Minutes of a Lowestoft Charter Trustee Meeting held at the Town Hall, Lowestoft on **Thursday 22 January 2015** at **6.30 pm**

Members present:
S Ardley (Mayor), M Barnard, S Barker, M Cherry, Y Cherry, P Coghill, P Collecott, D Coulam, J Craig, G Douce, J Ford, I Graham, L Jacklin, C Law, M Pitchers, M Rudd, T Sullivan, J Swainson, N Webb, S Webb and J Wheatley

Officers present:
A Charvonia (Assistant Chief Executive)
D Lee (Democratic Services Manager)
J Sturman (Senior Accountant)

1 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Barron, P Byatt, F Mortimer and K Patience.

2 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

No declarations of interest were made.

3 **MINUTES**

(a) **Lowestoft Charter Trustees meeting on 9 June 2014**

**RESOLVED**

That, subject to an amendment to the 2nd paragraph in Minute 3 – Communications from the Retiring Mayor to replace the word ‘rant’ with ‘range’, the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 9 June 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

(b) **Lowestoft Charter Trustees meeting on 15 December 2014**

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 15 December 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

4 **LOWESTOFT CHARTER TRUSTEES BUDGET FOR 2015/16**

The Lowestoft Charter Trustees (LCT) considered a report which sought approval to set a budget and agree a precept level for 2015/16 and gave details of a budget estimate for 2016/17 together with a risk assessment of LCT activities.

**Budget**

Members were reminded that the budget set by the LCT would form part of the precept payable by Council Taxpayers in Lowestoft for 2015/16. The proposed LCT budget for 2015/16 was comprised of the following elements:

- **Lowestoft Mayor Expenses** - £2,000
- **Waveney District Council Recharge for support costs** - £2,000
- **LCT Grants and other expenditure** - £5,000
- **Budget Requirement** - £9,000
LOWESTOFT CHARTER TRUSTEES - 22/01/15

It was reported that should the LCT wish to continue with a budget allocation and consequently a precept of £9,000, this would result in an annual amount of £0.59 being paid by a Band D household in 2015/16.

The LCT was reminded that if a budget of £9,000 was agreed, the level of support provided by Waveney District Council (WDC) would be minimal and limited to support for 2 LCT meetings a year (administrative and legal advice), financial services (including the submission of the Charity Commission Annual Return) and audit services.

Previous consideration of Administrative Support to the LCT

In February 2014, the LCT had previously considered the actual costs for supporting the LCT and Mayor, in that the cost was £21,000 in 2013/14, compared to the recharged amount to WDC of £2,000. In effect, WDC was subsidising the LCT by £19,000 per annum.

At the February 2014 meeting, the LCT agreed not to increase the precept but to set up a Working Group to explore alternative support provision for the LCT. This meant that no financial provision had been budgeted for to support the LCT and the Mayor of Lowestoft with diary management etc. However, due to exceptional circumstances, details of which were contained in the report, administrative support was provided on an on-going basis.

Future Options

In accordance with previous decisions, the LCT now needed to determine whether it wished to retain the office of Mayor of Lowestoft for 2015/16 and, if so, how the support required would be financed / provided.

If the LCT did not wish to see a Mayor of Lowestoft appointed for 2015/16 then the proposed budget of £9,000 could be approved which would mean that only limited administrative and financial support would be provided to the LCT as a whole and no support would be provided for the Mayor of Lowestoft (Option 1). This would require a precept level of £0.59 for a Band D household for 2015/16.

If the LCT felt that a Mayor of Lowestoft should be retained, then administrative support could be provided by the WDC Democratic Services Team in the areas such as strategic overview, Mayor’s diary management, budget monitoring and general civic support at an additional cost of £10,100 per annum (Option 2 within the report). As a result, the precept for 2015/16 would have to increase from £9,000 to £19,100 per annum and would see the annual amount paid by a Band D household increase to £1.25 per year. The exploration of seeking alternative support for meetings, financial matters and support for the Mayor had not proved fruitful to date.

Discussion

The Trustees were advised that WDC could no longer subsidise the LCT given the budgetary pressures it faced and the need to protect frontline services provided to the public. Should the LCT wish to appoint a Mayor of Lowestoft for 2015/16 at its Annual Meeting in June 2015, consideration needed to be given now as to how the necessary additional support would be financed / provided.

The LCT was being requested to consider options for setting the precept for 2015/16 and was informed that, dependent upon the level of precept set, the proposed estimated budget for 2016/17 might also need to be increased.

The following issues were raised during the consideration of this item:

- Clarification was given regarding the informal meeting held with the Mayor of Lowestoft (Councillor Ardley) at which Councillor Law (Leader of the Council) had been present as the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Democratic Services. It was reported that Democratic Services had co-ordinated arrangements for the meeting in order to prepare and finalise the LCT budget and precept setting report for 2015/16 so that it could be dispatched in accordance with statutory deadlines.
• Councillor Barker made reference to an informal meeting held with some Members of the LCT Governance Working Group and a subsequent meeting to which Councillor Collecott (Independent Member) had been invited to attend in order to explore alternative support for the LCT. However, limited progress had been made as a result of the sad passing of the former Mayor of Lowestoft in November 2014 and the need to appoint a new Mayor in December 2014.

• Confirmation was given that should the LCT set a precept for 2015/16 this would not commit the LCT to appointing a Mayor for a new term of office as this was a decision that would be reserved for the LCT Annual Meeting. However, if the LCT did not provide for financial or other support for the Mayor at this time, and a Mayor was subsequently appointed, there would be no diary management support for the new Mayor.

