

Minutes of the Meeting of Faversham Town Council
13th February 2023, 7pm
The Guildhall, Faversham

Present:

Cllr T Martin	Cllr Reynolds	Cllr Barker	Cllr Thomas
Cllr B J Martin	Cllr Henderson	Cllr Jackson	Cllr Williams
Cllr Saunders	Cllr Perkin	Cllr Rowlands	Cllr Hook

In Attendance:

Louise Bareham (Town Clerk)

Questions from members of the Public

None.

689. Apologies for Absence

An Apology with reason was received from Cllr Irwin. On being put to the meeting it was ***RESOLVED to accept the apology from Cllr Irwin.***

690. Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Cllr Perkin DNPI Minute Item 696 Hop Festival

Cllr Reynolds DNPI Minute Item 696 Hop Festival

Cllr Henderson advised as his son was involved in the Hop Festival, he would not take part in that particular discussion.

691. Minutes of the Town Council

Cllr T Martin proposed, seconded by Cllr Reynolds, and on being put to the meeting it was ***RESOLVED to accept the Minutes of the Town Council meetings dated 16th and 23rd January 2023.***

692. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor's Announcements were noted.

Cllr T Martin referred to a recent meeting of the Standing Committee of the Cinque Ports. At present the Committee consisted of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and the Town Clerk, for each of the members but it was proposed to allow for the appointment of a "Cinque Ports Champion", to allow for continuity.

Cllr T Martin referred to the recent updating of the town walks leaflets and thanked Claire Windridge for her work on this.

693. Challenges to 2021/2022 AGAR

Members considered the following correspondence from PKF Littlejohn, the Town Council's external auditors:

"There has been some correspondence back and forth with the member of the public who brought the information to our attention in the meantime, as a result of which we plan to look at only two issues from the many raised. We now request that you collate and take to the Council for formal approval, the Council's responses to the following points:

1. Darius Wilson contract(s) (Assertions 2 and 3 and Box 6)
 - a. the contention is that the tendering process was not followed and therefore the expenditure of £98,975 and £56,000 during the year was unlawful, e.g. there was a failure to advertise contracts in line with Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
 - b. the contention is that there was poor project management of the contracts including monitoring of any overspend.
 - c. the contention is that there was a lack of compliance with the contract terms.
 - d. the contention is that the year-end accruals in relation to the contract are inaccurate.
 - e. Please provide the Council's response to each of these matters, a copy of the relevant tendering documentation for the contracts and minutes showing the Council's approval of the payments.
 - f. Please provide a copy of the most recent internal audit report on purchasing and procurement.
 - g. Please provide copies of the Council's standing orders and financial regulations that were in force during 2021/22.

2. Enhancement/asset expenditure (Assertion 1 and Boxes 6 and 9)
 - a. the contention is that capital expenditure and asset purchases during 2021/22 have not been correctly included in Box 9.
 - b. Please provide a copy of the Council's asset register as at 31/3/22 and a copy of any calculation of additions and disposals during the year.

Please provide a copy of the agenda showing that this information request will be discussed at full Council. If there are any reporting issues arising from our additional work, they will be reported direct to the Council. Engagement lead time for additional work as a result of challenge correspondence is charged at £355 per hour plus VAT, the rate set by SAAA. Please provide the requested information by 18 February 2023, this deadline can be flexed if required, please just let me know."

Cllr Henderson proposed, seconded by Cllr Barker, and on being put to the meeting it was **RESOLVED to agree the draft response as detailed in Appendix A:**

“APPENDIX A

Draft Response to Challenges from PKF Littlejohn

Darius Wilson contract(s) (Assertions 2 and 3 and Box 6)

In relation to works carried out by Darius Wilson Associates, Faversham Town Council reaffirms its positive assertions to the following statements on the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22:

2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.

3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.

In combination, we do not recognise the figures of £98,975 and £56,000 to Darius Wilson Associates for the financial year 2021/22.

