

Snodland Town Council – Policy and Finance Minutes

23rd September 2024

Committee Members in attendance:	Ms D King (VC), S Loader, P Hickmott, Ms Nicola Misy, A Bennison, D Lettington, G Miners
Non Committee Members in attendance:	Cllr Crook
Committee Members Absent with apologies:	Cllr W Mallard, Mrs V Lawrence-Rose (C), Mrs Sue Bell
Committee Members Absent without apologies:	
Council Staff Present:	Mrs K Sowten (CEO) Mrs K Miners
Members of the public:	

1.	<u>Apologies for absence</u> see above.
2.	<u>Declaration of Interests</u> Cllr Miners – Item 11
3.	<u>Minutes - To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 8th August 2024</u> The minutes of the meeting held on the 8 th August 2024 were agreed as a true record.
4.	<u>Questions from the Public</u> <i>Pursuant to Standing Order 3 e & g Members of the public may make representation, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes</i> There were no members of the public present
5.	<u>Audit Trail to be given by a Councillor</u> Cllr Lettington carried out the Councillor audit relating to section 137 payments and General Power of Competence. All criteria have been met. Cllr Lettington also carried out a check on petty cash and reconciled the amount in the petty cash tin to the petty cash report. There is no ability to obtain petty cash as the Larkfield branch of Nat West bank is now closed, a debit card would enable the CEO to get cash from the post office, this will be covered under agenda item 12. A full copy of the report is on file.
6.	<u>Financial Review</u> <u>6.1 Income and Expenditure Report.</u> A full copy of the report is on file. No questions were asked. <u>6.2 Expenditure under delegated authority</u> The CEO gave a report on the spending under delegated authority, a full report is on file. <u>6.3 Aged Debtors</u> The CEO gave a report on aged debtors and advised that several outstanding items on the report had been paid since the report was issued. A CCJ has been issued to

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<p>1305 1306</p>	<p>one aged debtor, however no payment has been received. A full copy of the report is available on file.</p> <p><u>6.4 Earmarked Reserve and Capital Reserve Balances</u> A full report is available on file. The new report shows details of what has been paid out since the last meeting.</p> <p>The outstanding balance from 106 contributions has been received from TMBC. This money was an additional amount due for works already previously paid by STC from general reserves and it would be beneficial for some of this money to be transferred for play equipment as this would be the area where we need money as a recent ballpark figure for three pieces of play equipment is in the region of £55,000. Also transfer some into repairs and renewals as there will be a need to replace fencing at Willowside.</p> <p>Cllr - Is there enough money in the museum reserve? Answer - There is £4300, which is enough for the work that needs to be done.</p> <p>RESOLVED to transfer £20000 from general reserves into play equipment reserves. RESOLVED to transfer £13500 from general reserves into repairs and renewals.</p>
<p>1307</p>	<p>7. <u>To Sign and Seal the Deed of easement for the gas main at cemetery lodge (If available)</u></p> <p>The Deed of Easement has not yet been received. Due to the urgency for the document to be completed the committee gave delegated authority to allow the Deed of Easement to be signed and sealed in the presence of two councillors and the CEO.</p> <p>RESOLVED Delegated authority given to allow the Deed of Easement for the gas main at the cemetery lodge to be signed and sealed in the presence of two councillors and the CEO.</p>
<p>1308</p>	<p>8. <u>To agree the renewal of the Personnel and Health and Safety Package</u></p> <p>The CEO represented a report on the renewal of the personnel and health and safety package. A copy of the full report is available on file. The initial cost for renewal for a 5 year agreement would be £3200 to include one health and safety visit per year and £3809 to include 2 health and safety visits per year. Additional costs as shown in the full report cover legal expense for employment claims (£16.25 per person per annum plus £64 per annum admin fee), health and safety prosecution (£2.50 per person per annum) and an e-learning package (£545 per annum).</p> <p>RESOLVED to accept the proposal for the personnel and health and safety package based on one health and safety visit £3200 per annum, e-learning package £545 per annum, legal expense for employment claims £16.25 per person per annum plus £65 per annum admin fee and health and safety prosecution £3.50 per person per annum.</p> <p>The CEO advised that she is also looking for a replacement EAP as there are technical issues with the existing Sage Benefit package. She asked for any recommendations for companies to be sent to her.</p>

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9.	<p><u>To consider costs relating to the opening and closing of Potyns Car Park Gates</u></p> <p>STC pay community centre for the locking and unlocking of gates on Saturday and Sunday evening. We do not pay for caretaking for any other car parks that we own. We need to move forward to see why we are paying this.</p> <p>Following a lengthy discussion the following points were raised –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknow why the Council are paying it has been in place for over 12 years, it appears to have been a rolling agreement. • When locking the gates last week a councillor was approached as to why we are locking the gates. • It is not a satisfaction position that the locking of the gates appears to be irregular. • We should stop paying the community centre. • A caretaker should be employed to lock the gates. This has been tried before and no one wants the job on late nights. • If community centre is locking the gates, STC need a schedule so that any times not covered by the community centre can be covered by STC. • Football have use of the car park why can they not lock the gate. • Community centre car park to be locked at 8pm if not in use. <p>1309 RESOLVED to cease the payments for the caretaking services provided by the Community Centre, effective 31 October 2024 This decision aligns our policy across all car parks under our jurisdiction.</p>
10.	<p><u>To receive the External Audit of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24.</u></p> <p>The external audit of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) has been signed off by the External Auditor. There were no significant matters for concern on the report. A full copy of the report is available on file.</p> <p>The auditors did highlight minor areas of improvements in a covering letter which recommend the following –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. that the Council must ensure that all AGAR responses are accurate and align with the internal findings. b. that all sections of the AGAR are fully completed to avoid doubt in future returns. c. The Council should clearly state on its website that the AGAR document is a scanned version and that it may not be fully compliant with accessibility regulations. d. The Practitioner’s guide (March 2024) introduces new guidelines concerning email management, specifically regarding the use of .gov.uk domains. Councils are now encouraged to adopt .gov.uk domains for both their websites and official email communications. This is becoming an expected standard. To support compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), it is advised that all councillors be provided with official .gov.uk email accounts for council-related correspondence. Although the use of .gov.uk domains is not mandated, if the Council does not implement these changes by 31 March 2025, it could lead to qualifications or other matters being raised on the 2024/2025 AGAR.

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<p>1310</p> <p>1311</p> <p>1312</p> <p>1313</p>	<p>The CEO pointed out that in relation to point a above this was down to our internal auditor making an error on the return and not ticking the correct box. It was felt that it should not be the councils responsibility to be checking the auditors section of the return for accuracy, however would ensure that this is done in the future.</p> <p>ACTIONS To investigate the cost implications for the use of .gov emails and website.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Council must ensure that all AGAR responses are accurate and align with the internal findings.</p> <p>RESOLVED that all sections of the AGAR are fully completed to avoid doubt in future returns.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the Council should clearly state on its website that the AGAR document is a scanned version and that it may not be fully compliant with Accessibility Regulations.</p> <p>RESOLVED to suspend the use of the snodlandcouncillor email until cost implications have been looked at regarding the .gov emails.</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>1314</p> <p>1315</p>	<p><u>Approval of Additional User on Council Credit Card</u></p> <p>CEO is only user of the Councils credit card, it would be beneficial to obtain a second card for the Senior Administrator, so that there is a second card available when the CEO is unavailable.</p> <p>RESOLVED for the addition of the Senior Administration Officer as a secondary user of the Council credit card.</p> <p>RESOLVED to establish Usage Guidelines and develop clear policies regarding the usage of the card and to ensure that the Senior Administration Officer understands the guidelines and establish a process for monitoring expenditures.</p>
<p>12.</p> <p>1316</p>	<p><u>Introduction of a Council Debit Card</u></p> <p>With the closure of the Nat West branch at Larkfield, the CEO would now have to travel to Maidstone to get petty cash, which is time consuming.</p> <p>The debit card would enable petty cash to be drawn out from the post office, it would also allow for recognised expenditure to be placed on the debit card instead of the credit card which has a low spending limit. The CEO offered examples such as planning application fees, vehicle tax.</p> <p>RESOLVED to make an application to Nat West Bank for a debit card for use by the CEO.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p><u>Correspondence</u></p> <p>None</p>

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20:40