

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL  
FINANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

21 NOVEMBER, 2017

MINUTES  
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Present:  
Councillors:

Applin	Fojtik
T Bates	I Fradgley
Bicknell	Jefferson
Dowling (Chairman)	Lowe

Clerks: Deputy Town Clerk  
Press: None  
Public: None

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34. To Accept Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

Mayor Alcock was absent on a mayoral engagement. Cllr Jackson was absent from the meeting.

35. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Lowe declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7.1 (Membership Benefit of WALC / NALC), minuted as 40.1, and left the room when the item was debated.

36. To Receive Written Requests for Dispensation for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no written or verbal requests for dispensations.

37. To Grant Any Requests for Dispensation

None were required.

38. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

39. To Approve the Draft Open and Confidential Minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED: That the Draft Open and Confidential Minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September, 2017 be approved as a correct record.

40. Review of Membership of WALC/NALC and SLCC

40.1 To evaluate membership benefit and consider if the increase in the WALC fees is acceptable

Members commented on the need for greater clarity of exactly what benefits the Town Council gets from being members of WALC/NALC.

The split of the increased fees between WALC and NALC was requested and confirmed as £620 for WALC / £1546 for NALC. A point was raised that the decision by WALC to fix their share of the fees for the next 5 years related to their smaller proportion of the fees, so it was likely there could be further increases in the NALC fees.

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: That the decision whether to renew membership of WALC / NALC should be deferred until the next meeting of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee in January 2018, and that the Town Clerk / Deputy Town Clerk should write to

the WALC County Secretary to ask what benefits the Town Council gets as a Quality Council and what he regards are the benefits or reasons why Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council should remain a member of each organisation.

#### 40.2 SLCC

Members acknowledged the frequent use and support provided to the Town Clerk by this organisation.

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That membership of SLCC should be renewed for the next financial year 2018/19.

#### 41. To review Financial Regulations and Finance & Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

Members accepted the reasons for changing these documents, which resulted from the recent staffing restructure to appoint a Deputy Town Clerk and Finance & Facilities Officer.

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RECOMMENDED: That the changes to the Financial Regulations and Finance & Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference be recommended for approval by Council.

#### 42. Re-investment of Funds

Members considered the recommendation to re-invest the existing investment, and to increase the overall investment in a 1 Year Fixed Rate Bond, after getting assurances that this would not impact on the Council's ability to access required funds as and when needed.

It was Proposed, Seconded and unanimously

RESOLVED: That the sum of £150,000 should be invested in the Cambridge & Counties Bank 1 Year Fixed Rate Bond.

43. Ring-fencing fee income for the Tranquillity Garden

Members considered the expenditure required to maintain the Tranquillity Garden as part of the Cemetery, now that the initial development project was completed, and the expected income from fees going forward. Mindful of the considerable expenditure which Council had approved in the past in order to develop this facility, and the expected excess of income over expenditure in the future, Members decided that there was no need to retain a ring-fenced reserve for the Tranquillity Garden, provided that adequate funds were budgeted each year for its maintenance.

Therefore, it was Proposed, Seconded and

RECOMMENDED: That the designated reserve for the Tranquillity Garden should not be retained in the Town Council's accounts at the end of the current financial year, but the sum of £5,000 should be included in the budget for maintenance of the Tranquillity Garden for 2018/19.

44. Management Accounts for the period 1 April – 31 October, 2017

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a verbal update on the Management Accounts, highlighting the three main Year to Date Variances, which are the ongoing current income deficit from Town Hall Commercial Management, the significant surplus in Cemetery Fees and the current underspend in Operational & Administration Expenditure.

It was agreed that a meeting of the Town Hall Sustainability & Income Task & Finish Group needs to be scheduled as soon as possible to consider the situation and make recommendations.

Members noted the report.

45. Draft Budget 2018-19

Members saw no reason to alter the approach to endeavouring to seek a Precept request which did not increase the cost per Band D household, though it was noted that if inflation continues to rise and reserves are depleted over the next 12 months then there may be a requirement to reconsider this approach next year. General Reserves are currently forecast to reduce by the end of 2017-18 to the level of the annual Precept, which is the benchmark set in the Reserves Policy.

The Draft Budget currently does not include the expected substantial increase in security costs for future events, though it was suggested these will need to be funded from Reserves if figures are not known before the Budget is approved.

It was noted the budget for Planning expenditure should be increased to ensure it is in line with expected actual expenditure, as there has been a deficit over the last 2 years.

The increase in the budget for the Tranquility Garden, as minuted in 43 above, will also be added.

Further work will be done over the next 2 months in reviewing variances between budget and actuals for the last 3 years, and the final budget is dependent on confirmation of the Tax Base and Council Tax Reduction Grant by the District Council, which is still awaited.

It was therefore Proposed, Seconded and

RECOMMENDED: That the budget is adjusted in line with the current approach of using Reserves to fund any shortfall, providing no significant additional funding

requirements are identified before the next meeting in January. Reserve levels will be reviewed as part of next year's budget.

To defer issues to Confidential Session

*The Chairman proposed and it was AGREED that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, agenda item 7.7, minuted as 48, be moved to Confidential Session.*

46. Deputy Town Clerk's Verbal Report – for information only

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a brief verbal update on:

- Debit / Credit Card payments – although occasional requests continue to be received, these typically relate to “over the phone” payments and the lack of this facility does not prevent payment from being made by other means;
- The photocopier lease agreement has been renewed with the current service provider – as a result of further negotiations, the estimated saving on the new lease and service agreements is £200 per quarter;
- Avon mooring rental agreement – a letter has been sent to the current tenant and a response is awaited;
- The dumb waiter replacement in the Town Hall is scheduled for January 2018 (funding already agreed in 2016/17);
- Cemetery telecommunications mast new contract – one of the terms in the new contract had caused concern to Pentacom Networks, the Council's telecommunications management advisers, and was being re-negotiated ;
- The CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund/Prices & Dividend Yields.

47. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

16 January, 2018 at 6:30pm at the Town Hall.