

WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
held on Monday 9th January 2023 at 7 pm in Russell House,
Market Square, Westerham

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

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

Item	Action	Action
1.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Kay – holiday.	
2.	<u>Declarations of Interest not previously declared</u> None.	
3.	<u>Minutes of the Meeting held on 28th November 2022</u> Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 th November were approved at Council on 5 th December.	
4.	<u>Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda</u> 4 Fountain – The Fountain light had been re-connected and was now in working order. 5.1 Ash Road fencing – Passed to APFOS. 5.1 Buildings Insurance Valuation – A quote had been received for £400 plus VAT per building. A further quote was awaited. It was agreed to authorise expenditure up to £3,000 based on the ability to complete the work within the required timescale. 5.7 London Green Belt Subscription – was being paid this week. Login details would then be circulated to the Planning Committee. 6.1 Churchill School lease – The agreed letter to be sent with an extension of the lease for one year and with an increase as provided for in the lease. The Clerk had chased the KCC Cllr for a response. 9 Local Council Award – A meeting of the Working Group would take place in February. 9.2 Landlords responsibility - The Chairman and Town Clerk were meeting on 20 th February to review actions and set up a review structure. 9.3 Air con maintenance – The service had taken place.	AH AH

<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Finance</u> 5.1 RFO's report – The Report was received with thanks. 5.2 Payments and receipts list to 31st December 2022 – Cllr Sheen had no issues to bring to the Committees attention. 5.3 Committee Accounts to 31st December 2022 – Cllr Sheen reported that she had nothing of concern to bring to the Committee's attention. The Accounts would be recommended to Council for approval. Following discussion it was agreed that a letter would be sent to St Mary's Church regarding an invoice for the electricity for the flood lights. 5.4 Internal Auditor - The Finance Officer reported that the only item raised in the Internal Audit report was the frequency of review of the Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. Whilst it was noted that WTC routinely reviewed these policies every 4 years and also reviewed whenever a new NALC 'model' document was received or there was a change in business practice; it was deemed insufficient. It was advised that annually was best practice. Consequently, the Clerk/Finance Officer suggested amending the review frequency and have added the Financial Regulations to the agenda for immediate review. The Finance Officer was thanked for all her hard work. 5.5 CIL Report – The Finance Officer reported that the Annual CIL report for 2021/22 had been completed and returned to SDC and added to WTC website. The SDC CIL agreement had been finalised for the playground refurbishment funds and the Finance Officer was now able to request a draw-down of the £15,000 awarded. The Finance Officer reported that additional, detailed itemised expenditure had now been requested by SDC on the report forms and following discussion it was agreed that Cllr Ogden would ask SDC Cllr Esler for clarification on why this was being requested. 5.6. Investment with Nationwide – The Finance Officer reported that there was a balance of £106,591.90 in the Nationwide account. The Nationwide had now reintroduced their fixed saver accounts. The current interest rate for a one year fixed term was 3.20%. The Finance Officer recommended reinvesting and this was agreed.</p>	<p>DM/AH/SS</p> <p>DM/AH</p> <p>HO</p> <p>DM</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Precept</u> 6.1 Draft Budget 2023/24 – The Committee draft budgets were noted. 6.2 Recommendation report - The Finance Officer had circulated papers regarding background information on Precept setting and a consolidated draft budget 2023/24. The Finance Officer was thanked for her very helpful report giving options for consideration. It was noted that the tax base for 2023/24 had increased slightly. Following lengthy discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council that the precept be increased by 23p a week; a Precept of £293,115. This was an increase of £26,115 to cover increased costs from high inflation due to the current global economic environment.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Land Issues</u> 7.1 Doctors Surgery – Cllr Sheen had circulated a paper regarding the Doctors</p>	

	<p>Surgery Lease and Rent review. The Lease had expired on 16th December 2021 and had been rolled for one year. The Lease had expired again on 16th December 2022. Cllr Sheen had worked on a draft NHS lease and her comments had been reviewed by the Practice Manager. Cllr Sheen had reviewed the Surgery draft and now felt it was time to send the draft to WTC Solicitors. Cllr Sheen had also taken advice from the Solicitor and reported that the only way to increase the rent was by issuing a Section 25 Notice, this would allow an increase to be proposed, it had to be negotiated within 6 months and would include an interim rent increase of 5%.</p> <p>Following discussion it was agreed to: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm the quote for the Solicitor to review the draft lease 2. Request a quote to issue a 'friendly' Section 25 Notice 3. Issue a 'friendly' Section 25 Notice with a 10% increase and 5% interim increase. <p>7.2 Bloomfield Allotments lease – No further update.</p> <p>7.3 Land North of King George's Playing Field lease – The Clerk reported nothing had been received from the Land Registry.</p> <p>7.4 Currant Hill Allotments, SDC Local Plan – Cllr Ogden had circulated information regarding the inclusion of WTC allotment site in the SDC Local Plan 2040. Also attached was a legal opinion from 2019 regarding ownership of the site.</p> <p>Following discussion it was agreed: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to respond to SDC that WTC still wished the site to be included in the new Local Plan with availability in 5 – 10 years, response to be sent by 11th January. 2. That a Working Group be set up, including members of APFOS and F&GP, to develop a plan of action for the site, to take place in the last quarter of 2023. 	
8.	<p><u>Russell House</u></p> <p>8.1 Anti-social behaviour issues – minor littering only.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Policies and Procedures</u></p> <p>The following Policy had been circulated: -</p> <p>9.1 Internal Controls Policy – Following discussion it was agreed to recommend approval of the Policy to Council subject to minor amendments.</p> <p>9.2 Investment Policy – Following discussion it was agreed to approve the Policy subject to minor amendments.</p> <p>9.3 Financial Regulations - Following discussion it was agreed to approve the Regulations.</p> <p>9.4 Procurement Policy - Following discussion it was agreed to approve the review of the Policy subject to the addition of the following In order to comply with the Committee's ECO Action Plan: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tenderers are required to incorporate Councils commitment to ensuring that all procurements consider the environmental well-being of the Town and surrounding area, in their submissions. They will be required to provide evidence of compliance with relevant environmental standards with respect to themselves, their systems of work, equipment and supplies. 	

	2. All contracts must comply with the law and the policies of the Council (point 10 Contractor Considerations).	
10.	<p><u>ECO Policy Action Plan</u></p> <p>10.1 WTC Carbon Footprint – The Clerk had completed the Carbon Footprint for the year 2020/21. However as this was during Covid, work practices were very different with virtual meetings and the majority of staff working from home. It was agreed to file this and compare the next year 2021/22 with the Baseline.</p> <p>10.2 Green Postcard review – Two items on the consultation list related to F&GP: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A request for a Community Orchard in conjunction with APFOS. It was agreed that Council had no land available for this project however the Clerk would liaise with Westerham Town Partnership as they were investigating locations for a community orchard. 2. To invest in the Long Pond – Council had taken a decision not to invest in this project however the Friends of the Long Pond could apply for a grant from WTC. 	<p>AH</p> <p>AH</p>
11.	<p><u>Correspondence</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
12.	<p><u>Reports from Councillors</u></p> <p>None.</p>	
13.	<p><u>TN16, Crockham Hill Village newsletter and Website</u></p> <p>None</p> <p>March - Precept</p>	
14.	<p><u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u></p> <p>School land</p> <p>CIL</p>	
15.	<p><u>Further Matters for Consideration at the next meeting</u></p> <p>Landlord responsibilities</p> <p>Local Council Award</p> <p>Bonus update</p>	
16.	<p><u>Date of next meeting</u></p> <p>Monday 13th March 2023</p>	
	<p>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.</p>	
19.	<p><u>HR Consultation update</u></p> <p>Cllr Sheen briefed the Committee on the discussions with staff to advise them individually of the outcome of the Pay Review.</p>	

20.	<u>HR Committee Terms of Reference</u> Cllr Sheen had circulated draft Terms of Reference for a Human Resources Sub-Committee. Following discussion it was agreed to recommend to Council with minor amendments. It was proposed to hold the first meeting of the Sub-Committee in March if approved.	
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The meeting was concluded at 9.35 pm.

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman