



Morecambe Town Council

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Proper Officer: Mr Luke Trevaskis

Minutes of Finance and Governance Committee Meeting of Morecambe Town Council held at Morecambe Town Hall at 5:00pm on Monday 2nd December 2024

Present: Cllrs B Cooper (Chair), J Ainscough, J Goodrich, Cllr Kent

In attendance: Luke Trevaskis, Joel Turner, Peter Fisher, Helen Freeborough

Press: 0

Public: 1

Minute FG2024/25 - 036 – Apologies

Received from Cllr J Pilling, Cllr L Bradbury, Cllr G Knight, Cllr M Bottoms, Cllr D Whitaker

Minute FG2024/25 - 037 – Declarations of Interests

Cllr J Ainscough and Cllr B Cooper declared an interest as a Councillor of Lancaster City Council.

Cllr B Cooper declared an interest in HR Services, noting that his employer was one of the suppliers.

Minute FG2024/25 - 038 – Minutes

The minutes of the last Finance Committee meeting were approved and signed by the Committee Chairperson Cllr B Cooper.

Minute FG2024/25 - 039 – Public participation

None

Minute FG2024/25 - 040 – Direct Debit Update - the Council's Financial Regulations require certain payments made by direct debit to be approved no less than annually
The list below was approved by the committee.

Name of Supplier	Last Paid Amount	Frequency	Purpose
Barclaycard	Varies (Not yet paid, collect in full)	Monthly	Business Credit Card
British Telecom (BT)	£64.74	Monthly	Broadband
EE Limited	£873.19	Monthly	Mobile Phones

Kingfisher Leasing	£199.63	Quarterly	Photocopier Lease
Lancaster City Council	£475.32	Monthly (10)	NNDR
M B Digital	£22.00	Monthly	Printing
Meta Platforms	£20.65	Varies	Advertising
Peninsula Business	£373.67	Monthly	HR Support
Lancashire County Council	Varies	Varies	Pension Contributions
HMRC	Varies	Varies	Tax and NI Contributions
Paypal	Varies	Varies	Varies
Information Commissioners Office	£40.00 (Not yet processed)	Annually	Data Protection Renewal
RS Components	Varies	Varies	Public Realm Supplies

Minute FG2024/25 - 041 – Legal Fees

Members noted recent comments and requests for information from a Lancaster City Councillor regarding the Council's legal fees appeared to misrepresent the facts about the procurement process and the associated costs. For clarity:

Engagement of Legal Services: the Council engaged Weightmans Solicitors specifically to address issues related to its prior auditors FY20/21. This engagement followed all standard procurement practices and ensured transparency.

Totality of Payments: the payments to Weightmans Solicitors, as disclosed on the Council's website, represent the entirety of fees due for the work undertaken. No additional invoices are pending for this matter, and all transactions have been publicly accessible, including any disbursement payments for the barrister.

Transparency and Disclosure: the Council has maintained full transparency regarding these legal fees. All payments have been properly recorded, with no undisclosed or inaccessible expenditures relating to this issue.

The Council remains committed to upholding transparency and ensuring that all financial transactions are open to public scrutiny. If any Councillor or member of the public requires further clarification, they are encouraged to review the published financial statements or contact the Council directly.

Minute FG2024/25 - 042 – Procurement Report

The committee noted the report regarding the recent legislative changes.

Minute FG2024/25 - 043 – Budget Timetable Update

The Committee noted it is on track to setting its budget in January. Officers will undertake surveying, or other consultation, after further work has been undertaken to the questions.

Minute FG2024/25 - 044 – Treasury Management Update

As directed at the F&G Committee Meeting of 25th July 2024 (Minute ref: FG2024/25 - 19), Morecambe Town Council currently has:

- £550,000.00 stored in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund (AEY of 4.89% as of 29/11/2024)
- £500,000.00 stored in Unity Trust's 30-day term deposit account (interest rate of 2.96%)

What's next:

- The CCLA fund will remain in operation for a minimum of 12-months as referenced in minute: FG2024/25 - 19 (deposit an initial sum of £550,000 in the Public Sector Deposit Fund (a sum equivalent to approximately fifty percent of annual expenditure that the Council must hold as required by its General Reserves Policy) for a minimum term of 12 months.)
- The Unit Trust 30-day term deposit will be renewed on 05/12/2024 upon maturity for the same term up and again thereafter until year end allowing flexibility with any year end procurement required.

Cllr Clark Kent entered the meeting, and Cllr Brett Cooper withdrew from the meeting

It was resolved that Cllr Clark Kent would act as Chairperson for the remainder of the Meeting

Minute FG2024/25 - 045 – Exclusion of the Press and Public (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

The Committee resolved to pass the following recommendation in relation to the following items: “That, in accordance with Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings.”

Minute FG2024/25 - 048 - Financial Illustration

Members noted that the Council was committed to providing high-quality services and addressing the issues that matter most to residents. To continue this valuable work and improve the town, members noted they must consider how incremental tax contributions can sustain such efforts while minimising financial impact on households.

The Committee reviewed various budget scenarios and their implications for the 2025/2026 precept. Members were unanimous in their view that any increase should be kept as minimal as possible while maintaining stability over the long term. They recognised that fluctuating precepts - where decreases one year are followed by significant increases the next - are not in the best interests of the community. Such volatility can disrupt financial planning for both the Council and residents.

Instead, the Committee agreed on a multi-year approach that ensures collections remain steady, avoiding large swings that could cause undue hardship. After careful consideration, the illustration offering the most stability was considered most appropriate for recommendation to the Council, including a recommendation to subsidise the budget further using the Community Action Fund (CAF).

Once all costs are accounted for and subsidies applied, the anticipated impact on taxpayers would be an incremental increase of just £0.15–£0.20 per week (for Band D Properties). This modest adjustment allows the Council to address pressing issues raised by residents, invest in the town's future, and continue delivering the services our community relies on.

Members believed this balanced approach demonstrates a commitment to both fiscal responsibility and to the well-being of residents.

Minute FG2024/25 - 046 - Role Related Compensation

The Committee noted some of the challenges facing members, such as out-of-pocket expenses, and loss of income, through fulfilling their duties as councillors. Members agreed that this matter should be discussed by the Council prior to the next elections to ensure there were no barriers to actively participating in democracy, and the Committee agreed that the Independent Review Panel should be contacted for input.

Minute FG2024/25 - 047 – Human Resource Best Value Analysis – to consider the report and agree actions

The Committee reviewed its current HR service provision.

The Committee resolved to appoint Peninsula Business Services to continue in its role as the Council's HR advisors for a period of three years at a cost of £3,771.72 ex VAT per annum.

The Committee considered a confidential report regarding costs for occupational health services, costs related to absenteeism, and costs of resolving such HR matters when they arise. The Committee agreed to trial a health indemnification package at a cost of £2,445.84 per annum provided by Vitality. It is anticipated this will provide an overall cost saving to the current costs associated with the Council's human resource provision. By providing tailored support for both mental and physical health, this supplier aligns with the Council's duty of care under Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines.