

MINUTES
of
**A Meeting of New Romney Town Council's
Finance and General Purposes Committee
Held in the Assembly Rooms on
Wednesday 17th January 2024 commencing at 6.45pm**

PRESENT: Councillors P Thomas, J Davies, J Rivers, P Coe,
P Carey and K Terry

In Attendance:

Responsible Financial Officer	-	Mrs C T Morris
Finance Clerk	-	Mrs J Field
Member of the Public	-	1

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor P Thomas

474/2023-24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and noted, as follows:

Councillor Rev Cn McLachlan - for personal reasons

475/2023-24 **DISPENSATION TO PARTICIPATE**

The RFO advised that no new Dispensations to Participate had been granted.

476/2023-24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

@6.46PM Councillor Coe declared an Other Significant Interest in Agenda Item 14(i) due to his being a donor to John Armitage Memorial Trust.

477/2023-24 **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

It was not necessary to adjourn the meeting as no questions had been received in writing by the Clerk.

478/2023-24 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

479/2023-24 **RE-CONVENING OF MEETING**

Not applicable.

480/2023-24 **MINUTES**

(i) The Chairman presented the Minutes of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting** held on **20th September 2023**, copies of which had been previously circulated to all Councillors and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Carey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 20th September 2023, be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

Councillor Thomas abstained from voting as he had not been in attendance at the meeting.

(ii) The Chairman presented the Minutes of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee Budget Meeting** held on **11th December 2023**, copies of which had been previously circulated to all Councillors and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Carey

SECONDED BY: Councillor Rivers

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Budget Meeting held on 11th December 2023, be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

Councillor Terry abstained from voting as she had not been in attendance at the meeting.

481/2023-24 **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

(i) **2023/2024 Budget Comparison & Income & Expenditure Reports**

The 2023/2024 Budget Comparison Report and Income and Expenditure Reports were received and noted.

(ii) **Schedule of Payments Approved under Financial Regs, SPAA and/or Delegated Authority**

The RFO presented her detailed schedule of Payments Approved under Financial Regs, SPAA and/or Delegated Authority. Following due consideration, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the afore-mentioned detailed schedule of Payments Approved under Financial Regs, SPAA and/or Delegated Authority, in the sum of £42,652.10 exc. VAT, be received and noted and identified cost centres be approved.

(iii) Schedule of Fund Transfers

The Schedule of Transfers between Town Council Bank Accounts was received and noted.

(iv) Coding Allocation

The RFO reported that costs necessary to carry out an independent, third-party professional investigation of the recent staff grievance with the required expediency, in the sum of £4,550.00 exc VAT, had been incurred.

It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that, costs incurred in the sum of £4,550.00 exc VAT, necessary to carry out an independent, third-party professional investigation of the recent staff grievance with the required expediency, be formally allocated to the 2023/2024 Legal & Professional Fees Budget.

482/2023-24 **RFO'S REPORTS**

(i) Actions completed since the F&GP Committee meeting held on 20th September 2023:

The RFO's report, which read as under, was received and noted:

RFO's Report – F&GP Meeting on 17th January 2024

Actions completed since the F&GP Committee meeting held on 20th September 2023:

(i) NRIB have been advised of the Town Council's decision (*Minute Ref: 227/2023-24 refers*).

Other Matters of Report:

(i) In order to benefit from increased interest rates being offered, funds as per the schedule presented under Agenda item 8(iii). have been transferred into a Lloyds Bank Online Instant Access account – The Terms & Conditions of the aforementioned account are available to view, by appointment, at the Town Hall.

(ii) A communication, regarding changes to paper services, has been received from Lloyds Bank (Attached hereto*).

This concludes my report – RFO 10th January 2024

(ii) RFO's Maintenance Report:

The RFO's maintenance report, which read as under, was received and noted:

RFO's Maintenance Report – F&GP Meeting on 17th January 2024

Routine maintenance in respect of all Town Council owned lands and buildings has been carried out since the last report to the Committee as per previously awarded contracts.

