

**FELIXSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Present: Councillors Slemmings (Chairman), Barber, Bird, Deacon, Morris, Newman, Savage, Sennington, Sharman, Smith, Walker, and Webb.

In attendance: Mrs Rosemary Jones and Mrs Debbie Frost.

**210. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jan Garfield and Jon Garfield, Williams and the Clerk

**211. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Bird, Deacon, Morris, Savage, Sennington, Sharman, Slemmings, and Smith declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest as Members of Suffolk Coastal District Council.

Councillors Barber and Newman declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest as Members of Suffolk County Council.

Councillor Sharman declared a Local Pecuniary Interest as Treasurer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Felixstowe Scouts.

**212. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013, were confirmed as a true record by those present and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

**213. ACCOUNTS**

The Finance Officer and Technical Adviser provided responses to queries raised on the accounts presented. Councillor Sharman enquired regarding the repairs to the lights in the toilets at the Town Hall amounting to £338 + VAT. The Technical Adviser explained that there is an issue with the type of fitment, and replacements are currently coming from overseas. Members asked that the Premises Committee investigate an alternative.

<b>RESOLVED</b> that the accounts from 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2013 – 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2013, amounting to £75,767.27 presented to this Committee be approved.
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**214. EXTERNAL AUDIT**

Members noted the letter from the External Auditors alongside the External Auditor Certificate for 2012/13 which confirmed that the information in the annual return was in accordance with proper practice and that no matters came to the External Auditor's attention which required the issuing of a separate additional issues arising report. Members would like to congratulate the Officers who prepared the accounts and annual return for the External Auditors.

**215. “WINGS ON WAVES”**

The Finance Officer provided an updated closing statement for the “Wings on Waves” accounts. The Chairman reminded members that £6000 had been put into the “Wings on Waves” reserve budget from the Enhancement and Promotional Schemes Budget initially and it was proposed that the balance be returned.

**RESOLVED** that the remaining £2,103.80 be transferred from the “Wings on Waves” reserves budget and be returned to the Enhancement and Promotional Schemes Budget.

Members would like to congratulate all those who helped to make “Wings on Waves” such a success. Their thanks also goes to all who procured and donated towards “Wings on Waves”. Thanks was also given to the three County Councillors who each contributed from their own locality budgets.

Members were pleased to note the extract from Issue 2 (2013) – The Local Councillor – the newsletter for Suffolk Association of Local Councils which provided an excellent article about how the Town Council played such a major part in such a successful and memorable event.

**216. BANK ACCOUNT INTEREST RATES AND FINANCIAL PRODUCTS**

The Chairman gave a verbal update to members, as this matter had been raised at previous meetings. Progress is being made and Finance Staff at the Town Hall are currently looking at current offers alongside financial controls that will need to be in place. At the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes committee a variety of options will be submitted for consideration.

**217. FELIXSTOWE AND WALTON FOOTBALL CLUB – REQUEST FOR FUNDING**

Members discussed a request from Felixstowe and Walton United Football Club to support once again the annual “Felixstowe Firework Spectacular” display in November 2013. The Town Council has supported the event for the past four years contributing £250 annually. Following a lengthy discussion, it was felt that as the firework display was an annual event, request for a contribution should be made to meet an earlier meeting deadline following the proper process so members are able to understand how the donation would contribute to the total funding of the event. Following discussion, but not unanimously it was

**RESOLVED** that a contribution of £250.00 to the Felixstowe and Walton Football Club for the annual “Felixstowe Firework Spectacular” be made from the Enhancement and Promotion budget.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent immediately to the Felixstowe and Walton Football Club to explain that any further annual requests must be made in January of each year and the Club should provide the Town Council with accounts information. In the absence of this arriving by the deadline it is unlikely that further annual contributions can be made.

Members also agreed that the proper procedure for grants and contributions from Felixstowe Town Council should be made known to the public and this will be done via the newsletter and website.

## 218. SUB-COMMITTEE AND WORKING PARTY REPORTS

a. Report of the meeting of the Cemetery and Allotments Sub-Committee of 20<sup>th</sup> August 2013

The Chairman introduced the report of the Cemetery and Allotments Sub-Committee of 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2013 which included items concerning election of Chairman, election of Vice Chairman, update on matters relating to Felixstowe Cemetery: proposed improvements to 7<sup>th</sup> Felixstowe Scout Hut, Network Rail fence, Cemetery Path, Sub Committee visit, Cemetery toilets, amended wording for Cemetery fees and Cemetery IT improvement plan, update on matters relating to allotments: allotments IT and Railway Hill Site improvement works and review of allotment rents.

Councillor Savage reported that a member of the public had questioned why the pedestrian gate on the Cemetery Path at the Maidstone Road end had been temporarily closed for several months. The Technical Advisor will chase this by writing another letter to Network Rail.

It was **RESOLVED** that allotment rents should be increased by 25p per rod from £4.50 to £4.75 in October 2014 and that the current 50 per cent reduction for pensioners and the long term unemployed would be retained. There would be an increase in water charges of 50p to £5.50 per allotment in October 2014.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Cemetery and Allotments Sub-Committee of 20<sup>th</sup> August 2013, circulated to all Members and recorded in the Sub Committee and Working Party Minute Book.

Councillor Webb reported that the Committee had recently visited the Cemetery and were very pleased with what they saw.

b. Report of the meeting of the Felixstowe Libraries and Heritage Advisory Committee of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013

The Chairman introduced the report of the Felixstowe Libraries and Heritage Advisory Committee of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013 which included items concerning election of Chairman, election of Vice Chairman, update on Suffolk Libraries, report by Felixstowe Library, establishment of a "Friends" Group, reports to Felixstowe Town Council from the Library and title of the Committee. A discussion took place regarding the title of the Committee and whether it should include the word Heritage, a letter would be written to other stakeholders to confirm the title "The Felixstowe Libraries Advisory Committee" and that Felixstowe Town Council is happy as long as the others concerned were happy with the title.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Felixstowe Libraries and Heritage Advisory Committee of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013, circulated to all Members and recorded in the Felixstowe Libraries and Heritage Advisory Minute Book be approved.

c. Report of the South Seafrost Working Group of 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013

The confidential report of this meeting will be presented at Council meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013.

d. Report of the Electoral Review Working Party of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Councillor Smith gave a verbal report of the Electoral Review Working Party of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 which included items concerning the election of Chairman, election of Vice Chairman, Terms of Reference, background information and details of suggested warding patterns and proposed numbers of members.

The number of District Councillors was likely to decrease from 11 to 8, and it is proposed to decrease the number of wards in Felixstowe from 5 to 4. Members discussed options to change the number of Town Council members, and it was felt that due to workload in the future that 16 Town Council members would be appropriate. This would mean that each ward would have 4 members, 2 of which would be District Councillors. This was carried unanimously.

With regard to ward areas Councillor Smith confirmed that the District have one proposition for the boundaries of the wards, and the Labour party was also submitting an alternative plan for the boundaries of the wards. Therefore, two options will go forward, and it will be up to the Boundary Commission to make the final decision.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee have been given delegated authority to report back to the Boundary Commission. Councillor Smith proposed that a report be sent from Felixstowe Town Council to say that we are content with 4 wards with 2 District members, and that the Town Council will have a total of 16 members. It was unanimously

<p><b>RESOLVED</b> that a report would be submitted to the Boundary Commission by Debbie Frost by the deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013, and the written report of the Electoral Review Working Party of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013, be circulated to all Members at the next Finance &amp; General Purposes Committee meeting.</p>
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219. TOWN CLERK

The Chairman formally advised members of the absence of the Town Clerk on sick leave for a period not known. To ensure effective operation of the Town Council with specific regards to a Proper Officer, the newly formed Personnel Committee took the view that we need an interim Town Clerk. Advice was sought from SALC, who were able to suggest two suitable candidates who were interviewed by members of the Personnel Committee. A decision was made to employ Gordon Mussett, who has a wealth of experience, including Clerk to a large Town Council and also 15 years as Principal Funding Officer for Essex County Council. The urgent action prerogative was used with the Chairman of F&GP and the Town Clerk, Caroline Barrett, is aware that Mr Mussett will be standing in for the duration of her absence. It is expected that Mr Mussett will work on a flexible basis, which is likely to be 2 to 3 days a week for as long as we require his help. It is hoped that this will be for a relatively short period. Expectation will be that Mr Mussett will work on Wednesdays and he should be able to attend the next Council meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 when he will be formally introduced. It will be up to the Interim Clerk to decide which meetings, i.e. plans, that he will clerk and those that he will delegate.

Councillor Sharman enquired as to whether there was any insurance in place that would cover this expense. It was confirmed that the contingency fund would be used.

Members would like to thank Town Hall staff, who have gone beyond their normal duties and for their considerable efforts during this difficult time.

**220. SUFFOLK LIBRARIES**

Members noted correspondence from Suffolk's Libraries IPS Limited welcoming Felixstowe Town Council into membership. Councillor Sennington has previously been nominated as the Town Council's representative and is already receiving literature in this regard.

**221. ART ON THE PROM**

Members noted correspondence from Mary and Stephen Wyatt concerning Art on the Prom. Members were very pleased that this annual event had been such a success and been so well attended.

CHAIRMAN