

# 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, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

**Present:** David Fenwick, John O'Dowd, Marcus Themans, Christian Toon and Duncan White.

**In attendance:** Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Diane Barlow – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

## 1. Apologies

Cllr. Susan Crooke-Williams – other 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 held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be APPROVED and signed as a true record.**

## 5. Town Clerk's report

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

## 6. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. She reported that the interim audit for the 2023/24 financial year had gone well, with no concerns raised by the auditor. Income to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was £68,933 (excluding precept, income from grant awards, and proceeds from property sales) which was 60.1% above budget for the time of year. This income figure also included the refund from SSE Swalec for street light electricity charges. Expenditure to 31 December 2023 was £239,388 (excluding NHLF and AHF expenditure) which was 2.1% below budget for the time of year, with a large invoice for the Library Service expected soon.
- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 to date.**

## 7. Internal Audit

Members reviewed the report from the interim internal audit carried out on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024 by DM Payroll Services. The auditor had raised no concerns and Councillors expressed thanks to the RFO.

## 8. The Guildhall Project

- a. Members noted that a meeting with Greenwood Projects was scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> January. A tile had recently slipped from the roof of the Guildhall and this was being checked.
- b. Members considered the Structural Engineer's Report on the Guildhall, carried out as part of the viability appraisal for the Guildhall project. It was noted that many of the matters identified would be addressed as part of the wider Guildhall project.  
With regard to the oak posts at the front of the building, advice had been received from an Historic Building Consultant that it would not be advisable to inject the timber with an insecticide without dealing with the underlying causes of the problem.  
**It was RESOLVED to seek further advice from the Historic Building Consultant on the best way to address the problems with the condition of the oak support posts on the Guildhall.**

- c. Members considered the Mechanical and Electrical Engineer's Report on the Guildhall, carried out as part of the viability appraisal for the Guildhall project. No safety concerns were raised in the report and other work would be addressed as part of the larger Guildhall project.

#### 9. Public Toilets

- a. Members noted an update on outstanding work to the public toilets at St Mary's car park. Healthmatic had been asked to arrange the (re)installation of a cash payment facility and were seeking a solution. The Clerk was obtaining quotations for maintenance work to the building and for the repair of the damaged railings at the front of the building.

- b. Members noted that the upgrade to the electrical installation at Queen Street public toilets was scheduled for the week beginning 29<sup>th</sup> January. The toilets would need to be closed for the duration of the work and up to five days would be allowed.

There had been recent vandalism in the toilets with signs of a small fire in the gents' as well as a pink liquid having been sprayed on almost every surface in the gents' toilets. After a delay of several days, Healthmatic cleaners had attended and a deep clean would also be undertaken.

It was noted that the condition of the facilities at Queen Street was very poor. Contact would be made to seek sponsorship from a local company once the draft letter had been received from Cllr Toon.

#### 10. Car Park at the rear of the Corn Exchange

Members reviewed operation of the car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange following changes to the restricted parking hours. Letters had been sent to Spar staff and Blakemore advising of the revised arrangements, although the new signage was still awaited. The matter would be considered again when the new signs had been installed.

#### 11. Part-night Street Lighting

Members noted that the renewal date for the street lighting energy contract was March not January, as previously stated. The review of part-night lighting would therefore be included on the agenda of the Finance & Asset Management Committee meeting in March.

#### 12. Christmas Lights

Members reviewed the 2023 Christmas lights display. The service from the contractor, Potters Electrical, had been very good and an attractive display had been provided. The following matters had arisen:

- After removal of the lights, the contractor had reported that the decorations at the front of the Corn Exchange were covered in bird mess, especially in the centre of the building, as the spikes were not deterring the pigeons. The RFO was asked to discuss options for addressing this matter with the pest control contractor.
- The wiring to the lights on the tree in the Square had been vandalised. The contractor would try to effect a repair.
- Some replacement and additional trees for display on shop fronts would be needed for the 2024 display and this could be considered when costs had been obtained.
- During the display period the Christmas trees in planters at end of the High Street had slipped to the side. Options to improve stability were being investigated.
- It might be possible to reconfigure the Merry Christmas banner across the High Street to make the lettering clearer and this would be pursued with the contractor.

#### 13. Walkers are Welcome

Members considered correspondence from the Much Wenlock Walkers are Welcome group about the winding up of the local committee and the requests for financial support for continued affiliation to the national body 'Walkers are Welcome' and website hosting. Councillors were sorry to hear about the closure of the group but pleased that the volunteers would continue to operate informally.

**It was RESOLVED that the Council would pay the annual subscription for affiliation to the national body 'Walkers are Welcome' from 2025 and for hosting of the Much Wenlock Walkers are Welcome website on an ongoing basis.**

#### 14. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 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. Lighting for TBC Office in Corn Exchange**

Members considered quotations for replacement lighting in the TBC office at the Corn Exchange.

**It was RESOLVED to commission JC Electrical to replace the 10 existing suspended light fittings in the TBC office with 6 new LED suspended light fittings.**

**16. Rental of 10 High Street**

Members considered an update on the rental of 10 High Street. The lease was now ready for signature by Councillors and the rental was due to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

**17. Gaskell Recreation Ground**

Members noted the response from Shropshire Council regarding land adjacent to the Gaskell Recreation Ground.

**18. Much Wenlock Museum**

Members considered further information received from Shropshire Council regarding Much Wenlock Museum.

**It was RESOLVED that, on the basis of opening hours for the museum being reduced to 1,000 per year, the Town Council's preferred opening days for May to September were Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 10.00am to 4.30pm with a half hour break for lunch.**

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed.....  
Chairperson

Date.....