

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, 28th January 2020

Present:

Clr. Herbert Harper (in the chair), Cllr. Mary Hill, Cllr. Yvonne Holyoak, Cllr. Matthew Park, Cllr. Natalie Park, Cllr. Marcus Themans, Cllr. Daniel Thomas, Cllr. Allan Walter, 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

None

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 26th November 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. It was noted that the replacement LED ceiling lights under the Corn Exchange were due to be installed imminently.

Confirmation had been received that Councillors Harper and Walter had been added to the Unity Trust Bank mandate as online signatories.

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

6) Finance

- a. Members **NOTED** a report from the RFO. The balance shown in the bank accounts included the expected VAT refund of £16,382. It was noted that telephone provision was being reviewed to improve the system and reduce costs if possible. A quotation was awaited from RMW for repair of the faulty Christmas lights.

The RFO advised that an extremely high invoice had been received from Gazprom for energy for 10 High Street. This was in dispute as the bill included charges relating to the previous occupant.

Expenditure against budget to the end of December 2019 was 75%.

- b. Members **NOTED** the balance sheet as at 31st December 2019.
- c. Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure to 31st December 2019. It was reported that the Country Markets had finished and therefore income from the Corn Exchange markets would be reducing unless other stall holders could be attracted.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 31st December 2019.** It was noted that the Clerk and RFO were required to present their ID at Barclays in Bridgnorth again before the mandate could be changed.
- e. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve payments from 26th November 2019 to date, totalling £36,134.76.**

7) Internal Audit Report

Councillors considered the report submitted by the Internal Auditor following the interim audit carried out on 12th December 2019. It was noted that the auditor had identified only a small adjustment required with VAT. The RFO was congratulated on the positive report. It was noted that the RFO would be attending a training course on VAT in February.

8) Strategic Plan and Strategic Financial Plan

In order to move forward with formulating a Strategic Plan and Strategic Financial Plan, it was agreed that the Clerk should update the Council's Critical Commitments Strategy and associated documents. These could form a basis for the Strategic Plan.

9) Financial Risk and Health & Safety Evaluation

Members considered the revised Financial Risk and Health & Safety Evaluation. It was noted that the Clerk was taking advice on the requirements for water monitoring.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to recommend the revised Financial Risk and Health & Safety Evaluation to full Council for approval.

10) Grant Awards

Councillors noted the thank you letter received from the Wenlock Clickers for the grant awarded.

11) Callaughtons Ash

- a. It was noted that Shropshire Council had requested a report on how the Council had spent or intended to spend the funding received from the Community Led housing development at Callaughtons Ash. Shropshire Council had advised that the funding should be spent on a project to benefit the community. As the funding had not been received until the financial year 2019/20 it had been confirmed by Shropshire Council that no report was currently due.
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to allocate the funding from the Community Led Housing Development at Callaughtons Ash to the development of the Gaskell Recreation Ground.**

12) Gaskell Ground Drainage Consultant's Costs

- a. Members noted that the tender invitation had been issued for the creation of a surfaced path around the Gaskell Recreation Ground.
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that voting members on the Gaskell Recreation Ground Management Committee should review the tenders received and make recommendations to full Council. It was noted that the deadline for receipt of tenders was 19th February 2020 and a recommendation would need to be made to the full Council meeting on 5th March 2020.

13) Former Barclays Bank Premises – 10 High Street

- a. Members noted that Barclays had raised concerns about loading the ATM with cash due to problems parking nearby. The Clerk had contacted Shropshire Council with the request that options to create a parking area be considered. One option could be to extend the yellow zigzags outside 10 High Street. Prof. Mark Barrow was supportive of the Council's request. It was noted that delivery vans often had difficulty parking in the High Street.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to request that Shropshire Council install a loading bay in the High Street.
- b. It was noted that Barclays had advised approval had been given for the changes to the ATM enclosure and access, and a date for the work was awaited. Those Councillors who had not previously visited the interior of the building had recently had the opportunity to do so.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to appoint Councillors Matthew Park and Duncan White as additional members of the Barclays Bank Working Group. It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to invite selected members of the community to join the Working Group.

14) The Square

It was agreed to discuss the proposed changes with Wenlock Estates and then to report back to Council.

15) Telephone Kiosk in Homer

- a. Councillors considered the contract for the purchase of the redundant telephone kiosk in Homer. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to agree to sign the contract for the purchase of the telephone kiosk in Homer.**
- b. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to contact the residents of Homer directly to seek their views on the future use of the kiosk.**

16) Cemetery Chapel

- a. Members noted that Shropshire Council had advised that the Cemetery Chapel had been removed from the list of assets of community value on 17th January 2020 as the 5 year period of listing as laid out in legislation had expired.
- b. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** not to apply for re-listing at this stage.

17) Much Wenlock Library

Members considered correspondence received from Shropshire Council regarding proposed measures to improve the energy efficiency of the library. It was noted that measures were in hand to address problems with damp in the library.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to contribute £500 towards the cost of installation of secondary double glazing in the library.

18) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee would be held on Tuesday, 24th March 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.

19) Cleaning Arrangements for the Guildhall and Corn Exchange

Members considered a confidential report from the Town Clerk regarding cleaning arrangements for the Guildhall and Corn Exchange.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED:

- a. To reduce the cleaning hours in the Guildhall from 50 per month to 32 per month between April and October and from 12 per month to 8 per month between November and March with effect from February 2020.
- b. To employ the Guildhall cleaner to undertake cleaning for 3 hours per week in the Corn Exchange, reduced from 6 hours per week, from the week beginning 27th January 2020.
- c. To arrange casual cover for cleaning both the Guildhall and Corn Exchange, if necessary, when the cleaner is on leave.

20) Increase in Minimum Wage and Effect on Staff Salaries

It was noted that the minimum wage would increase from £8.21 per hour to £8.72 per hour from April 2020. Councillors considered the impact of this increase on staffing costs and differentials. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to increase salaries from April 2020 to maintain current differentials in pay, as outlined in Option A of the RFO's confidential report.**

21) Public Toilets

Members considered future maintenance and cleaning arrangements for the public toilets in St Mary's car park and Queen Street.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to seek advice from a local architect on how the facilities could be reconfigured to make them more manageable. The Clerk would obtain quotations for this work.

The reconfiguration could include the creation of two individual cubicles with disabled access at Queen Street and a 20p per use charge. Storage could also be incorporated into the design.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to negotiate with the current contractor to extend the cleaning and maintenance contract for a further six months.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....