

**Draft Minutes of the FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE meeting held on
21st March 2024 at 1.30pm at the Town Hall.**

REP FG 02.24

Present – Cllrs; Davy, Flunder, Jarvis,

Town Clerk/ RFO

Members of public – Nil

1. **Apologies:** To receive apologies for absence. Apologies from Cllr Sutton
2. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a. To receive any declarations of Non-Registrable Interest regarding the agenda. Nil
 - b. To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest/ Other Registrable Interest regarding the agenda. SF declared an ORI in respect of the Arts Centre.
 - c. Dispensation. Nil.

3. **Matters from the public on matters relating to matters on the agenda.**

Nil

4. **Minutes of Feb 2024 - Fin Rep 01.24.** Received and noted. Signed by Chair of Cttee.

5. **Management accounts 2023.2024 to consider alongside budget for period to February 2024.**

Management accounts against budget, and balance sheet, for the period to February 2024 had been circulated prior to the meeting. See papers attached.

Management accounts were reviewed on a line-by-line basis against budget and discussion took place on individual items

Income for the 11 months (including grants) was £2,222,965. Grant income £807k = £650k Station Rd, £50k cil skatepark, £107k from RDC for skatepark.

Precept was noted and members noted that the good news was that STC has not increased its precept for 2024.2025. This to be noted in newsletters etc.

Interest to date is £76.145 – mostly from CCLA investments.

Points to note – see mgt accounts. Income - Cil transferred to reserves. Insurance contributions have been charged out to tenants along with electricity contributions for the market traders. Kilcock toilets are closed due to vandalism, and the fair did not come to Southwold this year, so this has resulted in loss of income.

EV Chargers at Church Green are being charged at low rate – if electricity increases then rate will need to be considered. Income from new chargers being installed will be decided on the basis of the cost of the supply.

Expenditure for the 10 months

Grant expenditure is offset by grant income. A pledge of £5k is still in place for assistance to the tennis club pavilion works who have this month requested that this be paid. Other income and expenditure are as per budgets. Grant income also includes grant towards extending the public wi fi to Gun Hill area and this project is progressing through Proximity Futures. Grant received to progress North

Parade Shelter as part of the trails offer has also commenced and the new information boards are awaited.

New skatepark – covered by a formal design and build JCT contract. Work started this week. Money in reserves/ grants budgets cover costs.

Car parking expenditure includes the fees from Adnams for electricity for the past 3 years.

Donations budget has been allocated in full for 2023.24.

Property expenditure – kiv that costs for 2 Strickland Place will roll into next financial year as will the works on the gable end at 7 Hurren Terrace including any refurb of toilets.

Actual year to date expenditure is £ 1,981,809 including £1,539,679 Station Rd construction expenditure and additional £61,116 St Rd professional fees both of which are covered from reserves. Transfer from Station Rd reserves is required to correct the accounting position. Project is on budget at present.

Noted that the service charge costs will need to be accurately assessed once the bills are submitted and recharged as appropriate.

Balance sheet for the 11-month period reviewed – reserve transfers as mentioned above was noted.

The month end management accounts and bank reconciliations for February were reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Cttee for sign off as required. It was agreed that there are no bad debts from rental fees to consider for writ off before year end.

6. **Investments of short-term funds** –CCLA public deposit fund is still paying good interest rate. It is recommended that whilst these rates remain high, STC liquid cash not required for the monthly cashflow, be invested in the CCLA product. Withdrawals are available on same day access. Authority held for the finance cttee to invest and withdraw funds as appropriate.

7. **Grants to apply for, and donation requests** – update of those received and any new opportunities/ requests including.

- **Grants to apply for.** *Update of potential grant funding* including; VCSE Funding opportunities, National Landscapes 24.25 funding, Cultural Connections, Insulation grants, [Suffolk Climate Action Community Match Funder – Green Suffolk](#)
It was noted that Landlords cttee will apply for relevant grants for improvements to tenants EPC ratings including insulation etc, as required on the property portfolio.
- Sizewell Funding opportunities - Noted that Suffolk Community Foundation is holding the Community Fund grant and will consider applications along with ESC who will hold funds for the Tourism grant allocation.
- SCC Locality funding applications – SCC Cllr Ladd has offered to assist with the funding for the repair of the stocks and for the noticeboard/ access for Ferry Rd Garden from his 2024.25 locality funding.
- East Suffolk Community Partnership has funds to assist communities - there are specific criteria. They also have a number of projects to support schools and various contacts for Southwold School have been provided to the Community Partnership team.

- **Donation Requests.** See allocations for 2023.24 as attached. All funding has been allocated for this financial year. New funding pot will become available for 2024.25.
Old Hospital/ Arts Literary Festival/ Tennis club requests.

