

07/23

MUCH WENLOCK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a
FINANCE & ASSET MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
meeting held at the Corn Exchange, Much Wenlock
at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 26th September 2023

Present:

Cllrs. Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, John O'Dowd, Marcus Themans and Duncan White.

In attendance:

Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Diane Barlow – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

1. Apologies

Councillor Christian Toon – work 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. Town Council Car Park at the Rear of the Corn Exchange

Following on from the discussion at the previous meeting, Members considered options for management of the Council's car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange. Members wished to be even-handed and to support local shops with the one-hour, free pop-and-shop car parking. They had observed that there were many parking spaces available in the town in the morning, both on-street and in the chargeable car parks. Members noted the high charges for residents' permits and season tickets for Shropshire Council owned public car parks in the town.

It was RESOLVED to amend the times for one-hour public parking in the car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange to 8am to 3pm, Monday to Saturday, with no restrictions on parking outside of these hours. The arrangements for permit holders parking would remain unchanged.

The Clerk was asked to advise staff at the Spar store and Blakemore of the decision. The new arrangements and compliance would be reviewed in three months' time.

5. Public Toilets

- a. Members noted that the Service Manager at Healthmatic had sent apologies due to a family emergency.
- b. **It was RESOLVED to discuss proposals for the toilets at St Mary's Lane in private session at the end of the meeting.**

6. Minutes

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Asset Management Committee held on 25th July 2023 be APPROVED and signed as a true record.

7. Town Clerk's report

Members noted the Clerk's written and verbal report on action taken since the last meeting.

8. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report.
She reported that the annual grants application process was underway and would close on 30th September. There had been a high level of applications and these would be considered at the next meeting. The external audit of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2022/23 had been concluded. PKF Littlejohn, the external auditor, had confirmed that there was no action to be taken by the Council as a result of the audit.
Councillor Crooke-Williams had been gaining experience in authorising payments and there were now four competent signatories on the Unity Trust Bank account, three of whom were on the Finance Committee.

08/23

Income to 31st August was £35,573.32 (excluding precept, income from grant awards, refund from SSE Swalec and proceeds from property sale), which was 48.71% above budget for the time of year. Expenditure to 31st August was £111,589, which was 11.6% below budget for the time of year. Members noted the report.

Councillor Crooke-Williams advised that she had started periodic checks of the petty cash, as previously agreed.

The RFO was asked to include the summary information on income and expenditure against budget in her written report for future meetings.

It was RESOLVED to thank the RFO for her work on the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

It was RESOLVED that Councillors Themans and Crooke-Williams should be the main signatories for the Council's Unity Trust Bank account.

- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 31st August 2023.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 31st August 2023.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 31st August 2023. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 31st August 2023.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 26th July 2023 to date.**

9. 2024/25 Budget

It was RESOLVED that the RFO and Clerk should prepare a first draft of the 2024/25 budget for consideration at the next meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee.

10. The Guildhall Project

Members received an update on progress with the Guildhall Project.

11. Cemetery Tree Inspection

Members reviewed and noted the inspection report on trees at the cemetery completed by an arboricultural officer from Shropshire Council. No actionable defects had been found and no work had been recommended.

12. Trees and Shrubs at the Cemetery

Members considered a request to purchase and plant replacement trees and/or additional shrubs in the old part of the cemetery.

It was RESOLVED to approve the request from the Friends of the Old Cemetery to purchase additional shrubs for the cemetery to a maximum value of £150.

13. Museum

Members considered a request from the Manager of Shropshire Museums & Archives for a meeting to discuss the operation of Much Wenlock Museum. **It was RESOLVED to hold the meeting on 9th October at 10am and that Councillors Crooke-Williams, Fenwick, O'Dowd and Themans and the Clerk would attend.**

14. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee would be held on Tuesday, 24th October 2023 at 7.00pm at The Corn Exchange.

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.

15. Internal Audit

It was RESOLVED to appoint DM Payroll Services Ltd as internal auditor for the financial year 2023/24.

16. Rental of 10 High Street

- a. Members noted the arrangements made with the agent Andrew Dixon & Co. for marketing and letting of 10 High Street.

09/23

- b. It was **RESOLVED** to appoint **Fodens Solicitors** to deal with the legal matters associated with the lease.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** to defer a decision on the budget for flooring for 10 High Street until further quotations were obtained.

17. Public Toilets

- a. Members discussed proposals from Healthmatic to address the ongoing problems with the public toilets at St Mary’s Lane.

It was RESOLVED to recommend to full Council that Healthmatic be commissioned to arrange for conversion of the two units at St Mary’s Lane to semi-automatic and for new doors to be fitted.

The Clerk was asked to clarify exactly what would be involved in the work and how long it would take, as well as the ownership of the equipment within the building.

- b. Members considered a quotation from Healthmatic for renewal of the annual cleaning and maintenance contract for the public toilets. The quotation incorporated a reduced number of cleaning hours, as suggested by the Healthmatic Service Manager.

In view of the ongoing problems with the toilets at St Mary’s Lane, it was RESOLVED to request a monthly cleaning and maintenance contract.

18. Use of Alamy Image

Members considered correspondence from Alamy regarding the use of an image on the Council’s website. **It was RESOLVED to pay the fee requested.**

19. Winter Floral Displays

It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation of £280 from Abbey Nursery for provision of the winter floral displays.

20. Reprint of Olympian Trail Leaflet

It was RESOLVED to reprint 2,000 Olympian Trail leaflets, to approve the quotation from Bridgnorth Print in the amount of £219 and to accept, with thanks, the donation of £100 from Wenlock Olympians.

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Signed.....
Chairperson

Date.....