

ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE – 15TH JANUARY 2024

MINUTES OF THE ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15TH JANUARY 2024 AT 11AM IN THE TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ROOM LOCATED IN THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

PRESENT: Councillors Marriott (Chair), Birch, Hibbert and Purser

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr S Carter (Town Clerk), Mrs C Maclellan (Finance Officer) and Miss F Barford (Democratic Services Officer)

66. APOLOGIES

No apologies were submitted

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest

68. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13TH DECEMBER 2023

RESOLVED: The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th December 2023 as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

69. REVENUE BUDGET

The Finance Officer (FO) explained the highlighted budget lines as outlined within the Revenue Budget had moved 10% or more.

The following budget codes were where discussion or comments were made:

- Budget Code 4140 - Advertising and Marketing
A Councillor expressed some concern 110% had been spent and there was time before the Financial Year ended. Another Councillor queried whether benchmarking had been undertaken on printing costs. The Town Clerk explained he would undertake a benchmarking exercise of printers. The FO explained the advertising and marketing Budget had used expenditure for leaflets, town guides and branding. The FO explained in response to a question, the Communications Officer was responsible for the advertising and marketing budget.
- Budget Code 4015 - Travel and Subsistence
It was raised by a Councillor that Travel and Subsistence had continually increased and some further work was needed on this.
- Budget Code 4216 – Council Meeting and Room Hire
In response to a question, the Town Clerk explained this budget would be decreased from Financial Year 24-25 due to the low expenditure. He continued, it was the intention of the Council to host meetings in community settings hence the size of the budget however, in practice not many meetings had been held outside of the Guildhall.

RESOLVED: The Revenue Budget for month ending December 2023 was circulated and reviewed.

70. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The FO circulated the Payment of Accounts and requested Councillors take their time to review and ask any queries, questions or clarify any details.

A Councillor raised that the usage of the Town Council bank card was quite high and despite it being small amounts though this does add up. The FO stated the usage of the bank card and the associated admin was time consuming and she wished to arrange a meeting with the Town Clerk to review the process. In response to a question, the FO stated the Council does not have a petty cash account and it was advised not due to the associated risk.

The FO stated that the card was on some occasions has been used for retailers that had not been set-up as a supplier. In response to a question, the FO explained that she manually posted card payments to each budget code.

A Councillor asked whether line 216 of the payment list was the description correct as it was a large sum to test the lighting. In response the Town Clerk explained that the testing included the testing of the fixtures and lighting itself. In response to a question, the Town Clerk explained that the Town Council does own the Christmas lighting and decorations. The FO clarified the invoice for Ultralighting was for bracket testing, installation and removal of Christmas lighting in various roads in the Town Centre.

A Councillor explained that Kingsthorpe Parish Council had purchased a small amount of Christmas lighting that were LED lighting and solar powered and posed whether the Town Council was considering new lighting. The Town Clerk explained it would require a large procurement exercise and partnering with another Parish Council for better bargaining power could make it more complex.

A Councillor asked if there a way to determine the volume of people who live within the Northampton Town Council area and the amount who attended events. A Councillor explained that would be difficult to determine and the Christmas Light Switch-on did attract people into the Town Centre.

The FO explained there were payments for the water charges for the associated allotment sites and that Wave Utilities estimate the usage until water readings had been submitted.

RESOLVED: The Payment of Accounts for month ending December 2023 was circulated and approved for payment.

71. BANK RECONCILIATION

RESOLVED: The FO presented the cash book balance and bank statement balances for month ending December 2023 and these were presented, reviewed and approved.

RESOLVED: The CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund statement were presented, reviewed and approved.

72. INTERNAL CONTROLS

The FO explained that Councillors Hibbert and Soan completed the internal control checklist in January 2024.

A Councillor stated we undertook the internal controls check within two-hour and a half of hours and many of questions were posed. He continued that in future internal control checks we request to see evidence of the three quotes in relation to a requisition. The FO explained that Councillor Soan had nominated Councillor Lane to partake in the next Internal Controls in mid-march 2024.

73. RISK REGISTER

The Town Clerk circulated an updated copy of the Council's risk register that has been reformatted and updated.

The Town Clerk highlighted the following items:

Item 35, the General Power of Competence that has been reduced as the Assistant Town Clerk had completed her CILCA qualification.

Item 36 the loss of tax base which arose from the Boundary Commission for England's recommendation that Moulton Leys be transferred to Moulton Parish Council as this could pose a potential issue. The Town Clerk explained that he was advised by the Head of Democratic Services at West Northants advised the Town Council must provide evidence that Moulton Leys was part of the Town Council area to counter it. In response to a question, the Town Clerk explained ultimately West Northamptonshire Council's cabinet to make the final decision under the Local Governance Review.

The Town Clerk highlighted he had included the risk of a Parish Poll as a new item, he explained that any member of the public could request a poll if other residents agree with the motion. The Town Clerk explained the legislation was quite dated and could pose a risk due to the high volume of residents within Northampton Town Council area. A Councillor stated this would pose a large budgetary risk. The Town Clerk explained that the legislation was not very well known therefore not as a high list.

The Town Clerk stated in relation to the Loss of Staff it had been discussed about the requirement for long-term cover if required and there was an organisation that can provide locum staff.

MEETING CONCLUDED: 12:35PM

NEXT MEETING – 12th February 2024

X

Councillor. L Marriott
Chair of Accounts Sub-Committee