

It was RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 June 2023 be noted.

109. COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

Committee noted the report on Council investments and discussed the reinvestment of £500,000 in a 1-year bond with the Close Brothers Group at a return of 4.8% interest.

In response to a query on whether the interest received is returned into General or Earmarked Reserves, the Clerk confirmed that interest received would be accounted for as income on the revenue budget and, depending on the final year outturn, would affect the General Reserve.

Members were supportive of renewing a 1-year bond with the Close Brothers.

It was RESOLVED that £500,000 be reinvested in a 1-year bond with the Close Brothers Group.

110. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES & EXPENSES POLICY 2023-27

Members noted the report and debated the possibility of introducing a Parish Basic Allowance for Members during the 2023-27 Council term.

It was noted that, should the Council propose to pay the Parish Basic Allowance, in setting the level of that allowance, it must have regard to the recommendations which have been made in respect of it by the district council's independent remuneration panel.

Members debated the merits and issues of introducing a Parish Basic Allowance for Town Councillors. Members were keen to ensure that people were not put off from joining the Council if they felt that it would leave them out of pocket.

It was agreed that the Expenses Policy should be reviewed to cover additional costs that may be incurred in relation to the role of Councillor.

In relation to the potential introduction of a Parish Basic Allowance, Members agreed that in the first instance the district council's independent review panel should be asked to provide a district-wide recommended figure for town and parish councils, based on its own basic allowance, when it next convenes to review its own arrangements.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Clerk would draft a broader expenses policy, to defray a range of potential out-of-pocket costs that may be incurred as a result of being a Town Councillor, for Committee to review; and,**

- ii. **East Suffolk Council's Independent Remuneration Panel be requested to consider a district-wide recommended figure for town and parish councils, based on its own basic allowance, when it next convenes to review its own arrangements.**

111. IT EQUIPMENT

Committee considered the provision of IT equipment for Councillors.

It was noted that under its Terms of Reference, Committee had delegated authority to spend against the Council's IT Replacement Fund Earmarked Reserve, which currently stood at £25,402.62.

It was agreed that the Clerk should offer all Councillors the provision of a tablet, Chromebook or laptop for use during their career with the Council, to be used in accordance with the Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy 2021-25, and be delegated the authority to order the equipment.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. **Members be offered the provision of the provision of a tablet, Chromebook or laptop for use during their career with the Council, to be used in accordance with the Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy 2021-25; and,**
- ii. **authority be delegated to the Clerk to purchase the necessary equipment and software licences from the IT Replacement Fund Earmarked Reserve and report back to the next Committee meeting.**

112. COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETING TIMES

Members considered the possibility of bringing forward meeting start times by half an hour, from 7.30pm to 7pm for all Council and Committee meetings, aside from Planning & Environment and Personnel Committee meetings.

As there was no consensus amongst the Members at the meeting, Members felt that it would not be appropriate to make a clear recommendation to Council at this stage.

It was agreed instead that the Clerk should survey all Councillors for their views on the matter and, if there was a clear preference to change the meeting times, this should be reported to Council.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk survey all Councillors for their views on the matter and, if there was a clear preference to change the meeting times, this should be reported to Council.

113. BUSINESS PLAN 2024-2028

Committee considered the process by which the Council's next Business Plan for the period 2024-28 could be delivered.

The timescale as indicated on the agenda was reviewed and it was considered that it would be too ambitious to put a draft Business Plan to Council in March if there were to be six-week public consultation commencing in January. The Clerk advised that it would potentially be able to go to this Committee at the end of March, for onward referral to Annual Council in May.

Members debated the prospect of using a professional facilitator to support the Council in developing the Business Plan. The Clerk had been in contact with a local facilitator who would be able to support the Council in this process. The indicative cost for preparing and supporting two workshops and the production of a follow-up report would be under £900 which could be met from the Professional Fees budget.

Following a vote it was agreed that an external facilitator be engaged to support Member and staff workshops as part of the Business Plan development and that a Steering Group be set up to make any necessary arrangements to engage a professional facilitator, and oversee the process of developing the Business Plan 2024-28.

It was RESOLVED that;

- i. that an external facilitator be engaged to support Member and staff workshops as part of the Business Plan development; and,**
- ii. a Business Plan Steering Group, comprising Cllrs S Bennett, M Deacon, M James and D Rowe be set up to make any necessary arrangements to engage a professional facilitator and oversee the process of developing the Business Plan 2024-28.**

114. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 9.04pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 25 October 2023 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____