

## Finance & Governance Committee

**Present:** Cllrs Banks, Chapman, Collins, Goodman, Cooper-Marsh (Chair), Maslen, and Slade  
**Absent:** Cllrs Hitchin, Kumar and Pitt

**In attendance:** Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer

**Minutes** of the meeting of the **Finance & Governance committee** held on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June** at **7.30pm** in the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots, PE19 2BH.

### Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

### ACTIONS

- 010 Apologies for Absence**  
Apologies were received from Cllrs Hitchin, Kumar and Pitt. Admin
- 011 Declarations of Interest**  
Cllrs declared an interest in agenda item
- 012 Election of Deputy Chairperson**  
The Chairperson called for nominations for the role of Deputy Chairperson of the Finance and Governance Committee for the 2024-25 Council year. Admin
- RESOLVED** that Cllr Chapman is appointed Deputy Chairperson of the Finance and Governance Committee for the 2024-25 Council year.
- 013 Minutes**  
**RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 as a true and accurate record subject to amending that Cllr Collins had given apologies.
- 014 Payments**  
The Chairperson took committee members through each page of the payments.
- A Member queried a payment to Balfour Beatty, and it was confirmed the payment related to street light repair and replacement works at School Lane, Eynesbury.
- Members received and noted payments for April 2024.
- 015 Year End Accounts 31st March 2024**  
Members received and noted the following year end account documents;
- i) Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2022/23 Summary (AGAR)
  - ii) Statutory Income and Expenditure
  - iii) Statutory Balance Sheet
  - iv) Income and Expenditure versus budget summary

**016 Year End Reserves Reconciliations 31st March 2024**

i) Members received and noted the Reserves Reconciliation for the financial year 2023/24.

**017** ii) Members received and noted CIL reserves held by the Council and spend by dates associated with those reserves. Noted upcoming date and projects which would use that fund.

**018** iii) Members received and noted earmarked reserves as at 31st March 2024.

**019 Year End Bank and Investment Reconciliations 31st March 2024**

i) Members received and noted bank and investment reconciliation (AGAR box 8)

ii) Members received and noted the Public Works Loan Board Statement (AGAR box 9). It was explained that the loan was for the Eatons Community Centre. Members asked that a new settlement figure and supporting report be brought to the next committee meeting.

**020 Internal Audit Report**

Members received and noted the final 2023-24 Internal Audit report.

Members expressed thanks to all those involved in the accounting and governance process.

**021 Citizen's Advice Bureau Funding**

Members received a report from the Town Clerk on funding provided to the Citizens Advice Rural Cambridgeshire and consider any further funding for the 2024/25 financial year alongside information from Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) on funding provided to CARC and the service this delivers. The Clerk advised Members that HDC had informed him they were not able to share the SLA they have with CARC.

Members discussed potential funding for CAB to continue to fund one day a week's face to face service in St Neots. This would be in addition to the one day a week face to face service funded by HDC.

Members discussed potential funding at length, key points included;

- A Member expressed concern that MAST and CARC are delivering the same type of service and there is risk of duplication.
- A Member commented that the CARC (CAB) offer a lot more than just financial advice and that by making referrals to MAST it takes pressure off CAB and allows them to deliver more.
- A Member commented they were minded supporting the funding for CAB as it gives double the face-to-face provision in the town.
- Members commented on the need for face-to-face service and the lack of such a service from CAB is why organisations like MAST are coming forward.

- The SLA between HDC and CARC always used to be in public domain, a member stated they felt HDC should be sharing the contents of the agreement with the Council.
- A Councillor commented that it is a good value service with specialised knowledge.

It was Proposed and seconded to recommend that the Council provide a further £7,500 in grant funding to CARC to facilitate one day a week's face-to-face CAB advice service in St Neots.

An amendment was proposed that if the Council are minded provide further funding it is paid and reviewed on a quarterly basis, with a further payment of £2,500 per quarter for the remainder of the year. The amendment was not accepted by the proposer of the motion.

The amendment was not seconded.

The Chairperson called for a vote on the proposal that the Council provide a further £7,500 in grant funding to CARC to facilitate one day a week's face-to-face CAB advice service in St Neots.

The proposal was not carried.

## **022 CIL Project Funding**

Members received a report from the Town Clerk on CIL funding and consider recommendations to the Council on availability of funds for projects the Council may be minded providing funds for.

The report advised the committee that a funding request from St Neots Aquatic and Leisure for £650,000 for the build of a new splash park on the former swimming pool land was due to come back to the Council for consideration and the committee was asked to consider and advise if the Council had funding available to consider the request.

Members noted that the committee had previously put forward a number of conditions that would need to be met which had been resolved by the committee when the funding request was last considered and deferred. These conditions still stand and the Full Council would need to be satisfied they had been met.

Proposed and seconded to approve the officer's recommendation in the report.

A Member expressed concern that there had been no sight of legal contracts, agreements and consent from the private company involved in the operation, Charity Commission approval, architect site condition and contamination surveys, how charges would be controlled and other documents that they saw as key. It was responded that it would be for the Full Council to decide if the conditions set out in its resolution had been met and if the Council felt it had suitable information and assurances to make a decision on the funding with the documents and information the applicant had put forward.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that should the Full Council be minded providing any funding to the proposed splash park project that any such funding come from CIL reserves subject to the conditions previously recommended by the committee and agreed by the Council for consideration of project funding are satisfied.

**023 Town Council Website**

Members received and consider a recommendation from the Promotion and Events Working Group on allocating £4,000 in unbudgeted expenditure to deliver a new Council website design.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that a budget of £4,000 be allocated to the redesign of the Town Council website. That £1,247 in earmarked reserves for website programming be allocated to the project, along with £2,753 from the General Reserves.

**024 Armed Forces Day**

Members received a report from the Town Clerk on anticipated overspend in the Armed Forces Day budget as a result of unexpected costs arising from new Safety Advisory Group requirements for the event.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** allocating £2,626 from the AFD earmarked reserves towards the increased health and safety cost of running the 2024 event and noting a resulting overspend of £1,244 which would come from the Council's General Reserve.

**025 General Reserves Policy**

Members received and reviewed the Council's adopted General Reserves Policy and noted the required 3-to-6-month reserve level based on the Council's current precept. Expenditure over the 6-month reserve level needs to be considered and allocated to projects and ear marked reserves.

**RESOLVED** to accept the amended General Reserve Policy.

It was agreed to bring a report to the next committee on allocation of general reserves.

**026 Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted that the date of the next scheduled Finance and Governance Committee meeting would be 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 7:15pm.

**COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON**