



## RESOURCES COMMITTEE

30 SEPTEMBER 2024 – 7.30 pm

### MINUTES OF MEETING

**Present:** Councillor Oliver, Chairman; Councillors Hoy, Human, Imafidon, Meekins, Tierney and Wallwork.

**Apologies:** None (all members were present).

**Public Participation:** None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 15 July 2024 were confirmed and signed.

#### **R10/24 Audit of Accounts 2023/24**

Further to minutes 15/24 and R5/24, members considered the outcome of the external audit of the council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the financial year 2023/24.

A copy of the report from the External Auditor (PKF Littlejohn LLP) had been circulated by the Clerk (and RFO), in advance of the meeting. This report had also been published by the council in accordance with the relevant regulations.

The Clerk (and RFO) informed members that the External Auditor had made the following comment on the council's AGAR 2023/24 document: "the smaller authority had disclosed that it made proper provision during the year 2023/24 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 not correct".

The Clerk (and RFO) explained that this comment related to the fact that the council had published its AGAR 2022/23 later than the publication deadline. Consequently, the council's answers to Section 1, Assertions 4 and 7 should have been "No", not "Yes".

Mention was made by the Clerk (and RFO) that the External Auditor had neither raised matters of concern regarding the council's compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements nor made any recommendations as to actions to be taken by the council in relation to its governance or accounting practices.

Members decided that the outcome of the external audit of the council's governance and accounting practices for the financial year 2023/24 be noted.

#### **R11/24 Town Library (at the Wisbech and Fenland Museum)**

Members considered a request from the Wisbech and Fenland Museum for reinstatement of financial support which had been provided to the museum in previous financial years in relation to the museum's costs of maintaining the Town Library.

The Clerk (and RFO) had circulated to members, in advance of the meeting, the e-mail of request from the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Wisbech and Fenland Museum for reinstatement of the £1,000 per annum which had been paid for many years, but which had ceased at the time of



the discussions between Wisbech Town Council and the Wisbech and Fenland Museum regarding ongoing “general” financial support by the council to the museum with effect from the financial year 2024/25 (minute R14/23 refers).

In his e-mail, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Wisbech and Fenland Museum had provided details of some of the contents of the Town Library, which had been “housed” at the museum since 1888 (including manuscripts and books dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century). He explained the costs incurred by the Wisbech and Fenland Museum in maintaining the Town Library, which include those associated with operating a humidity and temperature controlled storage environment for the historic books and manuscripts.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Wallwork, that the request be supported; i.e. that the council would reinstate the financial support of £1,000 per annum to the Wisbech and Fenland Museum in relation to the museum’s costs of maintaining the Town Library.

*(Councillor Meekins declared his non-pecuniary interest in this item of business, by virtue of him representing Fenland District Council on the Board of Trustees of the Wisbech and Fenland Museum)*

### **R12/24 Christmas lighting in Wisbech**

Further to minute R18/23, members considered, in the light of discussions by the Wisbech Town Centre Committee (at minute T23/24), the financial implications of the acceptance of a tender for the Christmas Lighting Installation Contract 2024.

Members were informed by the Clerk (and RFO) that the Wisbech Town Centre Committee had considered, at minute T23/24, the three tenders which had been received for this contract and that the committee had decided that it wished to award the contract to tenderer 3 and, consequently, it would put to the Resources Committee a case that supports the necessary budget considerations, in accordance with Financial Regulation number 5.17.

Copies of the three tender documents, with an accompanying report from the Clerk (and RFO), had been circulated to the members of this committee in advance of today’s meeting.

The Clerk (and RFO) drew members’ attention to the Financial Regulations which apply to procurement activities undertaken by the council, as set out in his report. The report from the Clerk (and RFO) also included his assessment of each of the tenders.

Members were reminded by the Clerk (and RFO) of the total cost of the installation and removal of the town’s Christmas lighting in the financial year 2023/24 and of the financial provision for such activity in that year and the current one.

Mention was made by the Clerk (and RFO) that tenders 1 and 2 could be funded from within the Christmas Lighting Installation budget for 2024/25; however, tender 3 could not.

Detailed consideration was given by members to each of the three tenders, not only in terms of cost but also in terms of anticipated performance by the respective contractors.

The Clerk (and RFO) made the point that, generally, the practice of a local authority would be to accept the lowest tender unless there is a business case for not doing so. However, the Wisbech Town Centre Committee had felt that, overall, it would be in the council’s best interest to award the contract to tenderer 3.



Members had regard to the advice offered and recommendations made by the Clerk (and RFO) in relation to the acceptance of tenders and the need to comply with the council's Financial Regulations.

Members decided, on the proposal of Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Oliver, that

- (1) tender 2, in the maximum sum of £15,058.18, for the installation of the town's Christmas lighting in 2024 be accepted and that a contract, to include appropriate penalty clauses, be put in place by the Clerk (and RFO);
- (2) the penalty clauses to be included in the Christmas Lighting Installation Contract 2024 be:
  - for each element of the Christmas lighting which, because of contractor performance, is not working at the time of switch-on, £1,000 for each day that the element is not working
  - for each day that the Christmas lighting (including the real Christmas tree) is in place following the date agreed for final removal, £1,000 for each day.

(Councillor Hoy requested it be recorded that, although she has no pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in this item of business, she would take no part in the voting because she works in the same building as one of the tenderers)

(Members resolved to exclude the public for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

**Meeting finished at 8.30 pm**

Signed.....

Dated.....