Additional non-routine maintenance and repairs have been carried out since the last report to Committee, as follows:

(i) Town Hall

- Higher Elevation attended site to rectify stairlift teething issues.
- Remedial decoration works, following replacement of ground floor central heating system, commenced by Parish Caretaker.
- New bolt on main front door installed by Parish Caretaker.
- Meeting room walls painted by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- Replacement of existing lighting and installation of a new consumer board.
- Provision of air conditioning in the Council Chamber (survey carried out, drawings received – Planning application to be submitted).
- Provision of heating for Mayor's Parlour.

(ii) Town Hall House and Outbuilding

- Repairs to leaking radiator carried out by Aquaheat Ashford Ltd.
- Repairs to leaking toilet cistern carried out by Parish Caretaker.
- Draft excluders, to back door, fitted by Parish Caretaker.
- First coat of paint to new plaster applied by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- Installation of conservation roof light.

(iii) Town Hall Garden

- Stripping off and reseeding an area of lawn carried out by Parish Caretaker.
- Tree inspection carried out by Invicta Arboriculture.
- Emergency box prepared by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- None.

(iv) Public Clock

- None.

In hand:

- None.

(v) Assembly Rooms

- Repair works to front external wall carried out by B E Ames Ltd.
- Tree inspection carried out by Invicta Arboriculture.

In hand:

- None.

(vi) Community Hall (Nursery)

- Replacement of toilet flushing mechanism carries out by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- None.

(vii) Maude Pavilion & Sports Field

- Tree inspection carried out by Invicta Arboriculture.

In hand:

- Replacement of missing/broken roof tiles.
- Anti-vandal paint and associated signage has been purchased and is to be applied/fitted by the Parish Caretaker.

(viii) Fairfield Road Recreation Ground

- Tree inspection carried out by Invicta Arboriculture.
- Repairs to matting carried out by Parish Caretaker.
- Repairs to slide unit carried out by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- Routine maintenance works to play equipment.

(ix) The Greens / Hut & Winch Site

- The Greens vehicular access gate padlock replaced by Parish Caretaker (keys lost by user - costs re-charged).
- Hut & Winch site vehicular access gate padlock replaced by Parish Caretaker.
- Refurbishment and refitting of signage carried out by the Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- Routine maintenance works to gym/play equipment.
- Research in respect of providing a separately metered power supply to the Toilet Block.

(x) Allotment Gardens

- Strimming of vacant plots carried out by Caretaking Team.
- Strimming of interior pathways/boundary perimeter carried out by M Coleman Arboricultural Service *NB: Parish Caretaker currently unable to carry out these works due to staff shortages.*
- Removal of large fallen tree branch (leaning across boundary fence onto adjacent tree nursery).

In hand:**(xi) Flagstaff Land**

- Tree inspection carried out by Invicta Arboriculture.
- Hedge cutting carried out by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- Perimeter bollard gold banding (ongoing).
- Research in respect of replacement flagpole.

(xii) Coney Banks

- None.

In hand:

- None.

(xiii) Garden of Remembrance

- The Parish Caretaker has been assisted by members of New Romney British Legion to ensure the Garden of Remembrance continues to look pristine throughout the year.
- Bollard sited on corner of grassed area by Parish Caretaker (to mitigate the risk of vehicular ingress).
- Hedges cut and summer bedding plants removed by the Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- None.

(xiv) Cinque Ports Place (Town Square) & High Street Planter

- Town Christmas tree sited and subsequently removed and disposed of by Parish Caretaker with assistance from M Coleman Arboricultural Services.

In hand:

- Re-siting of street furniture.

(xv) Vandalism / Antisocial Behaviour

- None.

