

**MINUTES of the FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held
online on Wednesday 16 July 2020 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr M Richardson (Chairman) Cllr S Harkin
 Cllr T Green (Vice-Chairman) Cllr A Smith
 Cllr S Bennett Cllr S Wiles
 Cllr S Bird Cllr K Williams

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
 Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)
 Mr S Congi (Customer Services Apprentice)

IN ATTENDANCE: 1 Member of the public

135. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

136. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Deacon.**

137. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird Cllr T Green Cllr S Wiles	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as Members of East Suffolk Council)
Cllr S Bird Cllr S Wiles	All	Local Non-Pecuniary (as a Members of Suffolk County Council)

As no Pecuniary declarations were made, there were no requests for dispensation.

138. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 27 May 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a true record.

139. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 JUNE 2020

Committee received the budget monitoring report to 30 June 2020. A report of any variance to budget estimates for the period greater than 10% or £500 was considered.

It was RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 June 2020 be approved, with no other action required at this time.

140. COUNCIL INVESTMENTS

Committee noted that Council's 1-Year Investment Bond of £500,000 with Close Brothers Savings matured on 20 July 2020, receiving interest of £6,284.25. Members considered investment options in accordance with Council's Investment Policy and Strategy and agreed that a re-investment for a 1-year bond with Close Brothers at a rate of 0.9% was the most appropriate investment at this time, providing security, liquidity and yield.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the interest for the maturing 1-year bond covering the period 20 July 2019 – 20 July 2020 of £6,284.25 be returned to the Town Council Tracker account and accounted as part of the budgeted interest for 2020/21; and,**
- ii. the sum of £500,000 be re-invested in a new 1-year Investment Bond with Close Brothers Savings**

141. DATA RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

Committee reviewed the Council's Data Retention and Disposal Policy, outlining the length of time and basis for the retention of specific documents and information before they should be disposed.

The Clerk reported that, in accordance with the 'Test and Trace' arrangements being put in place for Covid-19, an additional Privacy Statement had been created specifically referencing the retention of data in connection with the Test and Trace to comply with GDPR regulations. Data collected for this purpose would be held for 21 days and then destroyed.

It was RESOLVED that the Data Retention Policy and Disposal Policy for the period 2020-2023 be recommended to Council for adoption as presented.

142. AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

Committee reviewed Standing Orders, acknowledging alterations to Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and public contracts in connection with the supply of gas, heat electricity, drinking water, transport services, or postal services to the public.

It was RESOLVED that the amended Standing Orders be recommended to Council for adoption as presented.

143. AMENDMENTS TO FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Committee reviewed Financial Regulations, acknowledging altered amounts to public supply and public service contracts, in addition to public works contracts.

It was RESOLVED that the amended Financial Regulations be recommended to Council for adoption as presented.

144. CODE OF CONDUCT CONSULTATION

Committee considered the draft Model Member of Code of Conduct, which was out for consultation by the Local Government Association (LGA).

Committee noted the proposed draft Model Member Code of Conduct and broadly supported the principles therein. No formal response from the Committee on behalf of the Town Council was proposed but Members looked forward to seeing the final recommendations of the LGA.

The Clerk advised that Members were also able to respond to the consultation as individuals if they so wished.

It was RESOLVED that the proposed draft Model Member of Code of Conduct be noted and that any new Code of Conduct be brought to Committee in due course for consideration.

145. FINANCIAL FORECAST TO 2024

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk presented a draft Financial Forecast to 2024, using previous years' figures as a basis to predict future trends. Members thanked the Customer Service Apprentice, Deputy Town Clerk and Town Clerk for the work involved in drawing these figures together. Committee noted that the figures were largely based on previous expenditure and worked on a basis of a projected 2% national salary increase and 5% increase in utilities per annum.

The Clerk advised that he had based the draft forecast using the current 2020/21 precept to demonstrate how this might impact the Council's reserves. Members suggested that the forecast should give some latitude to the precept figures of around 1.5% - 2% per annum, to reflect inflation and reduce any shortfall. Members noted that East Suffolk Council would be assessing how the coronavirus pandemic could negatively affect the tax base and the Clerk advised that the forecast would need to be updated once the tax base projection for 2021/22 was known.