Tennis club has advised that their request to draw down their pledge of £5000 has been received – agreed by all to recommend to council.

Old Hospital Canteen request – further information has been supplied as requested previously. The Canteen operates under a subsidiary limited company which include the Nursery. There is a community aspect which connects both of these entities as well as the library – with visitors to all using the Canteen as part of their visit.

It was agreed to propose to council that a £1000 donation be made to The Canteen for their request for audio sound proofing, due to the community benefit element that the nursery and library receive from the Canteen. Donation to come from allocation 2024. 25.

Literary Festival have requested a donation of £1000 to increase marketing of the Literary Festival – split between £604 for the leaflets with the remainder being a contribution to the costs of delivery of the leaflets. Discussion re the accounts and request. It is not clear what reserves are held by the festival and what these are being used for.

It was agreed that any event which brings people to Southwold is good for the economy of Southwold. It was therefore agreed to recommend that the town council supports the cost of printing of the leaflets for delivery and that these should include the logo of the council. It was agreed to recommend that a donation of £604 therefore be made to the festival for this purpose and that the donation be allocated from the donations budget 2024.25.

8. Quotes/ costings to consider including;

Planning applications: Casino new windows – Quote £800 to submit listed building application for replacement windows. Propose to approve.

Red Cross planning application – council has already confirmed approval of costs for pre planning at £13,500 whilst asking that the costs to get to full application be ascertained. These have been estimated at a further £13500. Discussion about costs. It was suggested that at this stage council commit to the pre planning only and review once the response has been received. It may be that the property could be advertised for sale on the basis of the pre app recommendations.

‘Previous Mayor’ pin badges – other councils provide their outgoing Mayor with a civic pin badge to honour their Mayoral tenure. The cost is in region of £16 per badge. In view of the 50th Anniversary of local Government and celebrations proposed in this regard for Charter Lunch, it was suggested that it would be appropriate for STC to honour previous town mayors with such a civic badge. 35 to be ordered for previous and future Mayors – civic budget to cover costs of approx. £560 to be proposed.

Electric car charger fees – see above.

Wi fi extension – costs had been circulated in advance of the meeting – grant has been received to cover bulk of asset costs to extend wi fi to Gun Hill area - which will then provide a spur for a further extension to the harbour to be possible. After the grant has been applied to the costs, up to £3k will be left for STC to cover in 24.25 for maintenance and footfall counter fees and there will then be 3 years servicing costs. £4k has been placed in the 2024.2025 budget to cover these costs.

9. Audit 2023.24

Arrangements are in hand for year-end close in April followed by the internal audit in May in order that audit can be sent off by the June deadline. Council falls in for intermediate review by the auditors.

10. Policies/ procedures for review including;

- Legal Topic Note – Feb 2024 – noted. Procurement details noted and amended as per Feb 24 minutes.
- **Policy review – for recommendation to council;**
Reserves and investment policy – discussion around the policy which also includes a reserve statement in 5.2. It was felt that these would be better as 2 separate documents. Note also that reserves as a percentage of book valuation to be updated to 5% (from 3%). (Book value to be updated as part of the budget process in 2024.
- **Internal Control – para 7.1 – change from ‘the Chair of the F and G cttee completes’ to ‘a member of the F and G cttee completes**
- **Separate list of the checks required to be attached to the policy.**
- **Independence of internal auditor – the council confirms that the internal auditor does not have involvement in or responsibility for the financial decision making, management, or control of the authority or for the financial controls and procedures. The internal auditor has no personal connection to members of the council and does not provide the software for council accounting. The council thereby confirms the independence of the internal auditor. The letter of engagement sets out the responsibilities and roles of the internal auditor – and council considers that the statutory requirements for internal audit are met.**
- **Grants/ donation – Take out reference to £250 – and replace with ‘at the discretion of Council’.**
- Complaints Policy – no amendments required.
- Equality and Diversity – no amendment required.
- Health and Safety – no amendment required.
- Lone working – no amendments required.
- Child protection Policy and Safeguarding policy – to be updated and brought back for recommendation.
- CCTV – Note that policies will be required upon installation.

11. Risk Management including Cyber, Fraud and Climate.

See minutes Feb 2024.

Boating Lake to be added as risk area too in light of the proposed Lionlink location.

12. Property Governance Review – Discussed. No action at present time. Should any further consideration of this be deemed appropriate, the guidance will need to be updated as law relating to charities/ tax etc is constantly changing. Such an update might also include The Common Charity.

13. Date of next meeting – 23rd April 2024 at 9.30am

14.Exclusion of Public and Press: *Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodied (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it is proposed that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following.*

Recommendations have been received in relation to the sale prices for a council property along with the agency commission rates. Council to consider their policy on sale i.e. market price or long lease with covenant for principal residence.

Recommendations

Donations

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