10. | <u>ECO Policy - F&GP Action Plan</u> Cllr Sheen had circulated an updated Action Plan. Following discussion the following actions were agreed: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Clerk to follow up on the green credentials of the website contractor • The Clerk to obtain a quote for double glazed windows at Russell House • Cllr Robson to investigate WTC carbon footprint • The Clerk to investigate solar panels on Russel House with SDC Planning | AH AH NR/AH AH |
| 11. | <u>Correspondence</u> None. | |
| 12. | <u>Reports from Councillors</u> Cllrs Ogden and Sheen had attended a virtual meeting on 15/12/21 with a Legal Adviser. | |
| 13. | <u>TN16, Edenbridge Magazine and Website</u> Parking projects KGF Consultation results | |
| 14. | <u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u> None. | |
| 15. | <u>Further Matters for Consideration at the next meeting</u> Training schedule CIL update Accounts for projects | |
| 16. | <u>Date of next meeting</u> Monday 14 th March 2022 | |
| | Part 2 Pursuant to Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (admission meetings) Act 1960. The Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the under mentioned item on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business concerned. | |
| 17. | <u>HR Matters</u> 17.1 HR Consultation update - Cllr Sheen reported that this was ongoing. 17.2 Working from Home Policy – The draft Policy had been circulated and following minor amendments was approved. | SS |

The meeting was concluded at 10.20 pm.

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman