

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
FINANCE & ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
meeting held at the Guildhall, Much Wenlock
at 7.00 pm on Thursday, 20th January 2022

Present:

Cllr. John O'Dowd, David Fenwick, Marcus Themans, Daniel Thomas

In attendance:

Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Diane Barlow – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), one member of the public

1) Apologies

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the following apologies: Councillor Wilf Grainger – work, Councillor Duncan White – family commitment.

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 23rd November 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.

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. She advised that the interim internal audit had been carried out the previous week and had gone well, confirming that all financial systems and internal controls were managed properly. Overall income was 0.4% above budget for the 2021/22 financial year with expenditure 16.87% under budget for the time of year. However large invoices for the library, Christmas lights removal and cupola were still to come. The RFO advised that there was a significant amount remaining in the Councillor training budget for the year. Members **NOTED** the report.
- b. Members **NOTED** the balance sheet as at 31st December 2021.
- c. Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure to 31st December 2021.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 31st December 2021. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliations to 31st December 2021.
- e. It was **RESOLVED** to approve payments from 23rd November 2021 to date.

7) Tree pit for Christmas Tree in High Street

Councillors reviewed the Christmas lights display, in particular, at the end of the High Street. A fixing tube had been installed in each of the two planters at the Gaskell corner junction and Christmas trees had been erected and decorated with lights powered by batteries on a timer. This had created a gateway to the High Street. Additional lights might brighten the display.

Members considered the desirability of installing a tree pit on the corner to allow a single tree to be erected and decorated with lights powered by an electrical connection. The cost of this would be around £3,000 and permission would be required from Shropshire Council highways.

It was **RESOLVED** to maintain this year's arrangement of installing trees in the existing planters but to consider the acquisition of additional lights.

8) Tree Planting at the Cemetery

Mrs Durbin was invited to speak on behalf of the Friends of the Old Cemetery. She outlined tree planting that had been undertaken in the old part of the cemetery over recent years and the current proposal. It was proposed to plant 7 x sorbus (rowan) along the grass path running across the cemetery, from the chapel towards the town, and 3 x crataegus prunifolia (hawthorn) along the central path running from the chapel towards the road.

Comparative prices for 10 trees of around 200cm in height had been obtained, as well as stakes and planting compost.

It was RESOLVED to support the planting of 10 trees in the old cemetery, to be obtained from Harley Nursery at a cost of £521.00.

It was RESOLVED that the Town Council would provide the funds to purchase the trees but would invite contributions from members of the public to offset the cost and encourage community participation.

Members considered a request to plant a memorial weeping lime in the old cemetery. Councillors were concerned about the final size of the tree and the exposure at the cemetery. It was therefore **RESOLVED not to approve the planting of a memorial weeping lime.**

Members were advised that volunteers from Caring for God's Acre had visited the cemetery the previous week and had created new areas for wildflowers, which would be seeded in the spring. The turf removed had been laid along the edges of the path from the steps, which had grown too wide. Members also noted concern about slow worms in the cemetery, to be followed up by the Clerk.

9) Guildhall Cupola and Window Repairs

Members noted that the additional work on the base of the cupola was scheduled to start the following Monday.

10) Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance, Asset Management Committee would be held on Tuesday, 22nd March 2022 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.

11) Welcome Back Fund

Members considered quotations for items to be purchased using the Welcome Back Fund:

It was RESOLVED to approve the purchase of a planter to replace the damaged one at the end of Sheinton Street, as well as removal of the damaged planter, at a total cost of £396.68 + VAT from Gordon Ellis & Co.

It was RESOLVED to purchase the following Christmas lights from LITE: simulated green pine garland with warm white twinkling lights and red and gold shatterproof baubles for The Square; simulated green pine garland with warm white twinkling lights and four 3D diamond stars for the Corn Exchange at a total cost of £5,380 + VAT.

Councillors agreed to consider the purchase of additional artificial Christmas trees and street light mounted decorations for the Gaskell corner at a later date.

12) Structural Engineer's Report for Guildhall

Members considered quotations for the production of a structural engineer's report on the damaged beam on the Guildhall.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Thomas Consulting to produce the report at a cost of £640 + VAT + disbursements.

13) Property Working Group

It was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue past 9pm.

Members considered a report from the Property Working Group.

10 High Street

It was RESOLVED to commission a local electrician to produce a specification for electrical work required inside 10 High Street to make good. Once a specification was to hand, quotations could be sought for the work.

Members noted difficulties associated with splitting the gas supply to 10 High Street and 2 Burgage Way, as both properties currently shared one supply. The RFO was exploring ways of separating the supply.

The Guildhall

Members of the Property Working Group and the Clerk had met earlier in the day with the Shropshire Council Conservation Officer to discuss the renovation of the Guildhall. The Conservation Officer had been supportive and positive about improvements to insulation, heating, double glazing, improved displays and interpretation and alterations to access. However, further clarification of the proposals would be required.

It was RESOLVED to arrange a meeting regarding the Guildhall renovation with a recommended fund finder and project manager.

It was RESOLVED to approve recommendations 2a and 3a of the Confidential Recommendations proposed by members of the Property Working Group in the report dated 20th January 2022.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....