

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
FINANCE, ASSET MANAGEMENT & HR COMMITTEE
 meeting held remotely by video conference
 at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 21st July 2020

Present:

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

In attendance:

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

1) Election of Chair

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Daniel Thomas be elected Chair of the Committee.

2) Election of Deputy Chair

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Councillor Matthew Park be elected Deputy Chair of the Committee.

3) Apologies

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve the following apologies:

Cllr Duncan White – holiday, Cllr Milner Whiteman – other meeting.

4) 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.

5) Dispensations

None requested.

6) Minutes

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2020 be **APPROVED** and signed as a true record.

7) Town Clerk's report

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

It was noted that an alternative site was required for the artwork intended to be sited in the High Street by Back Lane car park, as the plaque for Alderman Davies would be obscured by the artwork.

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

8) Finance

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

The internal audit and year end accounts had recently been completed and some changes had been made to enable day to day operations to continue. Prior to lockdown two councillors would come into the office to check invoices and sign cheques. Due to the restrictions in place, the RFO now scanned invoices, which were sent by email to two Councillors. The Councillors replied by email and payments were then put onto Unity Trust Bank and the direct transfers were authorised by two Councillors. The RFO expressed her thanks to Councillors for their prompt responses in dealing with payments. She had found that the revised system was helpful in terms of cash control and cheaper in terms of postage. It was also an improvement in terms of staff time and resources and the month end accounts could be completed more easily.

No separate income report had been prepared as the Council's income was much reduced due to the reduction in income from market traders.

The Council's telecoms provision had been transferred from BT to Invoco. There was now a fixed rate with no additional call charges, which should result in a reduction in expenditure on telecoms.

The RFO was very satisfied with the year-end accounts service provided by Rialtas, which she would recommend for next year.

Payment had been made for the Gaskell drainage, path and new access from the school. The first tranche of the LEADER funding had been received and a second claim would be made in August.

It was noted that there had been more interments than expected and cemetery fees received were over budget. It was agreed to review cemetery charges at the next meeting.

If the Gaskell expenditure were taken out of the budget, there was an underspend of 24% against budget for this stage of the year.

Members **NOTED** the report and thanked the RFO for its clarity.

- b. Members **NOTED** the balance sheet as at 30th June 2020.
- c. Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure to 30th June 2020.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 30th June 2020. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 30th June 2020.**
The RFO was asked to review the distribution of the Council's funds between financial institutions to ensure funds were adequately protected.
- e. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve payments from 5th June 2020 to date.**
Councillors queried the monthly gas bill for 10 High Street and noted the high standing charge.
There was also a query regarding council tax on the Mary Webb meeting room. This had previously been a stand-alone office with a tenant. It was noted that if a review were requested, this would have to encompass all of the Town Council's property, which could result in an increase in charges. It was agreed to consider this matter further at the next meeting.

9) Barclays Bank Debit Card

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the provision of business debit cards for the Barclays current bank account for the Clerk and RFO.** It was noted that restrictions would be in place on use of the card.

10) I-Pad for Guildhall

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the purchase of a re-conditioned i-pad for use for sales in the Guildhall in conjunction with the card reader, within a budget of £200.**

11) PAT Testing

It was noted that PAT testing of electrical equipment had been carried out at the Corn Exchange and Guildhall on 13th March 2020.

12) 10 High Street

Members noted a report from the working group. Cllr Duncan White had been elected as Chair of the working group, which included two members of the public. The group was gathering information on the condition of the building and considering how to consult with members of the public to seek views on its future use. Quotations were also being obtained for the repair and redecoration of the front of the building.

Cllr Whiteman joined the meeting

13) Anti-Pigeon Measures for the Guildhall

Members noted concerns about the pigeons roosting on the Guildhall, causing damage to the building and mess on the building and pavement below. It was noted that the removal of the Christmas lights and the pigeon spikes in place had not prevented the pigeons perching.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to obtain professional quotations for hawking and other measures to deal with the pigeons.

