

Costessey Town Council

Minutes of the ONLINE Finance, Budgets & Staffing Committee of Costessey Town Council, held via Zoom at 11am on 15 October 2020

Present: Cllrs G Jones (Chair), J Amis, G Dole, J Flowerdew, S Hannant, T Laidlaw and P O'Connor; H Elias (Town Clerk) & N Bailey (Deputy Clerk)

To receive apologies for absence

F110/20: Cllr Blundell (clash of meetings)

To receive declarations of interest

F111/20: Cllr S Hannant declared a pecuniary interest in any item involving Barclays Bank as she is in receipt of a Barclays pension

F112/20: Cllr Flowerdew declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had been invited to attend the meetings of the QH Community Park CIO until the AGM in January 2021

To confirm and sign the Minutes of the previous FB&S meeting on 18 September 2020

F113/20: Cllr Blundell was listed both as present and in the apologies. He was not present, so the minutes were amended.

RESOLVED to approve the minutes as a true record with the above amendment

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

F114/20: Min: F099/20: Cllr Jones had been in touch with Watton Town Council who had transferred from Barclays Bank to Unity Bank. The process had created a considerable amount of work and some 'legacy' transactions were still outstanding. There was no assistance with automatic transfers between the banks. Debit cards would still be required if the Council changed provider. Charge cards were available to bank signatories which would cause an issue for the Head Groundsman. Further details to be obtained from the Unity Bank. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

F115/20: Min: F100/20: 3): Cash collection: Barclays used G4S and could collect cash & cheques @ £15 per collection. CTC weekly takings were within the lower band, but at this point hardly any cash payments were being received. This would be reviewed when takings increased. **ACTION: Deputy Clerk**

To receive the Memo from the Accountant

F116/20: The Accountant had visited on 5 October 2020 and checked all the John Youngs invoices. The balance sheet had been amended to reflect the £5,233 retention, although John Youngs appeared to have written off any outstanding invoices.

To consider the accounts for September 2020 and receive a budget report incl payments over £500

F117/20: Highlighting potential overspends on the budget had been a recommendation from the Internal Auditor some years previously, though some Cllrs expressed concerns that this did not give a balanced view of the Council's finances. Cllrs considered whether more data was required to assist with budgeting; some Cllrs felt a system needed to be in place to help identify, and re-act to trends. A query was raised as to why only overspends were highlighted and not underspends. The Clerk would speak to the Internal Auditor regarding the narrative report and identification of overspends required by a previous Internal Audit action plan. Concerns were expressed that regular Year End forecasts could not be produced from the accounts system, which could aid financial planning and that manual transfer of data onto another spreadsheet could be prone to errors. A query was raised over unrepresented cheques. These often related to hall hires and efforts had been made to prompt the payee. Property maintenance costs were difficult to predict so an Earmarked Reserve had been set up to smooth the peaks and troughs over the years. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

To receive a revised 2020/21 forecast

F118/20: Cllr Jones apologised for the late submission. The end of the second quarter was a good indicator, and the 50% Parish Partnership contribution had been made for the speed humps which would be installed soon. A query was raised over the salaries budget. Backdated pay arrears from April 2020 will be paid in October, as will two pay runs as staff are paid four-weekly. A query was raised over the electricity power usage at QHCC. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

F119/20: Cllr Hannant left at 12:05pm

To consider the Preliminary Budget figures (v1)

F120/20: Budget figures usually are based on the previous year's expenditure and the current year's 6 monthly figures, but this year income is down as is expenditure, and any forecasts might be wildly inaccurate. The Tax Base was due in December. It was felt that the impact of Covid would not be clear until the following year 2022/23. Cllr Laidlaw offered to make more enquires with SNC, as collection rates may fall and claims for support increase thus affecting the Tax Base. The use of reserves instead of an increase in precept was an option for 2021/22. An urgent meeting would be required at the point of Tax Base notification. **ACTION: Cllr Laidlaw, Town Clerk**

To consider the maturity of the Barclays Treasury Fixed Term Deposit

F121/20: The CCLA was more flexible but offered low interest rates at present. **ACTION: Town Clerk**

To receive the Insurance decision re Business Interruption cover

F122/20: Final confirmation from Zurich that the Council was not eligible to claim had been circulated.

To receive a general update on Finance, Budget & Staffing matters.

F123/20: An urgent meeting would be required if the government announced the area had changed to Tier Two under coronavirus alert levels. This could result in closure of the halls to the current limited number of hirers

F124//20: RESOLVED to confirm the date of the next ONLINE FB&S Meeting as Friday 13 November at 11am

F125/20: RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that it is 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.

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

***To approve the recommendations of the Staffing Sub-Committee**

F126/20: Min: SSC041/20:

RESOLVED that the Organisational Chart be updated with the new Cleaner and the Job Titles following changes to job descriptions. ACTION: Deputy Clerk

F127/20: Min: SSC043/20:

RESOLVED that Mobile phones be provided to staff where required. ACTION: Deputy Clerk

F128/20: Min: SSC044/20:

RESOLVED that the Clerk's Assistant (Buildings Officer) Job Title be amended to Buildings Manager. ACTION: Town Clerk

F129/20: Cllr Flowerdew left at 12:40pm.

To consider the gate closing arrangements and correspondence re pricing

F130/20: Operationally there were no concerns with the interim monthly arrangement, but a query on pricing had emerged. The charges going forward would increase significantly and alternative contractors were cheaper. A compromise had been offered by the contractor of £1,168 to settle, and covered gate duties at three sites from July to October. Fixed costs were at £913 pcm on an interim monthly agreement.

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL to accept the compromise and settle the account.

F131/20: he meeting closed at 1:10pm

Chair:

Date: