

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL - Finance and Governance Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee Held on 18th January 2022 at 7PM in The Wing, Pathfinder School, Northstowe.

Members: 7 - Cllr Castelino (Chair), Cllr Benedicic (Vice-Chair), Cllr Gamon, Cllr Littlemore, Cllr Owen, Cllr Panvekar, Cllr Pokala.

Quorum: 4 Members.

Present: 4 Members: Cllr Castelino; Cllr Gamon; Cllr Littlemore; Cllr Owen.
No members of the public present.

Apologies: Cllr Benedicic.

Absent: Cllr Panvekar; Cllr Pokala.

Meeting started at 7:01 pm. Cllr Castelino took the Chair.

44/21-22 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and have been accepted from Cllr Benedicic.

45/21-22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were declared.

46/21-22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No member of the public was present.

47/21-22 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1) *To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee held on 17th November 2021 as a true record of that meeting.*

It was proposed by Cllr Gamon, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED, with 3 votes for and 1 abstaining, to approve the minutes of the meeting of 17th November 2021 as a true record of that meeting.**

2) *To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee held on 7th December 2021 as a true record of that meeting.*

It was proposed by Cllr Castelino, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED, with 2 votes for and 2 abstaining, to approve the minutes of the meeting of 7th December 2021 as a true record of that meeting.**

48/21-22 FINANCE

1) TO APPROVE BANK STATEMENTS AND BANK BALANCES

i) 30th November 2021.

ii) 31st December 2021.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED unanimously to approve the bank statements for 30th November and 31st December 2021.**

2) TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE

RETROSPECTIVE APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS MADE:

i) *The Christmas Decorators 2nd, final instalment* £1,572.00

ii) *Service Charge Unity Trust Bank, date 31st Dec 2021* £18.00

APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS:

iii) *Longstanton Parish Council – Recharge of Highway Verge (B1050) maintenance for land now in Northstowe Parish* £202.00

iv) *Northstowe Secondary College – room hire for 19th Jan and 23rd Feb '22* £300.00

v) *HMRC – periods 6 Oct – 5 Nov (£1,147.62); period 6 Nov – 5 Dec (£1,149.49); period 6 Dec – 5 Jan (£1,149.69); £1.70 late payment charge*

	<i>remaining for period 6 Sep – 5 Oct (£1.70)</i>	£3,448.50
vi)	<i>Salary Town Clerk – January 2022 (payment date 26/01/2022)</i>	£2,511.10
vii)	<i>Expenses Clerk & RFO – period 9th Aug – 31 Dec 2021</i>	£355.84

Questions were raised by Councillors regarding the following items;

- The hire agreement conditions from the Secondary College and whether in the case of cancellation this would bring any costs to the Council.

The RFO was **tasked** to check the hire agreement conditions and send around to the committee members.

- The highway verges maintenance payments to Longstanton Parish Council, requesting further details of the following items;
 - Details of the first payment made which would probably have been done before Northstowe Town Council was officially set up; and whether the first year was a full-year payment (£202.00) or for part of the year only, with an understanding how the calculations were done prior to Northstowe Town Council being formed;
 - It is understood that the real costs for verge maintenance are higher on an annual basis, with the remainder being paid by Cambridgeshire County Council to Longstanton PC; request for details of the full financial arrangements in place;
 - Up-to-date map of the verges in question along the B1050, with a precise understanding of the maintenance regimes; what is the agreement, and who is the contractor?
 - Confirmation that '22-'23 will be the end of this agreement, and what the Town Council will need to do to transition from this arrangement and continue the service itself thereafter.

The RFO was **tasked** to obtain the above information from Longstanton Parish Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Gamon and **RESOLVED unanimously to approve the above retrospective and new payments.**

Cllr Littlemore and Cllr Owen counter-signed the invoices/paperwork for above payments.

3) **INCOME RECEIVED**

For Information:

i)	<i>South Cambridgeshire District Council - S106-Community Endowment 1st instalment (Received 16th Dec 2021)</i>	£11,010.00
ii)	<i>South Cambridgeshire District Council - S106-Town Board 1st instalment (Received 16th Dec 2021)</i>	£10,756.50
iii)	<i>Sponsorship Christmas tree – Homes England (Received 5th Nov 2021)</i>	£500.00
iv)	<i>Sponsorship Christmas tree – Greenbelt (Received 16th Nov 2021)</i>	£500.00
v)	<i>Grant Northstowe Developers Community Fund (Received 6th Jan 2022)</i>	£500.00

Noted.

In a discussion that followed, on the S106 contributions, Cllr Littlemore provided further details as to the schedule of future S106 payments to the Town Council and the 'trigger points' towards these as embedded in the agreements.

It was, furthermore, suggested that the Town Council could start conversations with Homes England to understand better what their original intentions were for the use of the S106 contributions, in particular the 'Community Endowment' contributions. In this, mindful of the discussions under item 50/21-22, it was also considered important to flag up with Homes England that the Town Council is starting up a grant giving scheme, and it wishes to align this also with the intentions for the Community Endowment S106 contributions.

The Clerk was **tasked** to request a meeting with Homes England to discuss the usage of the S106 contributions.

