

# UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance Sub-Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre on Wednesday 20 April 2022 at 6.30pm.

**PRESENT:** Cllr. B. Cox (Chair) Cllr. P. Sparks  
Cllr. C. Macve (Vice-Chair) Cllr. D. Ward  
Cllr. J. Edwards

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Holly Goring – Town Clerk  
Sarah D’Alessio – Assistant Town Clerk & RFO

Minutes taken by Sarah D’Alessio

**1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda. No interests were forthcoming.

**2.0 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

**3.0 MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Sub-Committee held on the 23 February 2022.

**FS.19.04.22**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee of the 23 February 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4.0 TO REVIEW THE TOWN COUNCIL’S PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL POSITION AT THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR (2021/22)**

Members discussed the financial position over all committees from the potential year-end figures reported. A number of higher-than-expected income streams were highlighted which included the Cemetery income. The Chair noted that the income for Luxfords Restaurant had gradually increased since Christmas which showed customers’ increase in confidence since the pandemic. The Town

Clerk also added that the higher revenue in October and November was due to a number of events being held and Christmas deposits being taken. The members wished to thank the Responsible Financial Officer and all members of staff for the figures, noting that even though the Town Council was still suffering from the pandemic, the figures had remained positive, adding that despite the competition within the town the Luxfords restaurant clientele had remained quite strong. Cllr Edwards pointed out that with Costa Coffee now closed in the Town Centre, perhaps Luxfords Restaurant could further promote the takeaway element of the business, including within the June edition of 'The Voice' and social media.

The Town Clerk explained the figures on the reports provided were a first draft of the year end accounts and the office were still finalising the reports, which were to be sent to the accountant over the next few weeks, adding that the predicted deficit would be in the region of £5-8k so there should be no need to supplement this from Reserves as previously thought might be the case. The Responsible Financial Officer made members aware that there were still a few suppliers, mainly Utility accounts which needed to be tidied up but the predicted outturn would still be in target. Members confirmed they were happy for Officers to continue with the predicted year-end figures.

Members noted the Public Works Loan Board report and discussed what options the Town Council had in repayment of the two loans remaining. The RFO explained that, having spoken to a Public Works Loan Board advisor, it would be possible for a lump sum to be paid or an increase in monthly repayment instalments, the interest would then be adjusted accordingly but an additional charge might be incurred.

It was agreed for the RFO to confirm with an account manager and to investigate further, the calculations on either options and costs involved to implement this.

#### **FS.20.04.22**

Members **RESOLVED** to note the report, agreed for the Responsible Financial Officer to continue preparing the Year End accounts in line with the current figures and to also investigate further the calculations involved in the repayment of the Public Works Loans.

#### **5.0**

#### **TO REVIEW UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

Members discussed the revised contents of the Town Council's Financial Regulations as recommended by the Internal Auditor. The Town Clerk pointed out that the Town Council has additional regulations within its own financial regulations due to the nature of the hospitality businesses, such as the Luxfords Restaurant.

Additional detail was also included within the report on Internet banking and what is required of members to cover both security and fraud.

A number of paragraphs were highlighted and discussed further, which included producing a potential three-year forecast when producing the budget each year. The benefits of which were raised and discussed further by all members, including an option to expand the Building Maintenance plan over a number of years to show renewal of equipment and repairs.

The other was to consider reinvestment of the precept instalment every six months and not annually as undertaken currently, and again this was discussed further.

Members felt in the current circumstances, the uncertainty of the pandemic and annual council tax base, that a three-year forecast would be difficult to maintain. They did however welcome planning ahead for building maintenance, repairs and equipment purchases in the case of the Town Council's buildings, Civic Centre and Restaurant.

They felt that it would be beneficial to include the additional text in paragraph 8.3 reviewing the precept instalment every six months, but add in 'may, if required' to highlight that if only necessary.

#### **FS.21.04.22**

Subject to removing the addition of a 3-year forecast as highlighted in paragraph 2.1 and to include the phrase 'may, if required' in paragraph 8.3, members **RESOLVED** to recommend that the revised Financial Regulations be presented to General Purposes Committee for approval and adoption.

#### **6.0**

#### **TO CONSIDER USE FOR REMAINING COMMUNITY GRANT FUNDING**

The Chair opened up the discussion and explained that each member would be given two minutes to explain their points of view. The Assistant Town Clerk brought to members attention the findings from two other Town Councils, one of which was local, on how they distributed their Community Grants Programmes. Both had a cap on the amount of Grant given, with one offering a Micro grant at up to £100, small at up to £250 and large up to £2000 options.

The Chair explained that they thought that having the different levels of Grant would encourage more diversity.

A discussion then followed on the options available, which were highlighted within the report with a number of members agreeing that

this was an unprecedented year in which less applications were received against the money available. Capacity was also discussed as a reason not to redistribute as the administration involved would be quite considerable.

**FS.22.04.22**

Members **RESOLVED** to

(i) recommend that the remaining Community Grant funding be carried forward, to 2023/24 for the 2023/24 Community Grant Programme, and:

(ii) for the Responsible Financial Officer and members to explore how other councils managed their community grants programme, including caps on the grant funding awarded. Findings would be presented to the next Finance Sub-Committee in June/July 2022.

**7.0**

**MATTERS DEEMED URGENT BY THE CHAIRMAN**

Nothing to discuss.

The meeting closed at 7.46pm.