MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
FINANCE & ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
meeting held at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7.25 pm on Tuesday, 21st September 2021

Present:
Cllrs. Mike Atherton (from minute 10), John O'Dowd, Robert Toft, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas

In attendance:
Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Diane Barlow –Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), Cllr David Fenwick

1) Apologies
It was RESOLVED to approve the following apologies: Councillor Sam Neal – work
Councillors Daniel Thomas and Mike Atherton had advised that they would be late to the meeting, hence the later start time.

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 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Asset Management Committee meeting held on 20th July 2021 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.
Members **NOTED** the report.

6) Finance

a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. She advised that the grant awards process was under way, with a deadline of 30th September for applications from not-for-profit or voluntary organisations. The annual budget was underspent by 20.84% or £22,625.50 as at 31st August 2021 although some large invoices such as the library rental, anchor bolt testing and Christmas lights installation were to come. Income was higher than anticipated due to the rebate on public toilets and the buoyant performance of the markets.

   The RFO advised that the earmarked reserve for property covered all of the Council's properties.
   Members **NOTED** the report.

b. Members **NOTED** the balance sheet as at 31st August 2021.

c. Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure to 31st August 2021.

d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 31st August 2021. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 31st August 2021.**

e. **It was RESOLVED to retrospectively approve payments from 21st July 2021 to date.**

7) Arrangements for Budget Setting
Members agreed that the Clerk and RFO should work on a first draft of the budget to be presented to the October meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee.

8) Guildhall Cupola

a. Members noted that Listed Building Consent had been granted by Shropshire Council for work to the cupola.

b. Members noted that the contractor had been advised of the above and had submitted an application to Shropshire Council to erect scaffold on the pavement at the front of the building. Scaffold would also be required at the rear of the building but access would be maintained to the building and market. It was expected that the scaffold would be in place for between four and six weeks, depending on the work required to the cupola. Guildhall custodians, neighbours and the general public would be advised of the work when details were known. The Clerk was asked to request that shops on the opposite side of the road to the Guildhall kept the pavement clear while the scaffold was in place.

9) Yew Hedge at Guildhall

It was noted that an order had been placed for cutting back the yew hedge at the rear of the Guildhall and that the work would be carried out between 20th and 30th September. Officers were asked to arrange for the contractor to also remove the ivy on the rear wall.

Councillor Mike Atherton joined the meeting.

10) Insurance for Buskers

Members noted that the Council's insurer had advised that cover could not be provided for buskers. Those acting under the auspices of other organisations such as the U3A, would be covered by that organisation's public liability insurance. Musicians were able to obtain their own insurance, including via organisations such as the Musicians' Union, but this was really only suitable for regular performers.

Officers were asked to continue to explore other options.

11) Requests to display A Boards in The Square

Councillors considered approaches from local businesses regarding the display of A boards in The Square to advertise their businesses. Members noted that such boards might present a hazard and could proliferate.

It was RESOLVED not to allow A boards in The Square, however, Councillors would be supportive of sales or promotional events in The Square. **Promotion only stalls would incur no charge; sales events would be charged at the usual rates**.

12) Street Lighting

a. The RFO advised that the Council was in year two of a three-year programme to replace all of the Council's SOX or SON lights with LED lighting. Lights with asbestos seals in Station Road were due to be replaced the following year, which could incur an additional charge.

   A telephone pole in Queen Street had recently fallen and been removed as it had rotted near the base. A Town Council owned street light was fitted on the pole and this had been disposed of without the Council's knowledge. The Council's street lighting contractor had carried out a site visit and a quote for a replacement light would be presented to the next meeting.

b. Members noted that the Council's fixed contract for street lighting energy had expired and was now on a rolling basis. **Given the rapidly changing nature of energy prices, it was RESOLVED to delegate authority to officers in conjunction with the Deputy Mayor to select a supplier and make arrangements for a new contract.**

13) Cemetery Grass Cutting and Grounds Maintenance

The Clerk reported that she and members of the Friends of the Old Cemetery had met the grounds maintenance contractor at the cemetery to discuss possible changes to the maintenance regime to encourage greater biodiversity. The contractor would review the suggestions and provide costings and operational information. Separate quotes had been requested for removal of ivy on the boundary walls and cutting back hedges, work outside the regular maintenance contract.

It was noted that cemetery fees would be reviewed as part of the budgeting process.

14) Property Working Group Terms of Reference

It was RESOLVED to approve the draft Terms of Reference for the Property Working Group.

15) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee would be held on Tuesday, 19th October 2021 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.

16) Bus Shelter in Queen Street

Members considered quotations for repair of the roof of the bus shelter in Queen Street.

It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation from SL Coldicott Ltd in the amount of £695 + VAT.

17) Public Toilets

Members noted that the current maintenance and cleaning contract for the public toilets at Queen Street and St Mary's Car Park would expire at the end of September and considered the renewal quotation.

It was RESOLVED to renew the contract with Healthmatic for a further 12 months at a cost of £14,350 for both facilities.

18) Replacement Windows for Intermediate Office in Corn Exchange

Members considered quotations for two replacement windows for the intermediate office in the Corn Exchange.

It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation from Morris Joinery in the amount of £1,700.60 and £1,894.20 + VAT, to include supply, fit, full paint finish, draught seal and slimline double glazing.

It was noted that Listed Building Consent would need to be obtained before the work could go ahead and the Clerk would make the necessary application.

19) Mary Webb Room

Members considered arrangements for letting the Mary Webb Room to a tenant.

It was RESOLVED to approve the rental as outlined in the officer report and for officers to make the necessary arrangements.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

Signed…… Date……..

Chairman