We acknowledge that this project was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic and the implementation of the Coronavirus Act 2020, when local government was at its least open and transparent period, due to members of staff working from home and meetings being virtual. However, we are satisfied that robust internal control and monitoring of the project was carried out by a several layers of governance; made up of a leading team of experts (in museums and medieval history) known as the Advisory Group; FTC Heritage Working Group; FTC Policy and Resources Committee; and Full Council.

The threshold for the procurement spend was less than the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. No contract was assigned and therefore no terms have been broken.

Our Financial Year End Closedown was undertaken under the supervision of Rialtas Business Solutions Ltd, and we are satisfied that the procedure was carried

out correctly. For this project, we used the procedure of Earmarked Reserves, and not Accruals.

Enhancement/asset expenditure (Assertion 1 and Boxes 6 and 9)

In relation to capital expenditure and asset purchases, Faversham Town Council reaffirms its positive assertion to the following statement on the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22:

1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.

We are satisfied that our process for internal control is robust, which consists of Monthly Councillor Audits, Monthly Reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee and Half-Yearly Internal Audits carried out by an Independent Auditor.

Faversham Town Council
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10 VOTES FOR, 2 ABST

694. Footpath

It was proposed by Cllr Saunders, seconded by Cllr Thomas, it was **RESOLVED for the Town Council to apply to Kent County Council for a DMMO order for paths at Abbeyfields and Hollowshore.**

695. Faversham Umbrella

It was proposed by Cllr Perkin, seconded by Cllr Reynolds, it was **RESOLVED that the Town Council pledges to match fund the third-party contribution of £5,000 for Faversham Umbrella’s funding application to FCC, for an industrial-catering standard kitchen, only provided the funding application be successful.**

696. Environment Committee

Cllr Williams provided an summary of the meetings held on 11th January 2023 and 8th February 2023 and advised that grants had been made to The Abbey School for participation in the ASGARD project and to Swale Friends of the Earth for the “Lovely World” project. The Committee had commissioned a green roof to be installed on the flat roof of the Town Hall and this had been installed.

Cllr Williams proposed, seconded by Cllr Thomas, it was **RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Environment Committee meetings dated 11th January 2023 and 8th February 2023.**

697. Active Travel Committee

Cllr Thomas provided a summary of the meeting held on 19th January 2023.

Cllr Thomas proposed, seconded by Cllr BJ Martin, it was **RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Active Travel Committee meeting dated 19th January 2023.**

698. Community Committee

Cllr Rowlands proposed, seconded by Cllr Williams, it was **RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Community Committee meeting dated 6th February 2023.**

Cllr Rowlands proposed, seconded by Cllr BJ Martin, and on being put to the meeting it was **RESOLVED to recommend a pledge to the Hop Festival for a grant of £5000.**

7 VOTES FOR, 5 ABST

699. Spring 2023 Newsletter and Annual Report

Subject to a minor amendment in the “Linking with our neighbourhood villages” article, Cllr T Martin proposed, seconded by Cllr Thomas, it was **RESOLVED to send the Spring 2023 Newsletter to print.**

Subject to minor amendments, it was agreed for the Annual Report to go to print.

700. Receipts and Payments

Cllr BJ Martin proposed, seconded by Cllr Rowlands, and on being put to the meeting it was **RESOLVED to approve payments for February 2023.**

701. Private Session

To Resolve 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 because of the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be transacted.

702. Honorary Freeman

Two names were agreed and the Town Clerk will contact the individuals to see if they were happy for their names to be put forward at a public meeting.

703. KALC Community Award Scheme

Recipients of the KALC Community Award and Mayoral Certificates of recognition were agreed.

704. Staffing Matters

It was proposed by Cllr B J Martin, seconded by Cllr Henderson and on being put to the meeting it was ***RESOLVED to give delegated authority to the Town Clerk to recruit temporary staff to cover any absences, to assist with the workload.***

The meeting ended at 9.30pm