

WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
held on Monday 13th May 2024 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.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Hussain – personal commitment.	
2.	<u>Declarations of Interest not previously declared</u> None.	
3.	<u>Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th March 2024</u> Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 th March were approved at Council on 18 th March.	
4.	<u>Information items arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda</u> 4 Metro Bank – Cllr Lord had visited Metro Bank and the Bank confirmed that signatories had been updated. 4. Crockham Hill Car Park – Business Rates - The Finance Officer had returned the form, together with a letter outlining the usage of the car park. No further communication has been received as yet. 5.1 Russell House – Car Park re-surfacing - Southern Landscape Contractors (installers of the perimeter footpath around KGF) had agreed to provide WTC with a quote for resurfacing and an indication of when this would be appropriate based on the surface's current condition.	DM
5.	<u>Finance</u> 5.1 Responsible Finance Officer Report (Finance Officer) – The Report was received with thanks and the following items were noted: The Finance Officer had successfully completed the FILCA (Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration) qualification. Congratulations were given from the Committee.	

	• King George's Field (KGF) update - Some of the re-seeding had been undertaken, so hopefully there would be an improvement in the area surrounding the skate park in the coming weeks. Two further bases had been installed in the vicinity for additional benches. The plants and materials had been purchased in order to finish the planter. The Easter skateboard lessons were well attended and well received. Y&C were keen to try adding additional sessions to the youth programme, if budget allowed. • Further work on KGF redevelopment had been put on hold. The Finance Officer had now passed almost all of the APFOS workload to the Deputy Clerk but continued to provide support. It was planned to handover the Crockham Hill War Memorial Playing Field Trust workload by the end of the month. It was suggested that the archiving project was completed before the KGF redevelopment project planning steps for the final stage were undertaken. 5.2 Payments and receipts list to 31st March 2024 – Cllr Sheen had no issues to bring to the Committee's attention, minor queries were explained. Following discussion it was agreed that if Pear Mapping was not used by the time the subscription was next due then it would not be renewed. The Payment List would be recommended to Council for approval. 5.3 Committee Accounts to 31st March 2024 – The Accounts had been circulated and there were no queries. The Finance Officer advised that the Council tax rates for Russell House had increased substantially beyond budget expectation. The Accounts would be recommended to Council for approval. 5.4 Year End Accounts 2023/24 – An updated Annual Accounting Statement had been circulated as Metro Bank had given an incorrect date to Cllr Sheen as to when the interest had been paid into the bank account. It had been paid before the end of the last financial year not April 2024. The draft Annual Accounting Statement was there amended to include £88 interest in the total value of cash and investments for financial year 2023/24 (Box 8 on the Statement). The Finance Officer reported that the end of year closedown had been undertaken. WTC was well within budget at year end due to some under expenditure, savings on payroll lines due to gaps between staff leaving and new starters joining, improved interest on investments and an increase in surgery rent in quarter 4. Consequently, some of the expenditure from the KGF redevelopment reserve had been replenished. There was a very healthy general reserve, which could provide a bolster should there be any difficulties with the surgery rent uplift going forward or could be used to meet the expense of any building upgrades deemed necessary. Cllr Sheen explained that balance carried forward (Box 7) meant the actual monies due at year end and the cash (Box 8) was the cash received. The latter figure was lower as the VAT reclaim for the KGF Path had not yet been received. The Finance Officer advised that it was accepted across the sector that these figures would never align exactly as year-end. The Annual Accounting Statement was a statutory sector document. The Committee agreed to recommend the accounts for approval by Council. It was further agreed that the Finance Officer would provide an	DM/SS
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	explanation of the Governance Statement to be circulated with the Statement. 5.5 Internal Auditor's report The Finance Officer reported that the Internal Audit had taken place today. There were no issues raised other than item N on the Accounting Statement – the Authority had not complied with the publication requirements for 2022/23 AGAR. However, the Internal Auditor would explain that this was out of WTC's control as the External Auditor had not returned the 2022/23 AGAR in the required timeframe. 5.6 Virements and Rollovers The Finance Officer had circulated the Virements, Accruals, Rollovers and end of year movements to reserves. Following discussion these were agreed and would be recommended to Council for approval. It was also agreed that the Finance Officer would include an explanation of the function of each financial term for the Council meeting. 5.7 Reserves The Finance Officer had circulated an updated reserves and funds for anticipated liabilities document. The Committee felt the explanatory notes were excellent and would recommend the reserves to Council for approval. 5.8 Subscriptions The Town Clerk had circulated a list of Subscriptions for 2024/25. Following discussion these were approved, it was agreed to add the subscriptions budget line to the document.	DM DM AH
6.	<u>Land Issues</u> 6.1 Doctors Surgery – Cllr Sheen had circulated a paper for consideration. Following lengthy discussion it was agreed the next steps would be: - • Await the District Valuer valuation • Arrange a meeting with the Partners to run through the draft lease • Revert to the Committee in points -non-negotiable • Request an estimate from WTC Solicitor to review the final proposed draft lease Some suggestions about improvements to Russell House had been raised by the Surgery but it was agreed to prioritize a signed lease before responding. 6.2 Churchill School – The Finance Officer had circulated the costs incurred from the tree survey and tree work carried out at Churchill School in the last four years versus the rent received. The total cost spent was £4,454.68 compared with the receipt of £826 rent. Following discussion it was agreed that Cllr Sheen would draft a letter to KCC Cllr Chard, describing the issues with a request that KCC either take over the land or provide financial support to the school as required for tree maintenance. 6.3 Bloomfield Allotments – A positive meeting had been held with Squerryes Estate with Cllrs Lord and Kay and the Town Clerk. A response was awaited from the Estate regarding the request of three options for the site which included a request for a long lease.	SS
7.	<u>Russell House</u> 7.1 Maintenance Plan – The Maintenance Plan was noted. The Town Clerk reported that there had been a small water leak into the reception of the Surgery. Debris had been cleared from the area and a	

	cracked tile would be replaced. The Town Clerk reported that the lift was not working and the contractor had been called out. 7.2 Anti-social behaviour issues – minor littering only. 7.3 Car park usage – The Town Clerk suggested investigating the use of tablets to input car registrations to try and control parking from those not visiting the Doctors Surgery. Following discussion, it was agreed not to pursue this idea. 7.4 Computer equipment quote – A quote had been circulated from the IT Contractor for either leasing computer equipment or purchasing four laptops, three docking stations and three new screens. Following discussion, it was agreed in principle to lease the computer equipment subject to confirmation of the price and that the fourth laptop for the Finance Officer would be able to be docked in the office. This was not a budgeted item but costs would either be met from F&GP cost savings in other areas or if necessary, at the end of the year from the Office Chamber Reserve.	AH
8.	<u>WTC Strategy Consultation</u> The Strategy consultation had been circulated and following discussion it was agreed that the following items fell under the remit of F&GP and the actions would be recommended to Council: - • Repair mosaic at Russell House – This was in hand, the contractor to be chased. • A bank open all week – to advertise the banking facilities offered at the Post Office. • Lower Council tax – lobby SDC	AH
9.	<u>ECO Policy Action Plan</u> The open actions had been circulated.	
10.	<u>Policies and Procedures</u> The following Policies had been circulated: - Cllr Sheen reported that there had been new Employment Law legislation which came into effect from 6th April 2024 regarding Flexible Working and Carer's Leave. Both policies had been drafted using ACAS templates. 10.1 Flexible Working Policy – The key changes were that employees would be able to make two flexible working requests and would no longer be required to state the reasons for their requests. Following discussion the Policy was approved. 10.2 Carers Leave Policy – This Policy had been incorporated into the Compassionate Leave Policy. Following discussion and minor amendments, the Policy was approved.	AH AH
11.	<u>Correspondence</u> None.	
12.	<u>Reports from Councillors</u> Cllr Proudfoot had been investigating a sewage issue in New Street. The Town Clerk to contact Thames Water. Cllr Sheen had attended the NALC training seminar Emerging Trends in local government Finance on 24th April.	

	Cllrs Boyle, Kay, Proudfoot and Sheen had attended the ATM on 8 th May.	
13.	<u>TN16, Crockham Hill Village newsletter and Website</u> None.	
14.	<u>Matters for District and County Councillors</u> KCC Cllr Chard – Churchill School.	
15.	<u>Further Matters for Consideration at the next meeting</u> None.	
16.	<u>Date of next meeting</u> Monday 1 st July 2024	
	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 Minutes</u> 17.1 The HR Minutes were approved.	
18.	<u>Performance Management pay scale Increment</u> As two members of staff, the Town Clerk and Finance Officer, had achieved satisfactory appraisal performances, the Council agreed to award a Single Column Point uplift as per the WTC Remuneration Policy.	

The meeting was concluded at 10.08 pm.

Minutes confirmed as a correct record:

Chairman