

Costessey Town Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee of Costessey Town Council, held at The Costessey Centre, Longwater Lane, Costessey at 11am on 20 August 2021

Present: Cllrs G Jones (Chair), J Amis, D Burrill (voting substitute for the vacancy), G Dole, S Hannant, T Laidlaw and P O'Connor; H Elias (Town Clerk) & L Trabucco (Minutes Secretary)

To receive apologies for absence

F147/21: None

To receive declarations of interest

F148/21: Cllr S Hannant declared a pecuniary interest in any item involving Barclays Bank as she is in receipt of a Barclay's pension.

To confirm and sign the minutes of the previous FB&S meeting on 23 July 2021

F149/21: **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes as a true record with no amendments.

To receive updates on the previous minutes (No resolutions may be passed)

F150/21: Min: 137/21: The EMR for Lodge Farm had been increased to £50,000 at the Costessey Town Council meeting held on 13 July.

To consider the accounts for July 2021

F151/21: A query was raised over the high amount in the Trade Creditors code on the Balance Sheet. This was due to the Proludic invoice having been loaded, but not yet posted as paid. This would appear in the August accounts as paid. The Detailed Balance Sheet EMRs at month end for July did not tally with the EMR list, as the Reserves Movements List only printed out the YTD totals on the day of printing, plus the opening balance referred to the start of the year and closing balance was on date of printing. A suggestion was made that the EMR List should be run twice a year as the valid item was the closing balance. Hall hire had increased following lifting of Covid restrictions; the figures were £10,000 over the estimate, therefore should be around the £61,000 mark instead of £51,000. A question was raised about the bookings as the second quarter was largely the summer months and would, in normal times be lower than the rest of the year. Due to post-Covid-19 interest in hiring the actual income was higher than the lower budget estimate.

RECOMMENDED to full Council that the July 2021 accounts be approved

To review contractor engagement / spending criteria document

F152/21: It had been suggested that the CTC pre-contract brief and checks were leading to few quotes being received eg for the cemetery pathways. A discussion ensued as to the best way forward regarding budgets and specifications / contract brief. A suggestion was made to revert back to using the expertise of an officer seeking advice from a sector expert, if CTC had no in-house expert, who would produce an appropriate brief, rather than CTC prescribing a particular solution. Another suggestion was to advertise work asking for "expressions of interest" & "please reply for further details". Concern was expressed that commercial due diligence was necessary, so checks should not be diluted eg requirement of public liability insurance should always be included. The document should be consistent with the thresholds in the Financial Regulations.

A proposal was made to increase the threshold from £5,000 + VAT to £25,000 + VAT and that, for contracts below this amount, officers should have discretion to amend the list of checks as appropriate - adding the AMENDMENT – "with full regard to commercial prudence"

RESOLVED to approve the amendment and the proposal taken together.

To consider the interim CIL report v2

F153/21: The balance for the Proludic invoice out of CIL expenditure during the year 2021-2022 would mean that there should be approx. £3,200 CIL monies left unallocated. CIL should be spent on infrastructure and, as the monies were time-limited the earliest CIL should be used first. **Noted.**

To consider the HM Treasury Document re PWLB loan changes

F154/21: This item was only to make the Councillors aware of the recent changes. **Noted.**

To receive a general update on Finance matters (No resolutions may be passed)

F155/21: None

To confirm the date of the next Finance Committee Meeting on 24 September at 11am and consider dates for the October meeting

F156/21: It was agreed that a Staffing Working Group scheduled for the 24 September at 10am would be moved to Friday 1 October at 10am. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

RESOLVED to confirm the date of the next Finance Committee Meeting as Friday 24 September 2021 at 10am.

F157/21: RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that it was not in the public interest to disclose discussion on the items below due to the discussions relating to exempt information on staffing and employment contracts

No members of the press or public were present. Live streaming was stopped.

***THE FOLLOWING ITEMS WERE HEARD IN CONFIDENCE**

***To consider increasing the threshold for “Signed For” cheques**

F158/21: A brief background explanation was given and it was decided to remove the requirement for signed for” cheques and that instead a letter or email should be sent to inform the payee / recipient to check the post. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

RECOMMENDED to full Council that that the requirement for signed for” cheques should be removed and that this should be an operational decision.

***To consider any confidential finance items**

F159/21: A query was raised about the petty cash expense for an eye test for a staff member and the reason for it was given.

F160/21: A brief update was given about the Breckland Park Trim Trail replacement play equipment. A suggestion was made for a different type of swing; it was noted that this would cost more than the original option, but a “tandem swing” had been a success with residents in the past and therefore a quote was requested for a swing type suitable for older children. **ACTION: Deputy Clerk**

F161/21: The meeting closed at 12:08pm

Chair:

Date: