

Marlborough Town Council



Finance and Policy Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee held Monday, 30 January 2023
in the Council Chamber, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT	Councillor Caroline Thomas Councillor Kymee Cleasby Councillor Jane Davies Councillor James Sheppard	Chair
ALSO PRESENT	Richard Spencer-Williams Dawn Whitehall Neil Goodwin	Town Clerk Corporate Services Officer Marlborough.News

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Neil Goodwin asked whether there had been any nominations for the Town Mayor for 2023-24. The **Town Clerk** confirmed the agenda for an Extraordinary Full Town Council meeting on 6 February would be posted on 31 January and would include details of nominations.

268/22 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillor Fogg** and the **Town Mayor**.

269/22 DECLARATIONS

Councillor Cleasby made Members aware that she had recently become a Trustee of the Marlborough Welfare Trust. **Councillor Thomas** had been appointed Wiltshire Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Street Scene, and Flooding. This might lead to areas of conflicting interest in the future.

270/22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

271/22 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 28 November 2022, with two amendments, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair

272/22 ACTION LOG

Members noted the updated action log.

273/22 QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT

Members noted the budget summary report for Q3 2022-23 and month 9 Omega reports for Income and Expenditure, Bank Reconciliation, Receipts and Payments, Balance Sheet and Ear Marked Reserves (EMR). Matters arising included:

- Projected saving on legal and professional fees were at risk due to legal costs associated with premises leases as well as marketing fees for property agents
- Whether to separate Property legal fees from professional fees
- Energy costs might be significantly higher than budget (agenda item 7)
- Rising prices (e.g. software) were creating some overspend
- Whether potential future works to deal with Ash dieback had been forecast in the Amenities & Open Spaces budget

ACTION: create separate budget lines for Property legal and professional fees

274/22 ENERGY COSTS

Members noted an update report from the Town Clerk advising that estimates for energy costs were 400-425% higher than the current contract, significantly higher than the 95% increase included in the budget for 2023-24. This created a potential shortfall of £28,625 although an Emergency Fund EMR of £10,914 would help mitigate this, with General Reserves as a fallback option. Discussion points included:

- More quotes from different suppliers/brokers were expected
- Market prices appeared to be falling
- Whether to opt for a variable rate contract from 31 March 2023, when the current fixed term contract expired

RESOLVED: that, as soon as the comparative picture is clear, new energy contracts are agreed by the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Finance and Policy Committee Chair, and that unless conditions suggest otherwise short term (circa one year) contracts are agreed

ACTION: to send an email to all Members prior to the agreement of new energy contracts and, if felt necessary, to call an extraordinary meeting

275/22 ELECTION COSTS

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and that, from May 2025, Wiltshire Council would seek to recover the cost of administering Town, City and Parish elections.

It was agreed that the additional costs should be factored into the 2024 25 budget line, and that a sum of £22,000 in the reserves would ensure up to two elections could be provided for in any given year.

ACTION: **Councillor Thomas** agreed to ask Wiltshire Council whether there would be lower costs where economies of scale were possible when County and Town elections coincide (e.g. venue/staff costs)

276/22 POLICIES

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and the current status of the review of policies. Discussion points included:

- There were fewer people able to review policies following resignations from either the Committee or Council of **Councillors Ross, Allen and Waltham**
- Whether Members had the capacity to complete the reviews
- Whether Members should indicate likely timescales to complete the reviews
- Whether policies could be emailed to Members to act as a reminder of their commitment to review them
- Whether the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk should conduct an initial overview to advise on recommended priority policies
- **Councillor Thomas** had reviewed the Code of Conduct (to be discussed at the next agenda item) and had almost finished reviewing the Complaints Procedure
- **Councillor Cleasby** would have some capacity over the Easter holidays

It was agreed that the list would be updated and added to the agenda for the next meeting.

ACTION: send relevant policy documents to assigned Members by email

RESOLVED: that in the first instance Officers would review the status of the Town Council’s policies, draft any straightforward updates for sign-off by the F&P Committee and provide a list of outstanding policy review actions for the Committee’s consideration at the next meeting

277/22 CODE OF CONDUCT

Members considered a proposed Code of Conduct written by **Councillor Thomas**.

RESOLVED: that, with minor changes to wording, the proposed Code of Conduct be recommended to Full Council for ratification

278/22 RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEME

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on progress and tabled a draft document. Members were complementary about the format and content and thanked the Town Clerk for progress so far.

ACTION: Members to review the draft and feed back any comments to the Town Clerk. An updated document to be considered at the next meeting for recommendation to Full Council

ACTION: Town Clerk to seek feedback from other Committees

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm

Signed:
Chair

Date: