

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
FINANCE, ASSET MANAGEMENT & HR COMMITTEE
meeting held remotely by video conference
at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 29th September 2020

Present:

Cllr. Herbert Harper, Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Dafydd Jenkins, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas, Cllr. Allan Walter, Cllr. Milner Whiteman.

In attendance:

Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Diane Barlow – Assistant to the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

1) Apologies

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve the following apology: Councillor Duncan White – holiday.

2) Disclosure of pecuniary interests

Members were reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the Register of Members' Interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

3) Dispensations

None requested.

4) Minutes

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2020 be **APPROVED** and signed as a true record.

5) Town Clerk's report

Members received a written report from the Town Clerk on action taken since the last meeting.

It was noted that a location had been identified for the roundel adjacent to Back Lane car park and arrangements would be made to move the art work.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and AGREED** that the Town Clerk's report be **NOTED**.

6) Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report.

It was noted that VAT receipts for the period April to June totalling £19,974.55 had been received in September.

The Small Market Towns Grant of £5,000 had been received in August.

The closure of the office for four months had resulted in savings in some areas.

Following the closure of the Queen Street public toilets between April and July and problems with the subsequent re-opening, a reduction in charges of 15% had been negotiated for that period.

It was noted that the street lighting SOX replacement programme had commenced. However, it had been identified that the regular street lighting maintenance had not been included in the quotation and had not been separately budgeted for. A monthly maintenance contract had been set up at a rate of £95.80 per month, a considerable reduction on the previous annual street lighting maintenance costs.

The RFO advised that income was lower than budgeted due to the absence of stallholders for several months.

The RFO had reviewed the business tax rate for the Mary Webb room. She had been advised on this occasion that as the Mary Webb room had a separate entrance off the staircase it was rated separately. As the Corn Exchange was a listed building, there would be no charge if the room were empty of furniture and unused. It was agreed to further consider options for reducing costs at the next meeting: continue to market the Mary Webb room as a meeting room, rent to a tenant as office space or empty the room.

- b. Members **NOTED** the balance sheet as at 31st August 2020.
- c. Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure to 31st August 2020.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 31st August 2020. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to **approve the bank reconciliations to 31st August 2020**.

- e. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve payments from 22nd July 2020 to date.

7) Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2020-21

- a. Members noted that agreement had been reached between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union on rates of pay applicable from 1st April 2020.
- b. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to agree to implement the agreed increase of 2.75% for all staff, backdated to 1st April 2020.
- c. Members noted that the minimum annual leave for employees with less than five years' service would also increase from 21 to 22 days from 1st April 2020.

8) 2020/21 Budget

Members considered arrangements for drafting the 2020/21 budget. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to set up a working group to work with the RFO and Clerk on preparing a draft budget. Members of the working group would be Cllrs Holyoak, Harper, Natalie Park, Thomas and Walter.

The RFO and Clerk would produce a first draft of the budget for consideration by the working group.

9) 10 High Street

Members noted a report on progress from the working group. It was noted that the community was currently being consulted regarding ideas for the future use of the former bank premises. Decoration of the front of the building was under way.

10) Anti-Pigeon Measures for the Guildhall

Members considered the report prepared by the RFO and options for anti-pigeon measures for the Guildhall. Councillors noted the difficulty of finding a long-term solution to deal with the pigeons and the health implications of the mess they generate. There was some support for culling the pigeons. Officers were asked to seek advice on whether alternative measures or removing the pigeons would need to be tried before culling.

11) Repair to Window Panel in Guildhall

Members noted that a damaged window panel in the Guildhall had been repaired at a cost of £235, as agreed by the RFO and Mayor.

12) Fire Alarm and Emergency Lighting

- a. Members noted that the contract for fire alarm and emergency lighting maintenance for the Corn Exchange and Guildhall had been renewed with RMW at a combined cost of £598.84 per annum.
- b. Members noted that the annual fire alarm inspection had been carried out for the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange and recommendations provided by RMW. Quotations for recommended work were awaited.

13) 2 Burgage Way

- a. Members noted that the damp work had been completed.
- b. Members noted and retrospectively approved the purchase of a new refrigerator at a cost of £141.66. It was noted that this had been an integrated unit and therefore had been considered a fixture. The new unit was free standing.

14) Public Toilet Reconfiguration

It was noted that further guidance was required on the reconfiguration of the Queen Street public toilets in order for progress to be made. It was agreed that the Clerk should discuss the matter with members of the Grounds and Property Maintenance Working Group.

15) The Square

Councillors considered changes to The Square to improve usability and accessibility. Proposed changes could create a better performance space and market space whilst still providing a seating area. Councillors Holyoak, Jenkins, N Park, Themans, and Thomas agreed to meet on site on 3rd October to consider options.

16) Olympian and other Information Panels

Councillors noted the deteriorating condition of some information panels around the town. It was noted that the panels had been installed in 2000 as part of the commemoration of that year. The Wenlock Olympian Society and Town Council had jointly secured grant funding for the brass plaques in the pavement and six information boards. The designer had been contacted but he had not retained the designs for the boards. It was agreed that Councillor Hill would investigate further to obtain details of the manufacturer of the boards and cost of repair or replacement. In the meantime, the boards would be cleaned.

17) Tree work at Cemetery

It was noted that work had been required to a tree overhanging the lychgate at the Cemetery and this had been undertaken at a cost of £60, as agreed by the RFO and Mayor.

18) Telephone Kiosk at Homer

Members noted a newsletter issued by the Homer and Wigwig Community Group regarding the telephone kiosk in Homer. Suggestions on the future use of the kiosk were awaited.

19) Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 20th October 2020 at 7.00pm.

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the above Act due to the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted it will be PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the public and press should not be present.

20) Covid-19 and Working Arrangements

Councillors considered the latest government restrictions relating to Covid-19 and the impact on staff working arrangements. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that staff would continue working from the office unless further government restrictions were imposed.**

21) Public Toilet Cleaning and Maintenance

Councillors considered quotations from Healthmatic for continued cleaning and maintenance of the public toilets at St Mary's Car Park and Queen Street from October 2020.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to accept the quotation from Healthmatic for a 12 month contract in the amount of £13,273.75, commencing 1st October 2020.

22) 2 Burgage Way

- a. Councillors considered a report regarding the gas supply at 2 Burgage Way. Officers were asked to establish the cost and arrangements for installation of a separate gas supply for the property.
- b. Quotations for work to the rear gate of 2 Burgage Way were awaited.

23) Linden Lodge

Members noted the report for the regular inspection of Linden Lodge undertaken by Balfours on 7th August 2020. Quotations were being obtained for re-levelling the paving slabs in the garden. The Clerk was asked to obtain quotations for re-grouting the bath.

24) Gaskell Recreation Ground Drainage

Councillors considered quotations for additional drainage work on the Gaskell Recreation Ground and a request from the Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee for financial support. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to allocate £4,500 towards the work.**

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....