

## WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee  
held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7 pm in Russell House,  
Market Square, Westerham

Present: Councillors: Mrs S Sheen (SS) – Chairman  
Mr E Boyle (EB)  
Dr S Kay (SK)  
Mr N Proudfoot (NP)

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

Item		Action
1.	<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Hussain.	
2.	<b><u>Declarations of Interest not previously declared</u></b> None.	
3.	<b><u>Minutes of the Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023</u></b> Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 <sup>th</sup> September were approved at Council on 2 <sup>nd</sup> October.	
4.	<b><u>Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda</u></b> 5 The Finance Officer had collected and submitted the data required for the KCC Pension Fund regarding changes in contractual hours since 2014 for WTC current 4 members of staff, ex-deputy clerk and the retired groundsman. This work had taken 3 hours to complete. 6.2 The CIL application for the path around KGF had been withdrawn. 12.4 The sign for Russell House was still to be ordered. 21 The Long Service Awards had been paid. 22 The Living Wage Accreditation had been shelved for the moment due to pressure of work.	
5.	<b><u>Finance</u></b> <b>5.1 Responsible Finance Officers (Finance Officer) –</b> The Report was received with thanks. The Finance Officer reported that £85,000 has been re-invested in a Lloyds 1-year fixed term deposit at 3.6%.	

<p>The Trade Unions accepted the Pay Award for Local Government for 2023/2024 on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023. The Pay Award was agreed as a £1,925 uplift on all National Joint Council pay points 2 to 43 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. In accordance with the WTC Remuneration Policy the increase in salary for all WTC employees would be back dated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and paid in November's payroll. Cllr Sheen reminded the Committee that although the pay award had been budgeted for, the payment of the pro rata fringe allowance had not been considered in the Remuneration Review undertaken in 2022 and was therefore outside budget. The Remuneration Policy should be updated to reflect the entitlement to this allowance.</p> <p>Cllr Proudfoot expressed concern regarding flat rate increases however the Finance Officer explained that the flat rate increases were supported by local government (and WTC employees) as they benefited the lower pay points. The Committee approved the pay increase for 2022/2023.</p> <p><b>5.2 Payments and receipts list to 30<sup>1st</sup> October 2023</b> – Cllr Sheen had no issues to bring to the Committee's attention, minor queries were explained. The Payment List would be recommended to Council for approval.</p> <p><b>5.3 Committee Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023</b> – The Accounts had been circulated and there were no queries. The Accounts would be recommended to Council for approval.</p> <p>The Finance Officer noted potential overspend regarding office expenditure, however this would be funded by the underspend in the insurance budget. Also APFOS had received a £1,200 water bill for Currant Hill allotments which would exceed budget. Allotments should be self-funded so if necessary this expenditure would be met by viring from available surplus in other allotment budget lines. APFOS were investigating whether this excess had been caused by a leak or increased usage.</p> <p><b>5.4 External Audit Report</b> – The Finance Officer reported that WTC had not met the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 which stated that WTC must advise the public of the conclusion of audit and the availability of the audited accounts by the 30<sup>th</sup> September each year. This was due to the external auditor not releasing WTC accounts until the 10<sup>th</sup> October. The External Auditor letter outlined minor scope for improvement in 2023/24 which the Finance Officer disputed. However, a clear Audit was received, and the Committee congratulated the Finance Officer.</p> <p>The Finance Officer reported that it would take longer to complete the Audit next year due to the cumbersome new reporting required for all the bank accounts. The Committee expressed concern, however, WTC had no control over the selection of external auditors. The RFO has completed the satisfaction survey based on her experience.</p> <p><b>5.5 Metro Bank funds</b> – The Metro Bank balance was reduced to £87,048.37, rather than £50,000 as agreed, as less available funds were required due to the perimeter path costing less than expected. The Metro Bank now offered a fixed term deposit, following discussion it was agreed to transfer funds into this for 1 year. Cllr Sheen reported that Metro Bank shareholders had voted in favour of its financial restructure.</p> <p><b>5.6 Draft F&amp;GP and Committee budgets 2024/25</b> – The F&amp;GP and Committee budgets had been circulated and the Committee reviewed each line in the F&amp;GP budget to understand the rationale for increases/decreases for</p>	<p>SS</p> <p>DM</p>
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	<p>2024/2025. Cllr Kay requested that the Council Strategy budget line be renamed Strategic Business Plan budget to reflect its purpose to align proposed expenditure with the 4 year Business Plan. Following lengthy discussion, the F&amp;GP draft budget was approved and would be recommended to Council. All Committee draft budgets were noted. Thanks were given to the Finance Officer for the well laid out information and supplementary notes.</p> <p><b>5.7 First draft consolidated budget 2024/25</b> – The first draft consolidated budget had been circulated and following lengthy discussion it was agreed to recommend this to Council.</p> <p>Cllr Proudfoot expressed dismay that election costs were not paid by central Government.</p> <p><b>5.8 Reserves</b> – A list of current reserves had been circulated and noted.</p>	
6.	<p><b><u>King George's Field</u></b></p> <p><b>6.1 KGF Funds Report</b> - The Project Officer had circulated the Funds Report; there were no queries. The report would be updated for Council.</p> <p>The Project Officer reported that the skate park had been completed and ancillary works were being worked through.</p> <p>The order had been placed for the perimeter path. The wet weather had delayed the contractors' start however work had now commenced which would run into the new year. The area being worked on would be fenced and they would work in sections, moving around the field.</p> <p>Further work on the King George's Field redevelopment project had been put on hold this year to provide cover for APFOS and CHWMPF Trust work.</p>	DM
7.	<p><b><u>Land Issues</u></b></p> <p><b>7.1 Doctors Surgery</b> – Cllr Sheen reported that the draft Lease had been sent to the Doctors Solicitors. A response was awaited.</p> <p>A Section 25 Notice had been sent on 15<sup>th</sup> February which was a notice for increased rent. The six months expired on 15<sup>th</sup> October so the Finance Officer would invoice accordingly.</p> <p><b>7.2 Churchill School</b> – Following previous communication regarding the land adjacent to the School the Clerk had chased the KCC Cllr as had Cllr Kay, but no response had been received. Following discussion, it was agreed to obtain a quote for a new lease for land adjacent to Churchill School which would clearly outline responsibility for the cost of ongoing maintenance.</p> <p><b>7.3 Currant Hill Allotments Working Group Terms of Reference</b> – The Terms of Reference had been circulated and it was agreed to recommend approval to Council.</p>	DM  AH
8.	<p><b><u>HR Sub Committee Minutes</u></b></p> <p>The minutes from the meetings of 6<sup>th</sup> October and 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved. The Assistant Clerk vacancy was discussed and it was agreed to consider a 12 hour position over three days.</p>	
9.	<p><b><u>ECO Policy Action Plan</u></b></p> <p><b>9.1</b> An updated Action Plan had been circulated. It was agreed to add Russell House insulation.</p> <p><b>9.2</b> Tablet quote – Two quotes had been circulated and following discussion it</p>	