4) **TO RECEIVE SUMMARY OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS REPORT**

Noted.

The RFO provided additional clarification, noting that;

- Payments made against the cost code 'Employer NIC Contributions' have, to date, also include employee NIC contributions – the payments will be split with employee contributions to be moved to 'Town Clerk salary' cost code instead, and will show as such in future Receipts and Payments overviews.
- The expenses listed under the cost code 'Employee Expenses' relate to travel expenses only, as per the original cost code intentions. For clarification, the expenses 48/21-22 (2) (vii) have also been allocated to various other cost codes they refer to.
- The cost code 'Council/Community Events' shows a small overspend, but the Council is reminded that this is compensated by the grant and sponsorship received for the Christmas tree, which is listed under the separate cost code 'Sponsorship Christmas tree 2021' under cost centre 'Income'.

Two observations were made by Councillors:

- The 'Receipts and Payments' report lists the S106 contributions under the cost code 'Precept'. The RFO declared that he had indeed seen this error after the report was sent and that this has already been rectified on the accounting system, by creating a separate cost code for the S106 contributions.
- The Council may need to consider the timelines by which S106 contributions may need to be used by, the details of which need to be looked into more detail. With this, it was recommended for the Council to also look into indexation, potentially adding an amount accordingly into an earmarked reserve, in the unlikely scenario that contributions were going to be unused and would need to be handed back by the timescales dictated.

49/21-22 FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

1) QUARTERLY CHECKS

- For information: RFO to inform the Council on the quarterly check, for Q1 and Q2, on financial documentation as carried out by Cllr Harrison on 18th November 2021.*

The RFO informed the Committee members that a quarterly financial check by an independent Councillor, Cllr Harrison, had taken place on 18th November 2021, and that no discrepancies had been observed, with all relevant invoices and paperwork duly countersigned.

2) DIRECT DEBITS

- To approve setting up a direct debit for payments to be made to HMRC, in line with the Town Council's Financial Regulations, section 5.*
- To approve setting up a direct debit for payments to be made to the Council's pension provider, in line with the Town Council's Financial Regulations, section 5.*

It was proposed by Cllr Littlemore, seconded by Cllr Owen and **RESOLVED unanimously to approve setting up of direct debits for payments to be made to HMRC and to the Council's pension provider, on the condition that the Town Council is covered by the direct debit guarantee scheme.**

3) DEBIT CARD

- To approve applying for a Unity Trust Bank Debit Card, to be issued to the RFO and be used in line with the Town Council's Financial Regulations, section 6.18, allowing the RFO to pay for essentials and emergency spend on things such as stationary.*

The RFO explained that he had not yet been able to obtain all the relevant information needed to understand the options and cost implications. Councillors pointed out alternative options, using pre-paid cards, for the RFO to also look into.

The Chair **deferred** this item to a future committee meeting.

50/21-22 GRANT POLICY

- To receive a report from the Clerk on information collated on other Local Councils' Grant Policies, as a key step towards developing a Grant Policy for the Town Council.*
- To decide on the next steps for developing a Grant Giving Policy for Northstowe Town Council.*

The Clerk summarised the report, asking the Members to consider grant policies from other Local Councils highlighted it, to identify elements they wish to see reflected in the Northstowe Town Council Grant Giving Policy to be developed. Councillors highlighted the following points;

- The existing policies from St Ives Town Council, Sutton-in-the-Isle Parish Council and Cambourne Town Council were particularly liked. The preamble in Cambourne’s example was liked, as well as the relative simplicity - yet still being thorough – of the policies from St Ives and Sutton.
- Seen as most important was that people’s grant applications should demonstrate a *lasting benefit* for the community.
- Important to state that the Town Council is approached early on, in application’s formative stage (such as stated in the Sutton example), so that the Town Council can help steer and enhance applications in the process.
- Keen that the policy should state that a focus is on providing one-off grants, not to subsidise community groups in perpetuity.
- For sports clubs the policy is to state that grants are to be given to purchase equipment or other one-off costs, not to cover any fixed club costs.
- On commercial companies applying, it was discussed that for SMEs applying this would be fine, although applications are to be considered on a case-by-case basis. In this, it was considered important that the Town Council remains the power to put a cap on the number of grants to commercial entities to be given out if considered necessary, so that a healthy balance in applications from different types of organisations can be ensured.
- Need to include statements around the need to carry out checks on financial health of the organisations applying, as well as a need to show organisation’s key documents such as safeguarding policies, to ensure the Town Council’s financial and reputational risks are covered.

The Clerk was **tasked** to devise a draft Grant Giving Policy, to be discussed at the next committee meeting.

51/21-22 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

<i>Full Council:</i>	<i>Wed 23rd February 2022 at 7PM</i>
<i>Finance and Governance Committee:</i>	<i>Tue 15th March 2022 at 7PM</i>
<i>Full Council:</i>	<i>Wed 30th March 2022 at 7PM</i>

For all Council meetings, see www.northstowetowncouncil.gov.uk

Noted.

The Clerk was **tasked** to send a poll around to find a suitable alternative meeting date for the next committee meeting.

Meeting closed at 8:06 pm.

Signed.....
Chairman of the Finance & Governance Committee

Date.....