

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, 25th July 2023

Present:

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

In attendance:

Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Diane Barlow – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), two employees of the Spar store in Much Wenlock.

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

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Asset Management Committee held on 23rd May 2023 be APPROVED and signed as a true record.

Agenda item 13, Town Council Car Park at the Rear of the Corn Exchange, was brought forward for the convenience of the members of the public present.

5. Town Council Car Park at the Rear of the Corn Exchange

Members considered a report on unauthorised use of the Town Council's car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange.

The Spar employees present were invited to outline their position. They expressed the following views:

- they had been parking in the Town Council car park for around seven years but only recently had this been challenged and staff felt that they were being unfairly targeted
- they were concerned about damage to vehicles when parking in the chargeable public car park or on the street
- the Spar store was open from 7am until 10pm which meant that staff arrived and left in the dark during the winter and wanted to park close to the store for safety
- it was difficult to retain staff, who would be reluctant to park elsewhere at a cost
- other vehicle owners, including market stall holders, parked on the car park all day.

Councillors explained that as stallholders paid for their stall, part of the arrangement was that they could park their cars on the car park. If Council staff became aware of unauthorised parking, this was addressed with vehicle owners as it arose on an ongoing basis.

Points made by Councillors included the following:

- the need to be fair to all users of the car park
- the public parking area was intended to support the High Street with 'pop and shop' provision
- other people working in the town had to park elsewhere and the Town Council could not provide parking for all workers
- if the cost of parking in the public car parks was too high, free on-street parking was available and various locations were suggested
- a paid permit system might be an option, but this would need to be offered to others in the town and there was insufficient space in the car park
- Much Wenlock was a very low crime area and there was little risk in walking in the well-lit town centre at the times mentioned.

Amending the hours covered by the one-hour parking restriction in the car park to allow longer term parking earlier in the day might be helpful to the store staff, who could then park elsewhere and move their cars into the Town Council car park late afternoon.

It was RESOLVED to consider options for management of the Council's car park and to make a decision at the next meeting.

The Spar staff were thanked for attending and left the meeting.

6. Town Clerk's report

Members noted the Clerk's written and verbal report.

7. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. She was pleased to report that nearly £880 had been received in donations in the Guildhall so far this season. Council income to 30th June was £29,336 (excluding precept and proceeds from property sales) which was 104.42% above budget for the time of year. Income in general terms had been encouraging for the year to date. The income figure also included the recent refund of £6,252.68 for street light electricity charges from SSE Swalec. Expenditure to 30th June was £73,846 which was 3.91% below budget for the time of year.

Members noted the report.

- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 30th June 2023.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 30th June 2023.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 30th June 2023. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 30th June 2023.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 24th May 2023 to date.**
- f. **It was RESOLVED to retrospectively approve the cost of £911 for the summer planting scheme in the town by Abbey Nursery.**
It was noted that quotations should be obtained for replacement of the tall planters in the churchyard for next year.

8. Investment Strategy

Members considered a draft Investment Strategy. Following amendment to a three year strategy, 2023 – 2026, **it was RESOLVED to recommend the draft Investment Strategy for approval by full Council.**

9. Grants Policy

Members considered a revised Grants Policy. The RFO had revised the existing policy to make it clearer and more robust for both Councillors and applicants. Following a minor amendment, **it was RESOLVED to recommend the draft Grants Policy for approval by full Council.**

10. Town Council Insurance

- a. Members noted that the Council's insurance policy was due for renewal on 16th August 2023.
- b. Councillors noted questions from the Insurer regarding reinstatement values and fixed wiring inspections as well as cost indications for the provision of these items. **It was RESOLVED to request a renewal quotation based on the current position.**

11. Financial Documents for Disposal

It was RESOLVED to approve the disposal of selected financial documents, in accordance with the Council's Document Retention Policy. It was noted that an amendment was required to the Disposal and Destruction Procedure with regard to electronic records.

12. The Guildhall Project – Renovation and Future Use

It was reported that the NLHF grant offer had been accepted.

The stakeholder and public consultation surveys were ready, both hard copy and electronic versions. It was intended to issue the tender documents for the Project Viability Report and the Audience Development Consultant this week with a deadline for responses of noon on 23rd August. The tenders would be opened on 24th August and then reviewed by Greenwood Projects. Following a decision by the Town Council it was expected that the contracts would be awarded in September.

13. 10 High Street

Members noted that refurbishment work at 10 High Street was due to start on 2nd August. The Clerk was liaising with Barclays regarding the ATM and access.

It was RESOLVED to obtain fee quotations from letting agents for providing a rental value for the property, finding a tenant and rental management of 10 High Street.

14. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee would be held on Tuesday, 26th September 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. Part-Night Street Lighting

Members considered a report on the viability of part-night lighting for the Town Council's street-lighting. It was noted that the LED replacement programme had positively impacted on the street lighting energy costs and that general energy costs were now coming down. The Council was in the first year of a two-year plan to convert SON lights to LEDs, which would further reduce energy costs. Members noted the cost of conversion to part-night lighting and that risk assessments would need to be carried out before any implementation.

It was RESOLVED to review the viability of part-night lighting again after renewal of the street lighting energy contract in January 2024.

16. Public Toilets

Members noted that a revised quotation for alterations to the automatic public toilets in St Mary's car park had been obtained from Healthmatic but this was unclear and further explanation was required.

It was RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow the meeting to continue past 9.00pm.

The current cleaning and maintenance contract with Healthmatic would expire at the end of September. Councillors discussed other options.

It was RESOLVED to await clarification on the quotations for alterations to the toilets in St Mary's car park.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Signed.....
Chairperson

Date.....