The Clerk reminded Committee that the forecast was a working document and would be brought back to Committee throughout its lifetime for review, particularly during the annual budget-setting process.

It was RESOLVED that the draft four-year Financial Plan for the year 2020-2024 be noted and brought back to Committee in due course once it could be updated pending further information on the impact of the pandemic on the projected tax base.

146. FELIXSTOWE FORWARD

Committee considered several initiatives around Felixstowe, which had been raised by the Felixstowe Forward Change Director, Helen Greengrass, at the Council meeting the previous week and referred to this Committee.

With regards to the drive-in cinema idea, Members noted the appeal of the event and the reduced risk of spreading infection in such an environment but felt that the limited numbers that would be able to attend made it quite exclusive. Referring to correspondence received by the Clerk earlier that day, the option of a company taking on the responsibility and running of the event seemed to be the best solution. It was noted that if an event organiser from the town wished to take on the running of the event, then they could do this as either a turnkey event where they could receive a percentage which is 24% after all costs including the film license or alternatively hire the equipment, run the whole event and keep any resulting ticket sales. The Clerk advised that Felixstowe Forward would be discussing the potential of this with the operator and some of the local event organisers. Several potential sites were discussed which the Clerk agreed to forward to the operator for consideration.

Members discussed the renewal of the wicker family in the Seafront Gardens, which had deteriorated to the extent that they would need to be removed after the forthcoming summer season. Members were keen to support an appropriate replacement of the wicker family, which were known to be very popular. Members also considered the use of wicker to be very ecologically friendly. Suggestions were made to replace the existing family with the wicker shark, until such a time the original artist was able to produce a replacement for £2,500. Committee was supportive of funding the replacement and hoped that they could be created with maybe an additional member of the family (for example a baby in a pram). Members enquired about the maintenance plan for the new wicker family and and if the wicker was not being recycled whether it could be given to the Felixstowe Museum. It was also suggested to find out whether it would be practicable for the family to hibernate for the winter so to lengthen their lives.

Committee also discussed the possibility of commissioning a further piece of public art which could be placed in a different part of the gardens or elsewhere in the town. It was felt that this would be a good way of promoting public interest in the town as it comes through the pandemic.

Members discussed the establishment of more toilet facilities at the Port Viewing area of Landguard point, in addition to elsewhere around Felixstowe following several complaints. Members noted Felixstowe's amount of facilities exceeded that of larger neighbouring towns. Next week there was a Liaison Meeting between Felixstowe Town Council and East Suffolk Council and the Town Clerk would take the items discussed and circulated previously to the meeting. The main request would be to receive more communication when toilets are out of order, and to provide signs to the nearest toilet when these facilities had to close.

A Member reminded Committee of a previous scheme looked at many years ago which did not come to fruition, which involved stickers placed in windows of local businesses throughout the town offering up the usage of their toilets to members of the public. Members were keen to re-visit this scheme and requested that the Clerk explores the feasibility of such a scheme with the Chamber of Commerce once the pandemic had passed.

Committee considered the provision of portaloos in the Landguard area but felt that these would be costly to keep clean enough considering COVID-19. With the recent news that the Viewing Point Café and Fort were shortly due to open and the availability of toilets at Manor Terrace, Members agreed that the provision should continue to be monitored.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Clerk should contact the drive-in cinema operator to suggest some local sites that may be suitable for them to use for an event;**
- ii. the Town Council would fund the replacement of the wicker family at a cost of £2,500, and Felixstowe Forward be asked to consider the suggestions raised above;**
- iii. consideration should be given commissioning a public art piece for the town as it comes through the pandemic;**
- iv. the Town Clerk to raise Committee's concerns over the public convenience provision with East Suffolk Council at the next FTC/ESC Liaison meeting, particularly with regards to improving communication when facilities were out of order and ensuring the members of the public were being signposted to the next available facility; and,**
- v. the Chamber of Commerce be consulted on the potential introduction of a scheme which would enable the public to freely use toilets available in businesses throughout the town, once the pandemic had passed.**

147. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 9.43pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 28 October 2020 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____