



**WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL**  
**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**7 OCTOBER 2019 – 7.30 pm**

**MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present:** Councillor Oliver, Chairman; Councillors Miss Hoy, Lynn, Tierney and Mrs Wallwork.

**Apologies:** Councillor Hill.

**Public Participation:** None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 July 2019 were confirmed and signed.

**R6/19 Audit of Accounts 2018/19**

Further to minute R3/19, the Clerk presented to members the report of the external auditor in respect of Wisbech Town Council's accounts for 2018/19, a copy of which had been provided to all members of the council, by the Clerk, in advance of the meeting.

The Clerk informed members that the external auditor had made comments in respect of

- a) the need to amend the bank reconciliation figure which had been included within the information provided by the council in support of the content of the Annual Governance and Accountability (AGAR) document;
- b) the absence of evidence that the council had undertaken at a formal meeting during the financial year 2018/19 an assessment of its risks;
- c) the information which had been provided by the council to explain the variance between the figure in Box 3 of the AGAR document in 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The Clerk expressed the opinion that the matters which had been raised by the external auditor are minor in nature and are not suggesting any improper practices by the council. He informed members of his awareness that the comment of the external auditor at b) above had been made in respect of the AGAR documents of a number of councils locally; this seems to suggest that risk assessments is a particular area of focus for the external auditor this year. He suggested that, as a means of addressing the matter, a risk assessments item be included on the agenda for the January meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee each year.

Councillor Tierney mentioned that, upon his receipt of a copy of the report of the external auditor, he had asked the Clerk a couple of questions and had been satisfied with the answers.

Members considered the appointment of an internal auditor for audit of the council's 2019/20 accounts. The Clerk informed members that the company which undertook the internal audit of the council's 2018/19 accounts (and had done so for a number of previous years), Canalbs Ltd, is willing to do likewise for the 2019/20 accounts.

Members decided that

- (1) the outcome of the external audit of the council's 2018/19 accounts be noted and that, in response to one of the issues raised within the report, a risk assessments item be included on the agenda for the January meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee each year;



(2) Canalbs Ltd be appointed as the council's internal auditor for the 2019/20 audit of accounts.

### **R7/19 Wisbech Town Council's Accounts 2019/20**

The Clerk reported to members on the council's financial position as at the end of quarter two (half-year) of the financial year 2019/20; he gave explanations as to variations between the estimated income and expenditure as at the end of the second quarter of 2019/20 and the actual financial position as at 30 September 2019.

As at 30 September 2019, the council had received 48.68% of the estimated annual income and had incurred 39.94% of its estimated annual expenditure.

The Clerk responded to members' questions.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk be noted;
- (2) the council's accounts as at the end of the second quarter of the financial year 2019/20 be approved and that, in accordance with minute R3/19, a copy of the report presented by the Clerk be signed by the Chairman.

### **R8/19 Grant applications 2019/20**

Members considered the grant applications which had been submitted to Wisbech Town Council since 8 July 2019 meeting of this committee (minute R5/19 refers).

The Clerk reminded members that the total council budget for 2019/20 includes a sum of £6,000 (i.e. increased from the £5,250 figure which had been the allocation in each of the financial years 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19) for small grants and £35,000 (which had been £37,000 in the financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19) for special grants.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that, at its meeting on 8 April 2019 (minute R17/18 refers) this committee allocated £4,320 of its 2019/20 budget for small grants, followed by further allocations totalling £1,000 at its meeting on 8 July 2019 (minute R5/19 refers). The consequence of the decision-making at those meetings is £680 of the small grants budget still being available.

The Clerk informed members that since 8 July 2019 meeting of this committee, the council has received two further applications for funding from the small grants "pot", as set out below:

	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Purpose of grant</b>	<b>Amount requested</b>
1.	Three Counties Running Club	Contribution towards the annual operating costs of the club (which is "staffed" by volunteers); the costs include providing medals and trophies, as well as administrative expenses relating to obtaining permissions etc to hold certain events	£500 (out of a total project cost of £3,000)



2.	Rose Fair Co-ordination Group	Contribution towards the cost of producing 8,000 copies of a three-fold leaflet (to be distributed throughout the eastern region) to promote the 2020 Rose Fair	£250 (out of a total project cost of £820)
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£750</b>

With regard to small grant application number 2, the Clerk reminded members that the applicant had received funding (of £250) from this council's small grants budget 2018/19 for the same type of project in 2019.

Members were reminded by the Clerk that this committee had considered, at minute R5/19, an application from the Wisbech and District Stroke Club for a contribution of £1,000 towards the annual costs of providing activities and support and advice for people who have suffered a stroke.

Although, within its application, the club had listed the types of costs that it incurs (including venue hire, insurance, the services of a Keep Fit Instructor (to assist rehabilitation) and days out), it had not provided a total of those costs.

This committee had decided (at minute R5/19) that, before making a decision on whether or not to provide grant funding to the Wisbech and District Stroke Club, it would like answers to the following questions:

- (1) what is the total number of persons who are supported by the society and what proportion of those live in Wisbech?
- (2) are the rehabilitation exercises sessions, or could they be, made available to persons who would benefit from such support but who had not suffered a stroke?

In response to those questions being asked by the Clerk, the Secretary of the Wisbech and District Stroke Club had stated that

- (1) the total number of people supported by the club is 25, 14 of whom are Wisbech residents
- (2) the rehabilitation exercises are available to anyone who would benefit from such support, regardless of whether or not they had suffered a stroke.

The Clerk invited members to now consider, in the light of the information that had been provided, awarding grant aid to the Wisbech and District Stroke Club.

The Clerk reminded members that the council's guidance to applicants for grant funding states that Wisbech Town Council would look at the following issues when assessing funding requests: contribution to social, environmental, economic wellbeing, community involvement and activities, social inclusion, any previous funding, purpose of the organisation and the nature of the assistance requested.

With regard to special grants, the Clerk reminded members that this committee had allocated, at its meeting on 8 April 2019 (minute R17/18 refers) £33,500 of the £35,000 budget for special grants for the financial year 2019/20; this meant that £1,500 had remained in that budget. He reminded



members also that, as a result of receiving a presentation at its 23 September 2019 meeting from a representative of the Cambridgeshire Shrievally Trust (The Bobby Scheme), Wisbech Town Council had decided, unanimously, to award the sum of £1,000, from the special grants budget, to the Trust for the current financial year and to ask this committee to consider the allocation of special grants funding to this organisation from the financial year 2020/21 onwards.

Following the award of the grant funding to the Cambridgeshire Shrievally Trust, the remaining balance of the special grants budget for the financial year 2019/20 is £500.

Members decided, unanimously, on the proposal of Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Lynn, that

- (1) the details of the additional small grant applications submitted to Wisbech Town Council for the financial year 2019/20 be noted;
- (2) the total amount of 2019/20 grant funding remaining available for allocation as at the date of this meeting - i.e. £1,180 (made up of £680 of small grants funding and £500 of special grants funding) - be allocated as follows:
  - small grant application number 1 = £300 (£500 had been requested)
  - small grant application number 2 = £250 (approved in full)
  - Wisbech and District Stroke Club = £630 (£1,000 had been requested).

### **R9/19 Cleansing Contract**

Further to minute R6/18, members considered the request from the council's cleansing contractor for a price increase for the contract year 2019/20.

The Clerk reminded members that on 3 September 2018 this committee had noted (at minute R6/18) that the council's Assets Management Committee had decided (at minute A5/18) to extend the council's Cleansing Contract, which had come into effect on 1 October 2017, for a further period of three years (until 30 September 2021) and had asked the Policy and Resources Committee to determine the associated financial arrangements; i.e. annual "inflationary" price increases.

Last year the contractor had proposed to the council, as part of the new contractual arrangements, that there be an automatic price increase of a 3.2% for each of three years of the contract.

When considering the matter last year, this committee had decided

- (1) to agree a price increase of 3.2% for the contract period 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019;
- (2) that the level of price increase for the contract years 2019/20 and 2020/21 be considered by this committee at that point of the year in 2019 (for the contract year 2019/20) and 2020 (for the contract year 2020/21).

The contractor has now submitted a request for a price increase of 3.0% for the 2019/20 contract year.

Investigations undertaken by the Clerk, to assist members' deliberations, reveal that the Retail Price Index (RPI) shows that the rate of inflation had "hovered around" 3.0% for the last 12 months.

An increase of 3.0% on the total contract cost for the period 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020 (a complete contractual year) equates to approximately £1,120. Given that this contract (which operates between October and September) "straddles" the financial year (which operates between



April and March), the additional cost of a 3.0% price increase in a full contract year would have the effect of an increase of a 1.5% increase in the current financial year;

Members were informed by the Clerk that, when the council's budget for the financial year 2019/20 had been produced (in January 2019), an increase of 3.0% in the cost of this contract in a full operating year had been assumed.

Members are of the opinion that, although the RPI estimates the rate of inflation to be around 3.0%, the actual rate of inflation is around 2.0%; however, given the high quality of service provided by the contractor, often "going the extra mile", it would be appropriate to agree to an increase in the contact cost of 2.5% for the contract year 2019/20.

Members decided that the council's cleansing contractor be awarded an increase in the price of the cleansing contract of 2.5% for the contract year 2019/20.

**Meeting finished at 8.00 pm**

Signed.....

Dated.....

DRAFT