

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee held in the Committee Room at Town Hall on Monday 23rd September 2024 at 5.30pm.**

**PRESENT:** Richard Stubbings (from Item 7)  
Barry Darch  
Christine Wheeler (Chair)  
Joe Athorn  
Peter Shannon (from Item 8)  
Colin Hill

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Paul Cunningham (Town Clerk)  
Cllr Stevie Bubb

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 1**

**1. To receive apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Greenhill and Birrell. Cllr Chidley was not present.

**2. To receive Declarations of Interest or any requests for the granting of dispensations in relation to any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda**

There were none.

**3. To accept for accuracy and adoption the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 10th July 2024**

**RESOLVED** To accept for accuracy and adoption the minutes of the Finance and Governance Committee meeting held on Wednesday 10th July 2024.

**4. To note the conclusion of the external audit of council's accounts for 2023-24**

Councillors noted that the audit had concluded and that the external auditors had not raised any concerns. They noted that the Town Clerk and RFO would arrange for the 'notice of conclusion of audit' to be published.

**5. To consider whether any changes are needed to the operation of committees, including the way that chairs of committees report back to full council, to comply with council's resolution regarding suspension of delegation**

Councillors discussed the questions in the Town Clerk's report. They agreed that: chairs of committees would need to provide explanations of recommendations when reporting to full council; that papers would need to be included in full council packs for

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all recommendations; that all spending authority would need to be removed from committee Terms of Reference, and that recommendations from sub-committees and working parties should be referred to full council and not be considered by committees.

Cllr Darch proposed that these changes be recommended to full council for approval. This was seconded by Cllr Hill, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

**RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** To agree the following changes to facilitate the implementation of the council resolution regarding suspension of delegation to committees: chairs of committees be asked to provide explanations of recommendations when reporting to full council; that papers would need to be included in full council packs for all recommendations; that all spending authority would need to be removed from committee Terms of Reference, and that recommendations from sub-committees and working parties should be referred to full council and not be considered by committees

**6. To consider a rescinding motion to reverse the decision to award a grant of £500 to Beccles Hospital Garden**

Chair noted that this motion had been instigated by Cllr Bubb, who was not able to propose it as she was not a member of the committee. Chair therefore proposed that the decision to award a grant of £500 to Beccles Hospital Garden be rescinded. This was seconded by Cllr Darch, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

**RESOLVED** To rescind the decision to award a grant of £500 to Beccles Hospital Garden.

(Cllr Stubbings joined the meeting).

**7. To consider a revised grant application from Beccles Hospital Garden**

Chair noted that this was a revised grant application, with additional information not provided in the previous application. Chair reported that she had been asked by some members of the Hospital's League of Friends to contact Ashley from ECCH about the project and that she had done so, which had led to the revised application being submitted. Chair invited views and Cllr Bubb spoke against the award of a grant. She noted that the original project target had been £6,500 but that this had now increased to £12,300. Cllr Bubb commented that the garden had been revamped five years ago and that she believed that £10,000 was sufficient to complete the upgrade and therefore that a grant from town council should not be given.

Chair noted that the new plans include an additional element of a memorial garden at the front of the hospital. No proposal was received regarding the application and councillors therefore agreed that the item be considered by full council without a recommendation from the committee.

(Cllr Shannon joined the meeting).

**8. To consider an increase in the Twinning Association's annual grant from council**

Cllr Darch noted that the costs of twinning visits are partially offset by hosts who generously provide free accommodation and food and by fund-raising activities. He noted that the Association had funded the cost of visits to Carlton Marshes and St Peter's Brewery and an evening event at Waveney Centre. Cllr Darch pointed out that the Council's annual grant had not increased since 1980 and that since then the costs of goods and services had risen by over four times, according to the Bank of England inflation calculator. Cllr Stubbings noted that the association had not submitted accounts and he commented that he would not be able to support a substantial grant increase without seeing these figures.

Cllr Darch proposed that the annual grant be increased from £1,000 to £2,500 and that it be increased by inflation in future years. This was seconded by Cllr Shannon, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

**RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** To approve an increase in annual grant for Twinning Association to £2,500 and that it be increased by inflation in future years.

## **9. To consider amended Committee Terms of Reference**

Councillors considered the revised draft terms of reference (ToRs). They noted that the 'delegated powers' sections needed to be removed from the ToRs for each of Assets & Estates, Development, Commerce & Strategic Planning, Finance & Governance and Planning & Highways committees.

Cllr Stubbings proposed that, subject to the changes above, the amended ToRs be recommended to full council for approval. This was seconded by Cllr Darch, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

**RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL** To approve the amended committee ToRs, subject to the removal of 'delegated powers' sections from the ToRs for each of Assets & Estates, Development, Commerce & Strategic Planning, Finance & Governance and Planning & Highways committees.

## **10. To consider a revised Licence to Occupy Bell Tower from East Suffolk Council**

Cllr Darch commented on the email from ESC officer Tony Rudd regarding the licence. Cllr Darch noted that he did not agree with the sentence in the email which stated that the use of the tower for tours 'added to the risk of deterioration of the bells/bell frames', as the ropes are raised and the bells lowered by the bellringers prior to the tower being open for visitors. He also noted that the ringers' Steeple Keeper regularly checks the bells and undertakes minor repairs such as replacing broken stays. Cllr Darch commented that the suggestion that the town council inspect the bells periodically is reasonable and that the council should delegate this task to the tower Steeple Keeper. Cllr Darch proposed that the Town Clerk be asked to reply to ESC to request that the draft licence be amended so that the responsibility for commissioning specialised repair work to the bells falls on ESC rather than BTC. This was seconded by Cllr Stubbings, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

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**RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL**      To request ESC to amend the draft licence so that the responsibility for commissioning specialised repair work to the bells falls on ESC rather than BTC.

**11. To consider a revised Safeguarding Policy**

Town Clerk noted that the previous policy had been very brief. He reported that some safeguarding policies online were very long and that many of these were more appropriate to organisations working regularly with children and vulnerable adults. Cllr Darch commented that he had read the draft policy and that he was happy to recommend that it be approved by full council. He therefore proposed that the draft policy be recommended to full council for approval. This was seconded by Chair, a vote was taken which was in favour and it was therefore

**RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL**      To approve the draft Safeguarding Policy.

**12. To agree the date of next meeting**

Councillors agreed that the next meeting should be held on Monday 28th October 2024 at 5.30pm.

**Meeting closed at 6.25pm.**

**ACTION POINTS**

| Agenda Item | What?                                                            | By Whom?         | By When? |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------|
| 4           | Arrange for the 'notice of conclusion of audit' to be published. | Town Clerk & RFO | asap     |

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Finance & Governance Committee Chair