



## **WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL**

### **RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**12 OCTOBER 2021 – 8.00 pm**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Present:** Councillor Wallwork, Chairman for the meeting; Councillors Hoy, Lynn and Tierney.

**Apologies:** Councillors Oliver and Tibbs.

**Public Participation:** None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 14 June 2021 were confirmed and signed.

#### **R6/21 Chairman for the meeting**

Members considered, in the absence from the meeting of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the election of a Chairman for the meeting.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Tierney, that Councillor Wallwork be elected as Chairman for the meeting.

#### **R7/21 Audit of Accounts 2020/21**

Members considered: the report from the council's Internal Auditor, resulting from her inspection of the council's governance and accounting practices for the financial year 2020/21 (which had been forwarded, by the Clerk (and RFO), to the External Auditor with this council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)); further to minute 25/21, the outcome of the External Audit of the council's AGAR for the financial year 2020/21; the appointment of an Internal Auditor for audit of the council's governance and accounting arrangements for the financial year 2021/22.

A copy of both the report from the council's Internal Auditor (Canalbs Ltd) and the External Auditor (PKF Littlejohn LLP) had been circulated to members, by the Clerk (and RFO), in advance of the meeting. The latter report had also been published by the council in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The Clerk informed members that the External Auditor had made the following comment on the council's AGAR 2020/21 document: "the smaller authority has disclosed that it made proper provision during the year 2020/21 for the exercise of public rights, by answering "Yes" to Section 1, Assertion 4; however, as was reported last year, we are aware that it failed to do this and, therefore, should have answered "No" to this assertion. It has also disclosed that it took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit, by answering "Yes" to Section 1, Assertion 7, which, on the basis of the above, is incorrect".

The Clerk (and RFO) explained that this comment related to the fact that the council had not approved its AGAR 2019/20 in time to publish the document before 1 September 2020. Consequently, the council's answers to Section 1, Assertions 4 and 7 should have been "No", not "Yes".



The Clerk expressed the opinion, with which members concurred, that the comment which had been made by the External Auditor is minor in nature – a simple error in completing the document – and is not suggesting any improper practices by the council.

Members considered the appointment of an Internal Auditor for audit of the council's 2021/22 accounts. The Clerk informed members that the company which had undertaken the internal audit of the council's 2020/21 accounts (and had done so for a number of previous years), Canalbs Ltd, is willing to do likewise for the 2021/22 accounts.

Members decided that

- (1) the content of the report from the council's Internal Auditor be noted;
- (2) the outcome of the external audit of the council's governance and accounting practices for the financial year 2020/21 be noted;
- (3) Canalbs Ltd be appointed as the council's Internal Auditor for the 2021/22 audit of accounts.

### **R8/21 Wisbech Town Council's Accounts 2021/22**

The Clerk (and RFO) reported to members on the council's financial position as at the end of quarter two (half-year) of the financial year 2021/22; he gave explanations as to variations between the estimated income and expenditure for the first two quarters of 2021/22 and the actual financial position as at 30 September 2021.

As at 30 September 2021, the council had received 53.6% of the estimated annual income and had incurred approximately 34.5% of its estimated annual expenditure.

The Clerk responded to members' questions in relation to the council's financial position as 30 September 2021.

In terms of funding available to support activity in Wisbech, Councillor Hoy and the Clerk (and RFO) reported to members on discussions which had taken place with Fenland District Council in relation to accessing monies from the Welcome Back Fund (minute 14/21 refers). In this regard, Miss Hoy shared with members a schedule of potential activities to be delivered in Wisbech using such funding and she sought their opinions on the proposals which had been submitted by the Clerk and her on behalf of Wisbech Town Council. Members were informed by the Clerk (and RFO) that the fund criteria require the monies that can be accessed to be spent by 31 March 2022.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by the Clerk (and RFO) in relation to the council's financial position as at the end of quarter two of the financial year 2021/22 be noted;
- (2) the accounts for the first two quarters of the financial year 2021/22 be approved and that, in accordance with minute R3/19, a copy of the report presented to this meeting by the Clerk (and RFO) be signed by the Chairman of the meeting;
- (3) given the current level of spending on the 2021/22 budget for Events, the cost of any further community events for this financial year be met from the Community Support budget (of £20,000); the only other "calling" on that budget currently is the costs associated with purchasing and installing three defibrillators in Wisbech (minute 53/21 refers);



- (4) the information reported in respect of the activities proposed for delivery through use of the Welcome Back Fund be noted and that two of the specific activities proposed for delivery by Wisbech Town Council, i.e. a Halloween event on 31 October 2021 and Twilight Markets on 19 and 23 December 2021, be approved.

### **R9/21 Grants and financial support 2021/22**

Further to minute R5/21, members considered further applications for financial support from Wisbech Town Council.

The Clerk reminded members that Wisbech Town Council's budget for 2021/22 (agreed at minute 60/20) includes a sum of £7,000 for small grants and that, given that a total of £4,000 of that budget had been allocated previously (minute R5/21 refers), £3,000 remains in the small grants budget.

The Clerk had forwarded to members, in advance of the meeting, the grant application forms and letters of request that had been submitted to Wisbech Town Council since minute R5/21; summarised as set out below.

	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Purpose of grant</b>	<b>Amount requested</b>
1.	Wisbech Art Club	Contribution towards the club's operating costs (principally the cost of venue hire)	No specific sum requested
2.	Shedders and Fixers group	Contribution towards the cost of purchasing a welder, as part of a programme of purchasing tools for the project	£834 (the full cost of the programme is £4,614)
3.	Little Miracles Charity (Fenland Branch)	Contribution towards the cost of delivering activities which support families that have children with additional needs, disabilities and life-limiting conditions	£1,080 (the full cost of the activities is £6,905)
4.	Rowan	Contribution towards the charity's annual operating costs	£150 (out of a total cost of operating the charity of 430,000)

The Clerk informed members that none of these groups/organisations had received small grants funding from Wisbech Town Council previously.

Members decided that

- (1) Wisbech Art Club be awarded £1,000 and that the club be asked to provide information in relation to numbers of regular participants/attendees and details of the towns or villages in which they reside;



- (2) the Sheddors and Fixers group be awarded £834 and that the club be asked to provide information in relation to numbers of regular participants/attendees and details of the towns or villages in which they reside; in addition, members asked that the Sheddors and Fixers group “spreads the word” of its existence and they offered the group a visit by the Town Mayor as one way of helping to raise its profile;
- (3) the Little Miracles Charity (Fenland Branch) be awarded £300 (to “get it started”; to meet the venue hire costs for 10 of its proposed sessions, at £30 each) and that the charity be asked to provide information in relation to numbers of regular participants/attendees and details of the towns or villages in which they reside;
- (4) no funding be allocated to the Rowan charity, on the basis that, currently, none of those who receive support from the charity live in Wisbech. Members indicated that if Rowan were to become involved in supporting people who live in the town, they may consider favourably a future application.

*(Councillor Tierney declared his non-pecuniary interest in small grant application number 2, by virtue of his stepfather participating in the group’s activities)*

**Meeting finished at 9.15 pm**

Signed.....

Dated.....