• Further clarification was given that should the LCT set a precept at this time that allowed for support for a Mayor but this was not subsequently carried through, any monies raised via a precept would be allocated to LCT Reserves.

• Whilst there was general support for the role of Mayor of Lowestoft, some Members also expressed reservations about allocating funds for a Mayor which could be seen as pre-determining a view that a new Mayor of Lowestoft should be appointed at the start of the new civic year of office. It was suggested that this was a decision that would more appropriately be made by the LCT Members appointed after the May 2015 elections. However, budgetary provision or alternative support needed to be put in place if a Mayor was subsequently elected in order to assist with diary management etc.

• It was commented that it would be beneficial if there was cross-party support for any proposals put forward in respect of setting a precept for 2015/16.

• Clarification was sought as to what would be deemed an appropriate level of reserves for the LCT to hold given the £11,227.94 currently held as at 31 March 2014. In response it was suggested that £3,000 would be an appropriate amount for the LCT and that the existing reserves had been built up over time with any unspent monies in a given year being transferred to reserves.

• It was suggested that consideration could be given to agreeing a small increase in the precept but also use some funds in the LCT reserves to fund support for any future Mayor of Lowestoft in 2015/16. This would see a step change in having to increase the precept in order to cover costs.

• It was confirmed that retrospective funding for support for any new Mayor could not be given in June 2015 at the Annual General Meeting as any LCT precept amounts needed to be included within the Council Tax bills sent out by Waveney District Council in February 2015, as the Council would collect the precept on the LCT’s behalf, the same as it does for the Parish / Town Councils across Waveney.

• In terms of work planning, the Democratic Services Team needed to allocate capacity should Option 2 be adopted as this would involve the provision of additional support for the Mayor from 1st April 2015 (the financial year running from 1st April to 31 March each year).

• Clarification was given that the LCT held no assets of its own as when the former Borough of Lowestoft was dissolved, all assets were transferred into the ownership of Waveney District Council.

• The general sense of the meeting was that there were benefits in the unparished areas within Lowestoft having a Mayor but some Trustees were reluctant to set a precept for providing support for a new Mayor ahead of the May 2015 District Council Elections. However, if the LCT wished to appoint a new Mayor in June 2015 at the LCT Annual Meeting, then adequate resources needed to be in place now via the precept mechanism, otherwise the Democratic Services Team would
only be able to provide limited support to the LCT overall and no support to the
Mayor at all. The LCT could chose not to appoint a new Mayor in June 2015 but it
would be for any newly elected LCT Members to make that collective decision.

During the discussion on this item, it was moved and seconded – “That the question be
now put”. On being put to the vote, the motion was LOST and so discussions on this
item continued.

The following motion was moved and seconded:

1. That the Lowestoft Charter Trustees consider it appropriate to set a precept that
allows for the future support of any incoming Mayor of Lowestoft but by doing so
does not predetermine whether a new Mayor of Lowestoft should be appointed in
2015/16, or not.

2. That Option 2 be adopted for funding support for a future Mayor of Lowestoft at an
additional cost of £10,100, giving a total budget allocation of £19,100 for 2015/16,
which would require an increase in the LCT precept from 60p per year to £1.25 a
year, an increase of 65p.

3. That the need for a revised LCT indicative budget of £19,100 2016/17 be noted.

4. That the LCT risk assessment of January 2015 as attached as Appendix A to the
report be approved.

On being put to the vote, the above motion was LOST.

A further motion was then moved and seconded (as outlined below) and it was:

RESOLVED

1. That approval be given for the LCT budget for 2015/16 to be increased from £9,000
to £16,770 resulting in an increase in the precept from 60p to £1.10p per year (an
increase of 50p per year) for Band D equivalents.

2. That as the budget requirement for providing additional support for any new Mayor of
Lowestoft for 2015/16 would be £19,100 and as the level of precept of £16,770 for
2015/16 does not fully meet the full financial costs of providing support for the
Lowestoft Charter Trustees and for the Mayor of Lowestoft, the remaining balance of
£2,330 for 2014/15 be funded from LCT Reserves.

3. That the estimated budget for 2016/17 be increased to £19,100 necessitating a
further increase in the Band D equivalent annual amount of £0.15.

4. That the LCT risk assessment of January 2015 as attached as Appendix A to the
report be approved.

NOTE: An Appendix detailing the budgetary implications of the above motion is attached to
these Minutes for information.

The meeting concluded at 8.00pm.

Mayor of Lowestoft
APPENDIX A

1. The budget set by the Lowestoft Charter Trustees ('LCT') will form part of the precept payable by Lowestoft Council Taxpayers.

2. The table below sets out the agreed budget for 2015/16 and an estimated budget for 2016/17 following the outcome of the LCT meeting on 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 2015:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014/15</th>
<th>2014/15 Revised Budget</th>
<th>2015/16 Approved Budget</th>
<th>2016/17 Budget Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowestoft Mayor</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDC Support Costs</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>12,100</td>
<td>12,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants &amp; other expenditure to further the Civic &amp; Ceremonial role of the LCT</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Budget Requirement</strong></td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td><strong>19,100</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financed By:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Reserves</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2,331</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Precept</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>16,770</td>
<td>19,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precept Charge:</strong></td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td><strong>19,100</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The approved precept of an increase of £0.50 to a £1.10 charge for Band D equivalents would provide the LCT with a precept income of £16,770.

4. The total budget requirement for 2015/16 is £19,100 therefore in 2015/16 £2,331 of the LCT reserves will be used to balance the budget.

5. The estimated budget for 2016/17 would require an increase against the 2015/16 Band D equivalent annual amount of £0.15.