

MINUTES of the **ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING** held in the Conference Room, Epping Hall on **Tuesday 9th January 2024 at 8pm.**

PRESENT:

Cllr C Burgess	(Town Mayor & Chair)	
Cllr C McCredie	(Deputy Town Mayor)	
Cllr N Avey	Cllr L Burrows	Cllr H Pegrum
Cllr G Scruton	Cllr R Sharif	Cllr Janet Whitehouse
Cllr Jon Whitehouse	Cllr M Wright	

OFFICER: Beverley Rumsey (Town Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE: 1 member of the press and 3 members of the public.

343 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J Duffell, Cllr H Whitbread and Cllr Jon Whitehouse for lateness.

344 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

345 DISPENSATIONS

There were no dispensations.

346 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - QUESTION TIME

There was no public participation.

347 CONFIRMATION OF COUNCIL MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 12th December 2023 be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council. **(Attachment A).**

348 MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

It was **RESOLVED** that the signed Minutes of the following Committee meetings be signed by the Mayor as a true record and adopted by the Council.

Planning & General Purposes Committee	12 th December 2023 (Attachment B)
---------------------------------------	--

349 COMMUNICATIONS TO NOTE/REQUIRING DECISION

(i) Referendum principles for Town and Parish Councils

Council **NOTED** the information on referendum principles for Town and Parish Councils, which stated that Town and Parish Councils would not be subject to referendum principles as the current time, as per **Attachment C.**

(ii) Community Ownership Fund

Council considered the Community Ownership Fund information, through the website link provided.

Community Ownership Fund: prospectus - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The Town Clerk would share the details with the Theydon Trusts Ltd in case there was anything they wished to pursue.

350 TOWN MAYOR & DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR'S DUTIES

The duties undertaken by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor since the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th December 2023 were **NOTED**.

351 REPORTS FROM MEMBERS

Reports from members were received on meetings or visits since the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th December 2023:

Cllr M Wright	Skate park meeting	18 th Dec 2023
Cllr R Sharif	Residents' issues relating to parking signs & car park	Dec 2023

352 REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK AND COUNCILLORS QUESTIONS

The Town Clerk advised that discussions with the skate park provider were ongoing now funding had been secured and this would be brought back to Council when the necessary legal clarification had taken place.

The Town Clerk advised members that the Town Sign on the Town Green had been damaged in the bad weather and this was with the sign maker awaiting quotes and an insurance claim. This would also be brought back to Council as appropriate.

Members **NOTED** the report of the Town Clerk.

353 REPORTS FROM EPPING FOREST DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

There were no reports.

354 FINANCIAL REPORT TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023

Council considered the summary financial report for December 2023, presented by Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and **APPROVED**;
- (ii) No further action was required at the current time.

355 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Council's Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton presented the payment schedules for December 2023 totalling £67,233.55. (The Co-operative online total: £20,08, Barclays £49.30 & The Co-operative £67,164.17).

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- (ii) The list of payments for December 2023 were **APPROVED** as presented in the schedule.

356 BUDGETS 2024/25 SECOND ESTIMATES

Cllr Jon Whitehouse entered the meeting during this item.

Epping Town Council's first draft budget has been considered at the Ordinary Council meeting on 12th December (Minute #322 of 2023/24) and this showed a budget presenting a £5.58 increase to a band D equivalent property per annum through Epping Town Council's share of the precept, with a second draft brought back to Council in January 2024. This budget was prepared based on the tax base figures provided by Epping Forest District Council on 4th December 2023, as detailed at the Council meeting on 12th December 2023.

The Town Clerk and Key Member for Finance, Cllr G Scruton, had revisited this to make some adjustments and ensure the balances are as accurate as possible reflecting December and early January's transactions.

Please note: this second draft budget showed an allowance for a revised staffing structure, as detailed in Attachments M, M1 & M2.

The budget (second draft) presented as per **Attachment H** showed an increase to a band D equivalent property through Epping Town Council's share of the precept of £5.58 per annum. This would require a precept demand to Epping Forest District Council of £621,795 for the 2024/25 financial year.

Please note: the second draft budget showed the same precept demand as the December 2023 version (increase per band D equivalent) and the same draft charges with an increase of 5%, the difference being a change to the staffing structure (grounds) (**agenda item 20**) and operational amendments.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Epping Town Council should approve the budget presented as per **Attachment H** and **AUTHORISE** the Town Mayor to sign the precept demand of £621,795 for the 2024/25 financial year on behalf of Epping Town Council.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The draft charges 2024 should be **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H1**.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The budget with fund transfers should be **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H2**.

Council was requested to **CONSIDER** this matter and **RECOMMENDATIONS** and **DECIDE** what to do.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 and the Audit Commission Act 1998 s44; Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014;
- (ii) The 2024/25 budget (second estimates) was **APPROVED**, with the Town Mayor **AUTHORISED** to sign the precept demand for the 2024/25 financial year of £621,795 (£5.58 per annum increase per band D equivalent) on behalf of the Town Council (**Attachment H**);
- (iii) The draft charges were **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H1** (5% increase across all services except the market which is 0% increase);
- (iv) The budget with funds transfers was **APPROVED** as per **Attachment H2**.

357 **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Epping Town Council is required to have a Whistleblowing Policy in accordance with the terms and conditions of The National Lottery's skate park award grant, as per **Attachment I**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act 1972,s111;
- (ii) The policy be **APPROVED** with the following amendments:

Disclosure process: (ii) Delete relevant director, add Town Clerk as designated person Raised to the Chairman.

Investigation and evaluation: TC to report their findings to a Committee or Council, as appropriate.

358 **UPDATED POLICIES/STATEMENTS**

Council considered the updated policies/statements, as per **Attachment J**.

Biodiversity Statement, Crime & Disorder Policy, Optimum Resources Statement, Resource Management Statement.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act, s111;
- (ii) These four policies/statements should be **APPROVED** as policies of Epping Town Council.

359 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED** that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

360 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS

Council discussed the information technology information, as per **Attachments K, K1 & K2**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government 1972, s111;
- (ii) The Town Clerk be **AUTHORISED** to tender the IT contract for Epping Town Council based on the information given in **Attachments K, K1 & K2**.

361 STONARDS HILL TENNIS COURTS

Council discussed the information regarding the Stonards Hill tennis courts licence, as per **Attachments L-L2**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s19;
- (ii) The Town Clerk be **AUTHORISED** to issue the new coaching licence to the succession coach, as per **Attachment L2**;

362 STAFFING MATTERS

Council discussed the staffing situation and supporting documentation, as per **Attachments M-M2**.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (i) The statutory basis for this item be **NOTED** as the Local Government Act 1972, s112;
- (ii) The **RECOMMENDATIONS (M1) and (M2)** were **APPROVED** for the Town Clerk to action.

CLOSURE

The Town Mayor, Cllr C Burgess, closed the meeting at **9.01 pm**.

Signature of Chairman

Date