

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
FINANCE, ASSET MANAGEMENT & HR COMMITTEE
meeting held at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 26th November 2019

Present:

Cllr. Herbert Harper (in the chair), Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Daniel Thomas, Cllr. Duncan White, Cllr. Milner Whiteman.

In attendance:

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

1) Apologies

The following apologies were received:

Cllr. Marcus Themans – work

Cllr. Allan Walter - holiday

These apologies were ACCEPTED and AGREED as APPROVED absence.

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

The minutes of a Finance, Asset Management and HR Committee meeting held on 22nd October 2019 were considered for approval. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that the minutes be APPROVED and signed as a true record.**

5) Town Clerk's report

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

The order had now been placed to replace the ceiling floodlights under the Corn Exchange with LED lights, which the electrician had advised would improve the effectiveness of the lighting.

It was noted that now that the plaque for Alderman Davies had been installed on the wall in Back Lane, the relocation of the artwork could obscure the plaque and it might be necessary to move the dog waste bin (the missing lid had already been reported). The site would be revisited to check the layout.

It was requested that Councillor Themans also discuss improvements to the surface of the Square with Wenlock Estates.

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

6) Finance

- a. Members **NOTED** a report from the RFO. Expenditure against budget to the end of October was just under 61%. It was noted that there were funds available in the Town Archives budget and quotations would be obtained for a secure, fire-proof cabinet for the archive room. Income against budget was positive, apart from the income from The Square. However, the usual trader had recently returned on a regular basis, so this was expected to increase.
- b. Members **NOTED** the balance sheet as at 31st October 2019.
- c. Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure to 31st October 2019. It was noted that the figures were skewed by the purchase of the bank, the funds for which had come from the general reserve, rather than the current year's budget.
- d. Members reviewed bank reconciliations. It was noted that it had still not been possible to resolve problems with the Barclays bank mandate. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 31st October 2019.** Councillor Natalie Park agreed to visit the office to sign the bank reconciliations.
- e. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve payments from 23rd October 2019 to date, totalling £94,862.84.**

7) Strategic Plan and Strategic Financial Plan

No progress had been made with the above due to the unavailability of the internal auditor and consequent lack of advice.

8) Budget

Members considered the third draft of the 2020/21 budget and recommendations from the working group. The draft resulted in an increase in the precept of 5%, however, it was noted that an increase in the tax base was expected, which should result in a slightly lower percentage increase in the precept.

Councillors agreed to remove £1,000 from the budget heading for election expenses and add £1,000 into the budget for initiatives connected with climate change. Following this amendment, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to recommend the draft budget with a precept of £204,432 to full Council.**

9) Internal Audit

- a. Members noted that the Council's usual internal auditor was unable to carry out the role this year for personal reasons.
- b. Members considered a report on alternative internal auditors. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to appoint Diane Malley as internal auditor for the 2019/20 financial year.**

10) Year End Close Down and Annual Return Preparation

Members considered the appointment of RBS to complete the end of year close down and annual return preparation on the computerised accounting system. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to appoint RBS to complete the end of year close down and annual return preparation on the computerised accounting system at a cost of £560 + VAT plus travelling expenses.**

11) Guildhall Commission on Sales

- a. Following receipt of a request from Councillors Harper, Hill and Walter dated 22nd October 2019, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to rescind the following decision, taken at the meeting of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee meeting held on 23rd July 2019 (minute 10): "Exhibitors would be responsible for payment of the card fee but have the option to continue with cash only if preferred."**
- b. Members considered the implementation of an increase from 20% to 22% in the commission charged by the Council to exhibitors from 1st April 2020 to reduce administration and to cover the cost of any purchases made by payment card. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to increase the commission charged to exhibitors in the Guildhall from 20% to 22% from 1st April 2020.**

12) Gaskell Ground Drainage Consultant's Costs

Members considered payment of the project management element of the drainage consultant's costs from the remaining contingency allowed for the drainage work. It was noted that an additional drain was required at the top of the Gaskell Ground and the funds for this would need to come from the contingency allowed.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to pay the invoice in the amount of £800 + VAT from Alan Lewis for project management of the Gaskell Ground drainage from the contingency allowed in the budget for the drainage project.

13) Christmas Lights

- a. Members noted that replacement Christmas lights were required for the area under the Corn Exchange and additional lights for the Christmas tree in the Square. An insurance claim had been submitted for the Corn Exchange lights but there would be an excess of £100 to pay.
- b. Members considered quotations for new lights for the above.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to place the order for supply and installation of new ceiling lights at a cost of £593 + VAT and for additional lights for the Christmas tree in the Square at a cost of £185.30 + VAT with RMW.
- c. It was noted that the cost of installation of the additional lights was included in the above and the lights could be installed for the current year's festive display.

14) Grant Awards

Members noted that thank you letters for grant awards had been received from the Wenlock Olympian Games Live Arts Festival and the Wenlock Herald.

15) Grounds Maintenance and Property Maintenance

Following the resignation of Adam Davy, **it was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to nominate Duncan White to the Grounds and Property Maintenance working group to join Cllrs Jenkins and Themans.**

16) The Square

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next meeting due to the absence of Cllr Themans.

17) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee would be held on Tuesday, 28th January 2020 at 7.00pm at the Guildhall.

PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960

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

18) Staffing Matters

Members considered a confidential report from the Town Clerk. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to confirm the permanent appointment of Lorna Dexter as Administrative Assistant following satisfactory completion of the six-month probationary period.

In recognition of good performance, it was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to increase the salary of the Administrative Assistant from SCP1 to SCP3 from January 2020.

It was noted that the Town Handyman was expected to return from sick leave early in December.

19) Public Toilets

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to defer consideration of the maintenance and cleaning of the public toilets.

It was noted that government legislation on the abolition of rates on public toilets was awaited.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....