14) Corn Exchange – Use of Market Area

The Mayor had held further discussions with traders regarding the use of the market area under the Corn Exchange for outdoor seating. No firm decision had been reached by the traders on whether they wished to go ahead. **It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to allow traders to use the space, providing the requirements set by the Council were met.**

03/20

15) Public Toilet Cleaning and Servicing

- a. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to retrospectively approve a six month extension to the existing contract with Healthmatic, until 30th September 2020, at a cost of £7,175 for the six months, a 2.5% increase on the previous contract.
- b. It had not been possible to make progress with seeking advice on the reconfiguration of the public toilets. Councillors wished to consider decommissioning the automatic toilets in St Mary's car park and reconfiguring the Queen Street facilities. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to initially approach a builder regarding proposals for the Queen Street public toilets.
- c. It was noted that the current contract with Healthmatic would expire at the end of September. It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to negotiate to extend the existing contract with Healthmatic for a further six months.

16) The Square

Councillors considered possible alterations to the layout of furniture in the Square to provide more space for market stalls or performances. Concerns were raised about locating the benches too close to the road.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** that Cllrs Holyoak, N Park, Themans and Thomas would meet in the Square to consider options. The matter would be considered further at the September full Council meeting.

17) Linden Lodge

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to retrospectively approve the purchase and installation of a new boiler at Linden Lodge at a cost of £1,244.96

18) Covid-19 and Council Facilities

- a. Councillors noted that the public toilets in Queen Street had re-opened on 13th July 2020, following cleaning and the display of signage by Healthmatic. There had been significant problems with the standard of cleaning initially and the Clerk was in discussions with Healthmatic to ensure these were addressed satisfactorily.
- b. It was noted that measures were being put in place to allow the re-opening of the Guildhall.
- c. It was noted that messages from central government were mixed regarding a return to the workplace. The Council's administrative staff had been home based since 25th March. Councillors noted the difficulties of prolonged working from home for employees, including personal circumstances, available equipment, communication and reduced efficiency.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to delegate authority to the Town Clerk to manage a return to office working for administrative staff, with the agreement of staff members, once all necessary measures had been put in place.

19) Plaque for 'Mayflower Children'

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** to approve the installation of a plaque to the 'Mayflower Children' on the right-hand wall of the Museum, facing the High Street, subject to approval by the tenant, Shropshire Museum Service.

It was noted that the programme of events planned for 2020 would be postponed to 2021.

20) Promotional Video for Much Wenlock

Councillors considered a request for a grant of £500 from the organisers of the Wenlock Edge Festival of the Spoken Word to support an initiative to create promotional audio-visual material for the town.

It was noted that the Communications, Markets and Tourism Working Group would be meeting later in the week to discuss proposals for an application for Covid-19 funding for smaller market towns and the above proposal might be discussed then.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED** not to award £500 but to invite the proposer to the forthcoming meeting to discuss the Covid-19 grant application and to also suggest a possible application for funding to the Community Council.

21) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance, Asset Management & HR Committee would be held on Tuesday, 29th September 2020 at 7.00pm.

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.

04/20

22) Council Insurance

- a. It was noted that the Council insurance renewal was due on 16th August 2020.
- b. Renewal information had been received from the current insurer, Zurich, for one year or three year options. BHIB, a broker, had advised that they could not match the renewal offer from Zurich.
It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and accept the three year renewal proposal from Zurich Insurance.

23) Market Trade

Councillors considered a report regarding the above.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the recommendation contained in the report on Buttermarket rent prepared by the RFO.

24) Decoration of Library Windows

Councillors considered the three quotations obtained.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and accept the quotation from Garth Goodall in the amount of £596.

25) 10 High Street

It was noted that quotations for the repair and decoration of the front of 10 High Street were awaited.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to delegate authority to the Clerk to spend up to £2,000 on the work.

26) 2 Burgage Way

Members noted that an inspection of the property had been carried out and considered quotations to hand for maintenance work required.

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve and accept the quotation to remedy the damp problems from Severn Damp & Timber Preservation in the amount of £975 + VAT.

It was noted that a repair had been made to the leaking toilet at a cost of £20.

It was noted that quotations were being obtained for the repair or replacement of the gates at the entrance to the property.

27) Tree at Cemetery

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to approve the quotation from Joffrey Watson to trim the Leyland Cypress tree adjacent to the vehicular access to the Cemetery at a cost of £100.

28) William Penny Brookes Sculpture on Gaskell Recreation Ground

It was PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to arrange for the sculptor of the William Penny Brookes sculpture on the Gaskell Recreation Ground to clean the sculpture and the plaque on the gate entrance at a cost of £150.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....