

**MINUTES of the FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held at
Town Hall, Felixstowe on Wednesday 23 October 2024 at 7.30pm**

PRESENT: Cllr D Rowe (Vice-Chairman) Cllr W Underwood
Cllr S Bird Cllr M Sharman
Cllr M James Cllr S Wiles

OFFICERS: Mr A Tadjrishi (Town Clerk)
Mrs D Frost (Deputy Town Clerk)
Mr S Congi (Finance Administration Assistant)

IN ATTENDANCE: One member of the public (*via Zoom*)

In the absence of the Chairman, Cllr M Deacon, Vice-Chairman Cllr D Rowe was the chair.

236. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There was none.

237. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from **Cllr M Deacon, Cllr D Aitchison and Cllr S Bennett.**

238. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Other Registerable Interests, to which no matters on the agenda were directly related, were noted:

Member(s)	Minute No.	Nature of Interest
Cllr S Bird Cllr S Wiles	All	Other registerable interests (as Members of Suffolk County Council)

Cllr D Rowe declared an Other Registerable Interest in the CIL application from Level Two (as a Director of Level Two). As the matter for consideration directly related to his Other Registerable Interest, Cllr Rowe advised that he would leave the meeting prior to any debate and decision on this item.

Members were advised that, should any other matters arise in the meeting that directly relate to any of their interests, they should make appropriate declarations at that time.

239. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

It was RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting held on 5 June 2024 be signed by the Vice-Chairman as a true record.

240. BUDGET MONITORING TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

The committee received the budget monitoring report to 30th September 2024, including details of any variances exceeding 10% or £500 against budget estimates for the period.

The Clerk advised that the Professional Fees budget was currently showing as overspent; however, once a recent invoice for legal fees was transferred and recoded to an earmarked reserve, as previously authorised, the budget would no longer be overspent.

RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report to 30 April 2024 be noted.

241. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ANNUAL RETURN 2023-24

Committee noted that the External Audit for the Financial Year 2023/24 had been completed on 28 September 2024, with the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn, having expressed the view that the information was in accordance with proper practices and no matters had come to attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

Members recorded a vote of thanks to the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, and Finance Administration Assistant for their work in achieving Council's ongoing unqualified audits.

It was RESOLVED that:

- i. the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, including Audit Certificate, be approved and accepted as presented; and,**
- ii. it be noted that, in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 as defined by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, the Notice of Conclusion of Audit had been put on the Town Hall noticeboard from 30 September 2024 and is available to view on the Financial Page of the Town Council website.**

242. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT : INTERIM 2024/25

Committee received the Interim Internal Audit Report for 2024/25, completed on 21 October 2024, and noted the following observations:

Standing Orders: The Standing Orders on the website do not reflect the updated procurement threshold figures and require amendment to the latest adopted version (Sections 18. Av, F, G).

Internal Control Statement: The Council's Internal Control Statement references its Financial Regulations 6.8 for electronic payments, which requires

updating in line with the new NALC Financial Regulations 2024. Electronic Payments are now referenced under Item 7.

The report made one recommendation:

It is recommended the Town Council approves member absences rather than just recording them. The Local Government Act 1972 s85 states the following; 'Subject to subsections (2) and (3) below, if a member of a local authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the authority, he shall, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the authority.'

The Committee considered this recommendation. Members expressed that it was not preferable to review and approve reasons for councillor absences at every meeting, as this would effectively reset the six-month attendance rule each time an absence was approved. Instead, the Committee agreed that any councillor approaching the six-month non-attendance threshold could be considered on a case-by-case basis, should the need arise. Consequently, the Committee did not support the Internal Auditor's recommendation and referred this to Council with a recommendation that it not be adopted.

The Committee extended its thanks to the staff for their efforts in achieving another positive audit report.

It was RESOLVED that :

- i. the Interim Internal Audit Report 2024/25 be approved by Council;**
- ii. the comments be noted and the Clerk to update the published procurement threshold figure in the Standing Orders and update the cross reference in the Internal Control Statement: and;**
- iii. it be recommended to Council that it does not adopt the Internal Auditor's recommendation the apologies and reasons for absence be considered and approved at each meeting.**

243. QUARTERLY BANK RECONCILIATIONS

It was confirmed that the Council's nominated Quarterly Bank Reconciliation Signatory (*Min #15 2024/25 refers*), had signed the reconciliation between the bank statement and Scribe accounts to confirm the amounts agreed each month.

RESOLVED that it be noted that the reconciliations between the bank statement and accounts statements for the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024 had been reviewed and signed by the appointed bank reconciliation signatory.

244. COUNTY COURT JUDGEMENT AND DEBT RECOVERY

The Committee considered a report on the outstanding debt and recommended further enforcement action. It was agreed that the first step would involve assessing the debtor's ability to pay, incurring a court fee of £68. Following this assessment, the committee supported proceeding to further enforcement action, including the potential instruction of bailiffs.

It was RESOLVED that the Deputy Town Clerk make an application to assess the debtor's ability to pay, proceed with further enforcement action as necessary, and update Committee in due course.

245. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Committee received the report and recommendations of the CIL Working Group.

The following items were considered:

i) **Play Area Refurbishments** and iii) **Allenby Park**

It was RESOLVED to recommend to Council the approval of funding from CIL Earmarked Reserves as follows:

- i. **a total of £100,000 (£50,000 each) for the complete refurbishment of play equipment at Walton and Seaton Road recreation grounds; and,**
- ii. **£15,000 towards the replacement of gates at Allenby Park.**

Cllr M Sharman was nominated and duly elected as Chairman for the next item, and **Cllr D Rowe** left the Chamber at 8.48pm for the discussion and decision regarding item ii) **Level Two Music Digital Arts Centre**.

With **Cllr M Sharman in the Chair**, it was noted that funding for the Level Two Music Digital Arts Centre project would be contingent on planning permission, with a potential clause to time-limit the funding offer.

It was further RESOLVED to recommend to Council the approval of:

- iii. **£30,000 from CIL Earmarked Reserves towards the Level Two Music Digital Arts Centre project.**

Cllr D Rowe returned to the Chamber at 8.54pm and resumed the chair.

246. BUSINESS PLAN MONITORING

Committee noted the report on Business Plan monitoring.

It was RESOLVED that the Business Plan monitoring report be noted.

247. CLOSURE

The meeting was closed at 8.56pm. The next meeting was noted as being scheduled for Wednesday 4 December 2024 at 7.30pm.

Date: _____

Chairman: _____