

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** held at the Parish Centre, Warboys on 20th March 2023.

PRESENT

Councillor Dr S C Withams, Chairman

Councillors R J Dykstra, D W England, Ms L A Gifford, J Land, J A Parker and Mrs A R Wyatt.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs J M Cole, A Ntuk, Mrs C L Sproats and G C M Willis.

12/22 MINUTES

Upon being moved by Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Ms Gifford, the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2022 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

13/22 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No Members declared interests in respect of the items appearing on the agenda for the meeting.

14/22 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted the following matters arising from its meeting held on 28th November 2022:-

(a) Grasscutting

Further to Minute No. 07/22, The Clerk reported that the Council had engaged a new contractor to cut the grass at Adams Lyons playground and Jubilee Park, after the previous contractor had decided not to continue.

(b) Employment of Additional Staff

Further to Minute No. 08/22, it was reported that a meeting of the Appointments Panel would be held later in the month to interview shortlisted candidates for the position of Assistant Clerk.

(c) Review of Wages/Salaries

Further to Minute No. 09/22, the Committee noted that the pay award for 2022/23 for local authority employees was unlikely to be resolved for some months after the trades unions had submitted a claim for an above inflationary increase.

15/22 INTERNAL CONTROL

Members' attention was drawn to the requirement in the Accounts and Audit Regulations for the Council to review the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and internal audit as set out in the Practitioners' Guide to Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales published by NALC and SLCC.

The Clerk submitted a checklist (copies of which had been circulated to all Members) summarising the controls that should be in place and explained the measures that were undertaken by the Council. Under the circumstances, the Committee expressed its satisfaction as to the effectiveness of the existing controls.

16/22 ASSET REGISTER

The Clerk circulated copies of the Council's current asset register sub-divided into categories for land, play equipment, miscellaneous equipment and property. Members were informed that the register was kept up to date to include new equipment, disposals and items that had been scrapped.

An inventory check involving the Chairman, Clerk, Senior Handyman and Internal Auditor had not been undertaken of the Council's miscellaneous equipment since November 2021 and due to the impact of the pandemic, an inventory of the play equipment, land and property had not been carried out in recent years. The Clerk reported that he would arrange for further checks to be undertaken once the new Assistant Clerk was in post.

17/22 RISK MANAGEMENT

As more extensive assessments were being prepared for the risks encountered by the Council, the Clerk explained that it was impractical to copy and circulate the information to all Members. Members expressed their satisfaction with the current arrangements.

18/22 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the need for the Council to review its Investment Strategy annually to comply with guidance issued by the Secretary of State under the Local Government Act 2003. The guidance required authorities to include information about their investment activity, including the use of performance indicators in the strategy and was now mandatory for parish councils with reserves in excess of £100,000. However the Clerk pointed out that many of the requirements were not applicable in the case of Warboys.

Having regard to the nature and extent of the Council's investments, the Committee did not consider there to be a need for any additional capacity or skills in terms of either Members or the Clerk in managing the Council's assets.

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the Investment Strategy appended to the report now submitted.

19/22 PARISH CENTRE – CONDITIONS OF HIRE

The Committee reviewed and confirmed the conditions of hire of the Parish Centre (copies of which had been circulated).

20/22 INSURANCE POLICY

The Clerk reported that, earlier in the year, RSA had withdrawn its policy designed specifically for local councils which had been brokered by Community Action Suffolk. As a result, Community Action Suffolk had invited quotations from alternative insurers. Ansvar Insurance had been chosen and had been accepted by the Council. Although the premium was higher than had been the case with RSA, the Council was satisfied that this had been the subject of competitive tender and had been recommended by the brokers.

Copies of the summary of cover had been circulated to all Members and was accepted.

21/22 SECTION 137 LIMIT

Members were advised by the Clerk that the appropriate sum set by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for the purposes of Section 137 expenditure by local authorities for 2023/24 was £9.93 which had risen from £8.82 due to the increase in the Retail Price Index. As the number of people on the electoral roll for Warboys on 1st January 2023 had been 3,433, this meant that the Council's expenditure under Section 137 should not exceed £34,089 in 2023/24.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed.

Chairman