(xvi) Miscellaneous

- Installation of Town Trail plaques and signboards carried out by BE Ames Ltd.
- Installation of Town Trail information boards carried out by C. Jones & Son Ltd.
- Damaged Town Trail plaque repaired by Parish Caretaker.
- Spraying of Christmas tree stars carried out by Parish Caretaker.

In hand:

- Installation of final Town Trail plaque.

This concludes my maintenance report – RFO 10th January 2024

483/2023-24 **CIVIC REGALIA**

Councillor Coe reported that the mayor's badge and chain had suffered an element of damage/wear and tear.

Following due consideration, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) an application be made to the 'Repair Shop' for assistance with repair to the mayor's regalia; (ii) Councillor Thomas would provide a heritage statement to support the application.

484/2023-24 **QUOTATIONS**

(i) Due consideration was given to the single quotation sought in respect of carrying out roof & rainwater goods inspections for Town Council buildings. It was:

(a)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers
SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that due to the specialist nature of the service to be undertaken, Standing Orders be waived to consider the single quotation sought.

(b)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) the quotation received to carry out inspections of roof and rainwater goods as detailed below:

- Town Hall - £920.00 plus VAT
- Town Hall House - £188.00 plus VAT
- Assembly Rooms - £356.00 plus VAT
- Community Hall - £136.00 plus VAT
- Maude Pavilion - £188.00 plus VAT

be accepted and funded from the relevant departmental budgets; (ii) the RFO be authorised to settle all relevant invoices, when received, having first ascertained that all is in order.

The contract was, therefore, awarded to B E Ames Ltd.

(ii) Due consideration was given to the quotations received in respect of the three-yearly grounds maintenance contracts. It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) quotations received in respect of 3-yearly grounds maintenance contracts, as detailed below:

- The Greens - £2,340.00 Per annum plus VAT
- Fairfield Rd Rec - £1,680.00 Per annum plus VAT
- Flagstaff Land - £ 744.00 Per annum plus VAT

be accepted and funded from the relevant departmental budgets and (ii) the RFO be authorised to settle all relevant invoices, when received, having first ascertained that all is in order.

The contract was, therefore, awarded to M Coleman Arboricultural Service.

(iii) Due consideration was given to the quotations received in respect of 2024 Church Lane ditch management works. It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) the estimate received in respect of 2024 Church Lane ditch management works in the sum of £3,450.00 plus VAT, be accepted and funded from the 2024/2025 Miscellaneous Expenses Budget; (ii) the RFO be authorised to settle all relevant invoices, when received, having first ascertained that all is in order.

The contract was, therefore, awarded to Ostridge Contractors Ltd.

(iv) Due consideration was given to the single quotation sought in respect of ad hoc grass cutting/strimming of communal areas at Church Lane Allotment Gardens. It was:

(a)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that due to the short-term nature of the service to be provided, Standing Orders be waived to consider the single quotation sought.

(b)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Terry

SECONDED BY: Councillor Carey

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) the quotation received to carry out ad hoc mowing/strimming of communal areas at Church Lane Allotment Gardens in the sum of £65.00 plus VAT per cut, be approved and funded from the Allotment Gardens Budget; (ii) the RFO be authorised to settle all relevant invoices, when received, having first ascertained that all is in order.

The contract was, therefore, awarded to M Coleman Arboricultural Service.

(v) Having noted that 3 quotes were sought in respect of each area but only one contractor responded, due consideration was given to the quotations received in respect of carrying out tree works.

It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) quotations received in respect of carrying out tree works, as detailed below:

- **Sports Field** - £2,340.00 plus VAT
- **Fairfield Rd Rec** - £2,490.00 plus VAT
- **Town Hall Garden** - £1,450.00 plus VAT
- **Rear of Assembly Rooms** - £ 300.00 plus VAT

be accepted; (ii) to be funded from the relevant departmental budgets and with any shortfall being funded by General Reserves and (iii) the RFO be authorised to settle all relevant invoices, when received, having first ascertained that all is in order.

The contract was, therefore, awarded to M Coleman Arboricultural Service.

**(vi) Due consideration was given to the quotations received in respect of Town Hall electrical works.
It was:**

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers
SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) the quotation received in respect of Town Hall electrical works in the sum of £3,025.00, be accepted and funded from the Buildings Repair and Restoration Reserve Fund; (ii) the RFO be authorised to settle all relevant invoices, when received, having first ascertained that all is in order.

The contract was, therefore, awarded to Electrical Matters.

485/2023-24 **THE GREENS MARKET**

Feedback in respect of the markets held during last summer having been provided by the RFO, due consideration was given to the application received to operate a market in 2024. It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers
SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that, subject to their acceptance of the Terms and Conditions, the applicant be given permission to operate for the dates requested.

486/2023-24 **WASTE MANAGEMENT PROVISION**

Consideration was given to upgrading the current waste management provision in accordance with the section PHE 4 of

the Town Council's Strategic Plan 'Complete the upgrade of NRTC waste disposal contracts and waste receptacles at New Romney Town Hall and Assembly Rooms to facilitate waste recycling'. It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that i) approval be given to upgrading the current waste management contract in order to facilitate waste recycling provision, in accordance with section PHE 4 of the Town Council's Strategic Plan; ii) costs to be funded from the Town Council's waste budget and the RFO be authorised to settle all invoices, once received, first having ascertained all is in order and iii) the upgraded provision to be reviewed in 6 months.

487/2023-24 **GRANTS/DONATIONS**

(i) John Armitage Memorial Trust (JAM)

Due consideration was given to the grant funding application received from John Armitage Memorial Trust (JAM). It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED – that grant funding in the sum of £1,200.00, to be funded from the 2023/2024 Grants/Donations Budget, be awarded to John Armitage Memorial Trust (JAM).

(ii) Teach Me Courses – Town Identifier Project

@8.15PM the applicant being in attendance at the meeting, was invited by the Chairman to respond to any questions posed by Members in respect of their application.

Following responses to questions posed, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED – that (i) grant funding in the sum of £3,000.00, in respect of the New Romney Town Identifier Project, be awarded to Teach Me Courses; (ii) Funding to be as below:

2023/2024 Grant Funding Budget £1,000.00

High Street Signage/Furniture Reserve Fund £2,000.00

488/2023-24 **REPLACEMENT FLAGPOLE**

Consideration was given to replacement of the Town Council flagpole on Flagstaff Land and associated quotations received.

It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

The contract was, therefore, awarded to Flagpole Express.

RESOLVED – that (i) the quotation received in the sum of £810.00, to supply a replacement flagpole for Flagstaff Land, be accepted; (ii) this to be funded from the Play & Miscellaneous Equipment Reserve Fund and (iii) the RFO be authorised to settle all invoices, once received, first having ascertained all is in order.

489/2023-24 **RIALTAS END OF YEAR CLOSEDOWN SERVICE**

Consideration was given to the quotation received in respect of the end of year closedown services offered by Rialtas.

It was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) due to the proprietary nature of the service to be provided, Standing Orders be waived to consider a single quotation; (ii) noting the cost savings to be made, the RFO be authorised to enter into a 3 year agreement in respect of the Rialtas end of year closedown service – 2024 cost £825.00 ex. VAT; (ii) to be funded from the IT Support & Equipment Maintenance Budget and (iii) the RFO be authorised to settle all invoices, once received, first having ascertained all is in order.

The Chairman thanked the Councillors, RFO and the Finance Clerk for their attendance and the meeting then concluded @ **8.25PM.**

NB: All documents referred to herein are freely available for perusal on the Town Council website: www.newromney-tc.gov.uk or at the Town Hall for perusal on request, except for those documents of a sensitive / legal nature discussed in private session, including documents relating to staff matters which remain Private and Confidential in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Minutes prepared by the Responsible Financial Officer