

Responsible Financial Officer Reports (10-15)**10. RFO Report** - (for information – bank balances, Town Accelerator Funding, Local Government Pay Award 2024/25, new preventative duty on employers)

Bank balances - as at 30 September 2024 are as follows:

HSBC	75,189.29
Lloyds Debit card	922.78
Cornwall Council deposit	784,996.21
HSBC Money Market Deposit	0.00
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£861,108.28</u>

Town Accelerator Funding – Cornwall Council confirmed the grant of £12,500 had been approved to fund a new Town Vision document. We are awaiting the grant offer letter. The brief to commission a consultant was published on 8 October via Contracts Finder, with a closing date of Monday 28 October at 9am. The award of contract will be considered by the Communications & Engagement Committee meeting on 14 November, following scoring by the tender panel.

Local Government Pay Award 2024/25 – The new National Joint Council (NJC) pay scales for 2024/25 were finally agreed on 22 October 2024 as follows:

- With effect from 1 April 2024, an increase of £1,290 (pro rata for part-time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive.

This represents an increase of between 2.97% and 5.77% to staff, and a total increase in the Council's salary costs of approximately £17,000, including employer pension and national insurance contributions, for the year. Staff pay will be backdated to 1 April 2024 when the increase is processed.

Budget & Precept Setting 2025/26 – In November all Council and committee agendas will include draft budget setting for 2025/26. Any ideas for new projects etc. should be put forward for consideration. The precept documentation has not yet been received from Cornwall Council (due early November), but the final deadline (including requested extension) is usually 31 January. The Town Clerk and the RFO are attending a budget briefing with Cornwall Council on 7 November.

New preventative duty on employers - The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 comes into force on 26 October 2024. It will introduce a new positive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and is accompanied by updated technical guidance produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

In Summary:

- Harassment relates to a protected characteristic
- Unwanted conduct covers a range of behaviour from spoken words, banter to physical gestures or behaviour.
- Any inappropriate conduct is considered on how the worker perceives it and whether it was reasonable to have that perception; intent is not a core consideration.
- The act covers all in employment, i.e. Employees and Workers. This will include job applicants and potentially agency workers.
- Councils must take steps to prevent it, which includes anticipating steps where it could occur and put steps in place to prevent it from taking place.
- The EHCR believe that Employers are unlikely to be compliant unless a risk assessment has been conducted. Following a risk assessment an action plan should then be created (and put into place).
- Councils should include taking reasonable steps to prevent harassment from third parties including customers, service users and members of the public.
- Other steps would likely include reviewing policies and providing training.

Where training is provided, the Council should consider including:

- a clear understanding of what harassment is
- a clear statement of required workplace behaviour – including behaviour at work-related social events and in online communications
- an understanding of what is appropriate and what isn't in 'grey' areas such as banter
- knowing what to do if they experience harassment
- knowing what to do if they witness harassment
- knowing what to do if harassment is reported to them
- knowing what the Council will do if they are found to have committed an act of harassment

If sexual harassment does occur, an employer must take action to try to prevent it from happening again. It must also prevent victimisation, particularly for those who report or provide evidence in an investigation relating to sexual harassment.

The RFO & Deputy Town Clerk and Facilities Manager have both attended training webinars on the new requirements. The Employee Handbook is in the process of being updated, risk assessments will be undertaken, the induction process updated, and new training implemented which will need to be to be regularly refreshed.

11. Schedule of Payments - To receive and approve the schedule of payments.

Attachment: 10. Schedule of Payments

Recommendation: to approve the schedule of payments

12. Budget Monitoring 2024/25 – To receive and accept a draft budget report to **31 August 2024** for monitoring purposes

Attachment: 11. Budget Monitoring to 31 August 2024

On target spend should now be at 41.67%

The following points should be noted on the Administration (101) budget (other budgets monitored within the relevant committees):

- PAYE & NI (4010) shows only 4 months expenditure (33.33%) as this is paid a month behind until year end.
- Pension (4020) includes the annual lump sum contribution of £4,900 and paid a month behind as above.
- Advertising (4180) will overspend this year due to increased costs at the Cornish Times for publishing the election notices (vacancy notice £182, election notice £390 (not yet showing in budget)). Cornwall Council have now confirmed it is no longer a legal requirement to publish these in the local press – websites, social media, notice boards etc are sufficient.
- Equipment & IT Purchase (4230) the overspend has been funded from the earmarked reserve.
- Mayoral Allowance (4340) is paid via payroll so included in the salary line. £654 paid to 31 August 2024.
- CCTV (4360) annual maintenance charges only have been paid so far this year.
- Sundry Expenses (4999) includes a rejected payment of £1,244 which will clear in September.

Recommendation: to note and approve the budget monitoring report

13. Aged Debtors - To receive a report on aged debtors and agree any further action required

As at 30 September 2024 the following amounts were outstanding:

Outstanding	31 - 60 Days		61 - 90 Days		91+ Days	
	No. of customers	Amount	No. of customers	Amount	No. of customers	Amount
Public Hall					1	131.99
Guildhall rents						
Guildhall utilities						
Allotments						
Miscellaneous						
<u>Totals</u>	0	<u>£0.00</u>	0	<u>£0.00</u>	1	<u>£131.99</u>

The amount outstanding is due from a public sector organisation and payment is expected within the next few days.

Recommendation - To accept the report on aged debtors

14. Civic Regalia Policy – To approve the new Civic regalia Policy

Attachment: 13. Civic Regalia Policy DRAFT

As part of the annual insurance renewal process, our brokers have recommended the introduction of a Civic Regalia Policy to set out the handling, usage and storage of the regalia. The policy has already been assessed and approved by our insurers.

Recommendation: To approve the Civic Regalia Policy

15. Annual Insurance Renewal – To approve the annual insurance renewal

The Town Council insurance renewal is due on 1 November 2024. In 2022, it was switched to Aviva on a long term arrangement with only inflationary increases (5%) in premiums, unless there are changes to cover, until 2026.

The Facilities Manager and RFO carried out a full review of cover with the broker on 12 September and a follow up meeting on 24 October.

Renewal Premium Summary:

Total premium paid 01/11/23 - £23,614.74

Renewal Quote 01/11/24 to 31/10/25 - £24,950.94

Annual Budget 2024/25 - £24,800

Additions/optional extras:

- Public Liability Cover for Castle Park with effect from 01/11/24 - **£383.83**
- Increase playground equipment sum insured by £100,000 across all Council sites - **£101.91**
- Wall bordering the road at Castle Park and notice boards - **£ quote outstanding**
- Cyber & Technology Policy to a liability limit of £500,000 - **£504**

The Council held cyber cover from November 2019 until October 2023, but the policy was not renewed as the required criteria for cover changed and could not be met at that time.

Cyber insurance covers certain losses relating to damage to, or loss of information from, IT systems and networks. Policies generally include significant assistance with and management of the incident itself, which can be essential when faced with reputational damage or regulatory enforcement.

Cover includes:

- Third party liability

- Event response (including crisis management, public relations, business interruption, digital asset restoration, computer replacement, etc)
- Cyber crime (including funds transfer fraud)

Recommendation - To approve renewal of the insurance with Aviva at a total cost of £24,950.94 including taxes and charges plus the addition of Castle Park at £383.83 an increase in the overall sum assured for playground equipment, wall and signage at Castle Park and cyber insurance cover totalling approximately £26,000