	was agreed not to proceed with the purchase of a tablet. If a cllr needed to use a device at a Council meeting then one of the office laptops would be made available. The Clerk would encourage councillors to review papers electronically.	
10.	<b><u>Risk Assessments</u></b> <b>10.1 Stress at work</b> – Cllr Sheen had circulated an amended Stress at Work Risk Assessment. Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend to Council for approval.	
11.	<b><u>Russell House</u></b> <b>11.1 Landlord responsibilities</b> – The Clerk reported that the Reinforced Autoclave Aerated Concrete (RACC) Surveyor had inspected the building and a report was awaited. A verbal report had been received confirming no RACC was evidenced in Russell House. The RACC Surveyor had suggested re-insulating the roof space and investigating insulation in the cupboards. The Clerk to obtain quotes. The Clerk reported that an electrician had been due to give a quote for the LED and fire escape lighting work but had not turned up for his appointment. It was agreed that a further quote was required. <b>11.2 Maintenance Plan</b> – Cllr Sheen had circulated an updated Maintenance Plan. This plan supported the RH budget line and detailed future potential issues. It was a very useful document and would be extended to the KGF Hut and Crockham Hill pavilion. Thanks were given to Cllr Sheen. <b>11.3 CCTV Maintenance agreement</b> – The Clerk had obtained costings for a Maintenance Contract and call out costs following a potential call out for a problem with the CCTV. Following discussion it was agreed to find out the lifespan of the current CCTV and discuss further at the next meeting. <b>11.4 Anti-social behaviour issues</b> – minor littering only.	AH AH AH
12.	<b><u>Correspondence</u></b> 12.1 A letter had been received from Thames Water about a public drop-in session regarding the closure of Westerham Hill on 4 <sup>th</sup> December, between 10am and 4.30pm at Westerham Hall. 12.2 A letter had been received from Dartford/SDC regarding a business rates request for Crockham Hill car park. The Finance Officer to investigate.	DM
13.	<b><u>Reports from Councillors</u></b> Cllrs Kay, Boyle and Sheen had attended the SDC Liaison Meeting. Cllr Kay had met with the Chairman of Limpsfield Parish Council. Cllr Sheen had attended the CA AGM. Cllr Proudfoot had cleared up broken glass following a report from a resident.	
14.	<b><u>TN16, Crockham Hill Village newsletter and Website</u></b> None.	
15.	<b><u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u></b> None.	

16.	<b><u>Further Matters for Consideration at the next meeting</u></b> Budgets Chamber furniture quote Churchill School	
17.	<b><u>Date of next meeting</u></b> Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	
	<b>Part 2</b> 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.	
18.	<b><u>Pay Award 2024/25</u></b> The budget for the Pay Award 2024/25 had been discussed and it was agreed to apply the same uplift as 2023/2024 based on the recent announcement to increase the National Living Wage.	

The meeting was concluded at 9.40 pm.

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman