

Queenborough Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

On **Monday 5th December 2022** at 19.00 in the Committee Room, High Street,
Queenborough

**ALL MINUTES ARE WATERMARKED 'DRAFT' AND REMAIN A DRAFT COPY UNTIL THEY ARE
AGREED AT THE NEXT RELEVANT COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE MEETING.**

Committee Present: Councillors Shiel, Constable, Simpson, Marchington, Darby, Telford.

Lisa Gransden – Town Clerk & RFO

Councillor Marchington is Chairman of the F&GP Committee 2022/2023

Councillor Constable chaired the meeting prior to the arrival of Councillor Marchington after item 9.

1. Apologies and grounds for absence: None

2. Declaration of Interests: None.

3. Public questions: None

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 24th October 2022.

The minutes were reviewed and adopted as a true copy and to be signed as a true copy by the Chairman.

5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 24th October 2022 - None

6. Chair's remarks – Thank you for coming.

7. Review of Grant Application for 37/39 High Street, Queenborough

The owner of Queenborough Stores at 37/39 High Street submitted a grant application for a ramp and new entrance store to the premises for the purpose of becoming a Post Office. The submitted application form was accompanied by only the original quotation from the supplier Close Brothers in the sum of £9,552 for the ramp construction and £3,000 for the supply and installation of a door before fitting and automation.

Councillors recommended that the Owner contacts Swale Borough Council who own the premises, to see if they can provide a grant for the works.

Councillors confirming QTC require three quotes before considering this grant.

It was agreed by resolution that QTC do not grant any more than 10% of the cost for the works if a reasonable quote is submitted. Proposal to be forwarded to Full Council for approval. **Action the Clerk**

8. Queenborough Town Council Email Account

The Clerk reported on the continued problems with the email account, the Clerk email had stopped last week after reaching 100% and other Councillors had reported their email accounts stating full.

Netwise had reported that the Town Council were using far more than the other three hundred councils they have as clients, with ours being the busiest email account usage they have seen.

They suggested that the Council considers moving the mail account to Microsoft 365 costing around £5 per month per user with 50GB of space, this would be the best long-term strategy. Based on twelve users it would cost £720 per annum in addition to the £420 that the Council currently pays.

Or the option of a virtual private server offering 40GB of space at a cost of £1,420 per annum replacing the current invoice.

Netwise are not Microsoft resellers but collaborate with companies who are and look after the migration on our behalf.

The Clerk also reported this would be a suitable time for the Council to review the retention policy in respect of how long emails are kept by the Council.

By resolution, the Committee agreed that £1,160 being the cheaper and recommended remedy be spent maximum on upgrading the email account, the Mayor Cllr Shiel and Clerk will investigate further options to rectify the email problems as soon as possible.

Action the Clerk

9. AGAR report 2021/2022

The Clerk reported the External Auditor report, received last week.

Reporting from the external auditor.

At section 3 of the AGAR.

The smaller authority has submitted its AGAR and supporting documentation prior to 30 September 2022.

However, we have not been able to complete our review work in time to enable to smaller authority to publish the required documentation in line with statutory requirements. Once we have completed our review a final report will be provided with the certificate of completion detailing any qualifications and 'other' matters. Our fee note for the limited assurance review will be issued when we certify completion.

Completion of the review.

The external auditor report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return requires amendments as follows:

The smaller authority failed to approve the AGAR in time to publish it before 1 July 2022, the date required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and did not disclose this by answering 'No' to Section 1, Box 1. The AGAR was not accurately completed before submission for review. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR: • Section 2, Box 2, the annual precept, does not agree to the figure published by the precepting authority. The figures in Boxes 2 and 3 for the current year should read £68,500 and £7,728, respectively. All grants, including Council Tax Support Grant, should be shown in Box 3, as per the guidance notes on the AGAR.

The Clerk explained to the committee that the precept amount for year had included the remittance from Swale Borough Council in the sum of £300 and this had been written into the precept amount box two and should have been written in box three under other income. This will be corrected in next year's figures.

The Clerk reported to the committee that the AGAR was not published before 1 July 2022 in time, with the internal auditor not completing their work until 4th July 2022.

The Committee agreed to pay £360 being the external auditor fees now due for their work undertaken. **Action the Clerk**

Cllr Marchington entered the meeting and chaired the meeting from here on.

10. Finance & General Purposes Committee Budget

Cllr Simpson centred discussions around the Environment Committee's Christmas Lights budget requirement and freighter day, reporting the freighter item should not go above any more than the £6,000 budget for this item.

The Christmas Lights Committee asking for another £500 towards the costs of the parade. The Environment Committee also asking to add defibrillator maintenance under Special Projects in the sum of £300.

And the Allotment Committee decreasing its budget by £500.

The total requested budget for Environment moving from this year's £30,900 to a proposed £31,200 for 2023/2024

The F&GP Committee looking to increase its budget by £3,692 for:

The Cleaner to be moved from Personnel to Administration, a cleaner was no longer employed by the Council, but a supplier paid to clean the premises, this will result in a budget decrease of £1,140, based on the actual costs for the cleaning already provided.

Councillors Care Allowances increasing by £732 due to the increase in members allowances based on the probability of all eleven elected councillors claiming the allowance next year.

Election costs increase by £2,500 with 2023/2024 being an election year.

Premises heat and light increasing by £1,000 due to the rising cost of energy prices.

Photocopier lease and printing increasing by £500.

Subscriptions increasing by £100

The total requested budget for F&GP moving from this year £46,140 to £49,532 for 2023/2024.

Bringing the Council total budget requirement from this year's £77,040 to £80,732 for 2023/2024.

With items above agreed, all members agreed to propose to Full Council no increase in the precept requirement this year and the remaining requirement to be used from the Council's reserves. **Action the Clerk**

11. Correspondence –

The Clerk reported on correspondence received from Queenborough Town Community Centre (Castle Connections) in relation to the lease for the Old School Building.

The Trustees have asked for a meeting to discuss the lease and renewal. Councillors' reported that it was not necessary to review the lease at this time but at the expiry of the lease and asked the Clerk to reply by letter to the Centre. **Action the Clerk**

12. Financial Reports

Cashbook and Bank Reconciliation

a) The Cashbook was noted, and the bank reconciliations were approved for October 2022.

b) Payments for authorisation –

The Christmas parade leaflets were discussed, it was agreed that these should go out much earlier next year. An idea was for a colouring sheet to schools, nurseries and in food bank parcels for advertising the event, to be forwarded for suggestion to the Christmas Lights Committee. It was suggested that the Town Council holds its own Pantomime next year to be forwarded to the Environment Committee.

All payments were approved, with no further matters arising.

Payments were approved for Microsoft Office £79.99, HMRC £221.77, Nest Pension £120.58, Handy Prints £26.40 parking signs from August 2022, Handy Prints £102.00 Christmas Lights Leaflets, PKF External Audit 2021/2022 £360

13. Human Resources

The session should have been closed.

The committee reviewed the clerks pay increase from April 2021 in line with the current NJC pay scales, the calculations were agreed by resolution at the scale range/points, the back dated increase to be paid now to the Clerk and the future hourly rate, was agreed in line with the NJC pay scale.

The Committee reviewed the Clerks holiday entitlement the Clerk achieving five years' service with the Council from 1st June 2021, holiday entitlement accrued since this date was backdated by 2.5 days and future annual holiday entitlement increased by 3 days, in line with the national award. **Action the Clerk**

14. Reserved for late items - None

15. Any Other Business

Cllr Simpson reported as Queenborough Fishery Trust representative on correspondence from the Fishery Trust that they want to dispose of the land at the end of Gordon Avenue. It had been suggested to the Trust that Queenborough Town Council may like to buy it from them. The Committee reported this was not viable at this time for the Town Council. Cllr Simpson will feedback to the Trust, these comments.

Cllr Shiel reported the Guildhall power sockets keep tripping. **Action the Clerk**

Cllr Constable asked for the use of the Committee room and table for the food bank, for making up parcels for the Christmas period, this was agreed.

The Clerk asked members of the food bank about cash donations received by the food bank. It was reported that Cllr Marchington had been recording income and expenditure, the Clerk requested copies of cash received and spent for the sheets for updating the November cashbooks.

Cllr Telford asked if the Council could reimburse the gentleman watering the Chinese area for In Bloom throughout the year. A cash payment was declined but a voucher award for his community work was suggested.

There being no further business the finance meeting closed at 21.14 hours

Date of next meeting: Monday 16th January 2023