

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WANTAGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT THE BEACON, PORTWAY, WANTAGE ON MONDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2022, AT 7.30 P.M.**

Councillors present: Councillor Major J Sibbald (Town Mayor)  
Councillors I R Cameron, A Crawford,  
A Dunford (part), A Duveen, T Gilhome,  
J T Hannaby, A C Menzies, P O'Leary, I L Sheldon  
and S Third.

Others present:

Clerk: W P Falkenau.

**Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E Johnson, A Przybysz, C Walters and C H Wills-Wright.

**Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests**

Councillor Hannaby declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Wantage Hospital League of Friends, a trustee of the Wantage Nursing Home Trust, a trustee of the Vale Community Impact and a Governor of Stockham Primary School.

Councillor Dunford arrived.

**To approve the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 December 2021**

The minutes were approved and signed.

**77. Statements and Questions from the public**

None.

**78. Briefing by K Oldridge of Zero Hour Oxfordshire regarding the proposal in the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill for a Climate and Nature Assembly**

Mrs Oldridge was not present (apologies for absence were received after the meeting).

**79. Matters arising from the Council meetings held on 29 November and 13 December 2021**

73. Budgets and Precept Setting The allocation of CIL was to be referred to the next Policy, Management and Finance Committee meeting. **Action: Clerk**

**80. Minutes of the Leisure and Amenities Committee meeting held on 17 January 2022**

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Hannaby  
SECONDED BY Councillor O'Leary  
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes be adopted.

**81. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 29 November 2021, 13 December 2021 and 10 January and 24 January 2022**

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Sibbald  
SECONDED BY Councillor Menzies  
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes be adopted.

**82. Minutes of the Promotion, Communication and Events Committee meeting held on the 7 February 2022**

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Gilhome  
SECONDED BY Councillor Third  
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes be adopted.

**83. Minutes of the Policy, Management and Finance Committee meeting held on the 31 January 2022**

30 b) Future ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the Manor Road Recreational Ground

It was reported that the District Council's Deputy Chief Executive had agreed to consider giving the transfer of ownership higher priority.

32. Minutes of the Climate Emergency Sub-committee meeting held on 10 January 2022

There had been some dialogue about a solar energy scheme being promoted by Sustainable Wantage. It was agreed to consider this as a confidential item at the end of the meeting.

30 a) Update on plans to pedestrianise western end of the Market Place

The drawings had been received. It was agreed that the Mayor seek feedback from councillors on these, outside the meeting. **Action: Sibbald**

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Crawford  
SECONDED BY Councillor Hannaby  
IT WAS RESOLVED that the minutes, as amended, be adopted.

**84. To consider arrangements for the Annual Town Electorate meeting to be held on 4 April 2022**

It was agreed to invite David Johnston MP and Matthew Barber, the Thames Valley Police Commissioner to speak to the meeting. **Action: Clerk**

The Silver Band and St Modwen were to be asked to make a presentation. **Action: Clerk**

The Town Mayor will cover in his report the Jubilee Picnic event, tree planting and the 20s Plenty Survey,

**85. To consider response to the interim report of the internal auditor dated 26 November 2021**

The Clerk had distributed the report with suggested comments (attached).

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Crawford  
SECONDED BY Councillor Duveen  
IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the comments to the internal auditor report, as suggested.

**86. District and County Councillors' reports**

District Council

Work on the budgets had been completed. Cost savings had been achieved and this would deliver a balanced budget over the coming five year period. The two hour free period in the District Council's car parks was to be reduced to one hour. An amount had been included

in the capital budget to revamp the wet side changing rooms at the Leisure Centre. £40k had been set aside each year for the next five years to improve play areas. £50k a year for tree planting, £50k a year to improve public open spaces and £5k a year for the Letcombe Brook Project. Some funding for this was being provided from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

#### County Council

The County Council had also been considering budgets. In the region of £60 million has had to be put aside to cover the increase in costs of a major road project. Social care expenditure was £540k per day and resources were stretched. £250k had been allocated to progress rail schemes, which included an amount to progress the reopening of the Grove station.

#### **87. Town Mayor's communications**

The Town Mayor's communications were available to view on the Town Council's website.

#### **Confidential items**

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Sibbald

IT WAS RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded, and they were instructed to withdraw.

#### **88. To consider suspension of financial regulations with regard to the annual grass cutting and cemetery maintenance contract**

The Clerk had distributed a schedule detailing quotes received relating to previous grass cutting contracts. The current contractor, White Horse Horticulture, had provided the grass cutting service to the Council since 2004. Up until 2017 the quotes had been much lower than others. In 2017 and 2019, only one contractor based in Carterton had provided a lower quote but this had been rejected as questionable given the time and costs involved in travelling to meet the demands of the contract. White Horse Horticulture had provided a quote of £10,220 for the 2022/23 year. This was still lower than the quotes received from three other contractors in 2017. In recent years White Horse Horticulture had progressively been called upon to provide services in other areas ie overseeing the installation and removing the Christmas trees, clearing derelict allotment plots, installing street furniture, installing/removing signs for road closures, first point of call to attend to emergencies such as putting down grit. More recently White Horse Horticulture had stepped in to undertake the early morning market attendant duties when the Council was unable to find someone to fill the market attendant vacancy. The Clerk expressed concern that the loss of the principal grass cutting contract could prejudice the provision of the more peripheral services. It was also not wholly reasonable to seek quotes from other contractors, given the time and work involved, if the Council was disposed to remain with its current contractor.

In discussion a view was expressed that the cost of work undertaken by White Horse Horticulture represented good value for money.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Hannaby

SECONDED BY Councillor Sheldon

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to suspend financial regulations with regard to the grass cutting contract and to accept White Horse Horticulture's quote of £10,220 for the year commencing April.

**78. Briefing by K Oldridge of Zero Hour Oxfordshire regarding the proposal in the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill for a Climate and Nature Assembly**

It was agreed that the Bill be supported in principle but that full support be held back until the final terms of the Bill were settled.

**83. Minutes of the Policy, Management and Finance Committee meeting held on the 31 January 2022 (continued)**

30 a) Update on plans to pedestrianise western end of the Market Place (continued)

The Mayor confirmed he would call a meeting to review and comment on the plans. He asked councillors to examine the plans prior to the meeting. **Action: All**

**32. Minutes of the Climate Emergency Sub-committee meeting held on 10 January 2022 – Solar Energy**

It was agreed that the Town Council should give its support to the use of solar energy but should not give its endorsement to any particular company.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

WPF

# Wantage Town Council

Financial Year 2021-22



IAC Audit and Consultancy Ltd

## Interim Internal Audit Observations

Visit date: 22- November -20

### B This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.

No.	Audit Test	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Is Clerk CILCA qualified?	<i>The Clerk is not CILCA qualified. This was highlighted in previous year audit.</i>	The Council to note.	Medium	Noted
2	Do electronic bank payments require two authorisers?	<i>Electronic bank payments may be made on a sole authoriser basis.  Currently Councillors are provided with invoices for payment in an email for authorisation. Approval responses are also maintained as an Audit Trail along with income and expenditure reports.  It is understood that the Council approved to use Unity Trust for banking. This is due to be implemented in the next 2 months. Dual authorisation for online banking will be set up.</i>	<i>The Council to review the controls in place in respect of online bank payments and consider the introduction of dual authorisation of payments. The Council to note the high level of risk associated with single authorisation of such payments and ensure that it has robust controls in place in respect of such payments.  The Council must ensure that it has in place 'safe and efficient' arrangements in accordance with paragraphs 1.15.3 to 1.15.6 of The Practitioners Guide 2021.</i>	High	It is intended to migrate to dual authorisation in a staged process. The Council agreed in November 2021 to open an account with Unity Trust Bank with dual authorisation. This, however, coincided with the bank suspending the opening of new accounts until January 2022. The account will be opened as soon as practical. Once this is up and running, the existing bank accounts will be converted to dual authorisation. The staged process is being adopted to avoid the risk of online payment facilities being lost altogether in the concersion process.
3	If payments are made under Direct Debit and Standing Order have these been subject to review and approval by Council in accordance with Financial Regulations?	<i>Direct Debits/Standing Orders have not been approved as required under the Councils Financial Regulations. (Paragraph 6.7 of the 2019 Model Financial Regulations.)</i>	Council to ensure that Direct Debits/Standing Orders are approved in accordance with Financial Regulations. (Paragraph 6.7 of the 2019 Model Financial Regulations.)	Medium	All direct debit payments are recorded in the schedule of "Accounts for Payment" presented to every Policy, Management and Finance Committee meeting. The DDs and SOs are approved with other payments.

### C This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.

No.	Audit Test	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	The Council, as a body, has undertaken a formal review of risk (this cannot be delegated to sub-committee) - Interim Audit	<i>As at the date of the Interim Audit the Council had not formally Minuted a review of Risk.  The Council last reviewed the Risk Register February 2021. It is understood the Council are due to review the Risk Register 29 November 2021.</i>	The review of Risk is a key requirement of both the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Internal Audit Report. The Council MUST ensure that it Minutes a formal review of Risk prior to the end of the financial year.	Advisory	The Risk Assessment was reviewed by the Town Council at its meeting on 29 November 2021.

**E** *Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.*

No.	Audit Test	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Is there is an investment policy in place? (obtain copy)	<p><i>The 27 September 2021 Policy, Management &amp; Finance Committee reviewed the Treasury &amp; Investment Policy no changes proposed and recommended to Full Council for formal adoption.</i></p> <p><i>Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd edition) requires that the Investment Policy is in place for cash and bank balances over £100,000 to be put in place.</i></p> <p><i>The Council Treasury &amp; Investment Policy 1.3 The legislation and associated guidance is optional for parish councils where investments are not expected to exceed £500,000 and no action is required below £10,000.</i></p>	The Council should review the current Treasury & Investment Policy and align this with the latest specific requirement of the 'Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments' paragraph 14 that Local Councils.	High	The Council will conduct a review and seek to align its policy with the Statutory Guidance, as soon as practical.

**I** *Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.*

No.	Audit Test	Observation	Recommendation	Priority	Comments
1	Bank reconciliations have been signed and dated as evidence of independent review (Interim)	<i>Bank reconciliations have not been signed and dated as evidence of independent review.</i>	Bank reconciliations which have been subject to review should be signed and dated as evidence of this review.	Medium	Arrangements will be made to get the bank reconciliations signed.