

# **MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2020 – REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM**

## **PRESENT**

The Mayor - Councillor Jones  
The Deputy Mayor – Councillor Rushton  
Councillor Brady  
Councillor Hall  
Councillor Hart  
Councillor Hawley  
Councillor Jackson  
Councillor McLoughlin  
Councillor Perkin  
Councillor Rogers  
Councillor Salt  
Councillor Sheldon  
Councillor Yates

Councillor Davies was also in attendance

## **1.20 ELECTION OF A CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR**

Councillor Jones opened the meeting and called for nominations for the Chair of the Finance Strategy and Management Committee. Councillor Rogers nominated Councillor Hall; he had led this Committee in the right direction and would continue to do so. This was seconded by Councillor Jackson. There were no other nominations; a vote was taken and agreed.

Councillor Hall thanked Councillors and called for nominations for the Deputy Chair. Councillor Rogers nominated Councillor Perkin; he had been active in working with the Town Hal staff in relation to IT issues and had been an effective Deputy Chair the previous year. This was seconded by Councillor Hart. There were no other nominations; a vote was taken and agreed.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: Councillor Sheldon in anything pertaining to Biddulph in Bloom.
  
- ii) Other Interests: Councillor Rogers works at one of the organisations in agenda item 9a. Councillor Jones is Chair of the Biddulph Grange Country Park Friends in agenda item 23.

## **3. APOLOGIES**

No apologies were received.

## **4. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2020 (agreed at the Town Council meeting on 16 June 2020) were **confirmed**.

**5. TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR THE TOWN COUNCIL FOR 2020-21 BEFORE FORMAL APPROVAL AT THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING ON 14 JULY 2020 (DRAFT DOCUMENT ATTACHED)**

Item 8- Councillor Davies wondered whether the provision of play opportunities and youth facilities could be included; he had been asked about a possible BMX course.

Item 16- Councillor Jackson would like the possible Shepherd Street allotment site to be added by name, as this is the most progressed of the ideas.

There was discussion about whether the areas of the Neighbourhood Plan should be separated in Item 25. The Chief Officer confirmed that this area of work was not about the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan, but about the development of a Town Council Strategy.

Item 24- Councillor Jones noted that there would be a second round of grants in October 2020.

Item 26- Councillor Salt wondered whether Covid could be mentioned specifically, as a risk. This should be an agenda item at every meeting.

In addition, there should be a greater emphasis on working with community sector organisations.

Councillor Yates agreed that Item 26 should contain how the Town Council would deal with future outbreaks.

Councillor Jones felt there was a strong focus on community groups in Item 5.

Councillor Hall queried whether Members were happy to recommend this document to Town Council, with the necessary amendments. There was a show of hands; all agreed.

**6. TO APPROVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION FOR APRIL 2020**

Proposed by Councillor Perkin; seconded by Councillor Hart and agreed.

**7. TO CONSIDER A REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS (ASSERTION 8 OF ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT)**

The document provided by the Chief Officer was shared to the screen.

The Chief Officer noted that the Town Council reflected each year on any significant events as part of the review of budgets and budget-setting. As part of the Annual Governance Statement, Assertion 8 required Councillors to be clear that there had been a review of significant events.

This year, there had been a number of events that had not been envisaged as part of the budget-setting process. To this end, the Chief Officer felt it would be prudent for this Committee to consider the impact of significant events and the approach that the Town Council had taken.

During 2019-20 the following 'significant events' occurred. Below is a summary detailing the Town Council's response:

Event	Detail	Action	Financial Implication
<b>Litigation</b>	None	Maintain effective insurance, reviewed annually.	Budget- £1,500 per annum
<b>New liabilities (legal responsibilities)</b>	No new assets during 2019-20; ongoing planning for additional liabilities in 2020-21.	Continue to monitor three-year financial forecast and plan strategically through the annual action plan and Neighbourhood Plan.	Allocation from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for Town Hall management in 2020-21. Earmarked Reserves allocated for internal and external development of Town Hall and Biddulph Grange Country Park Visitor Centre.
<b>New commitments</b>	Biddulph Town Council committed to forming an Environment and Climate Change Working Group within 2019-20 with associated action plan.	The emerging action plan for 2020-21 highlighted possible projects and identified the need for a budget.	£4,000 raised through precept; £5,000 from Earmarked Reserves.
<b>Events</b>	The Coronavirus pandemic had a significant impact on the work of the Town Council, necessitating an unprecedented community response.	Biddulph Town Council organised approx. 3000 prescription deliveries and arranged for food and other vital items for residents.	£1000 received from Staffordshire County Council following grant application. £500 requested from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council; awaiting decision. Earmarked Reserves 'Projects' budget used for additional funding.
<b>Transactions</b>	Financial transactions were recorded on the RBS IT system. Internal Audit reviewed income and expenditure and found this to be well-managed and transparent.	Continue to use the IT tool available, expanding data and reports available.	Ongoing annual fees (£500).

There was a show of hands and this document was received.

**8. TO RECEIVE THE ATTACHED DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2019-20 AHEAD OF APPROVAL AT TOWN COUNCIL ON 14 JULY 2020 (PLEASE NOTE THIS HAS BEEN SIGNED BY THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF THE 2019-20 INTERNAL AUDIT PROCESS)**

The Chief Officer noted that this was the opportunity to ask any questions ahead of the formal consideration of this document at the Town Council meeting next week. The Chief Officer also noted that the Internal Auditor had signed her section of this document and had noted following the internal audit of 2019-20 accounts and operations that there were no concerns.

Councillor Hawley asked whether Councillors should say 'yes' to everything next week. Councillor Hawley wondered if there are there any concerns. The Chief Officer noted that, as far as she was concerned, the Town Council could satisfy all the assertions with a 'yes' (as appropriate), but Councillors needed to be satisfied that they were happy.

There were no further questions from Members.

There was a show of hands and this document was received.

**9. TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL SPEND ON THE REFURBISHED TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES:**

- a) Purchase of slimline dishwasher for upstairs kitchen**
- b) Floor covering for office, corridor, kitchen and bathroom spaces**
- c) Purchase of toilet, sink and unit for Town Council bathroom (£580.20 inc. VAT from Howdens)**

The Chief Officer noted that there had been improvements to what had been the Police Locker room; the space was gradually becoming an office space. It was now time to move forward with further expenses and a number of the above items were over £500, requiring additional authorisation.

The Chief Officer noted that a small dishwasher would enable the Town Council to move away from plastic and disposable cups and plates, and would also support the Town Council's ability to provide facilities when bookings returned to the Chamber.

The Chief Officer had provided three prices for dishwashers.

The Chief Officer requested approval to seek three quotes for floor coverings and to move forward with the installation over the summer.

Item c) was the quote from the local branch of Howdens, which was over £500 when VAT was added.

Councillor Hawley wondered whether the dishwasher prices included fitting. The Chief Officer noted that fitting would be done by the caretakers; they could also fit the bathroom suite.

Councillor Hawley wondered whether formal quotes had been sourced from other organisations regarding the bathroom suite. Councillor Hawley felt that bathroom suites could be sourced more cheaply from the internet. The Chief Officer noted that Howden's was a local company and that internet prices were often cheaper, but additional costs inflated the 'deal' when they had been explored previously. As the Town Council was going to be the custodian of the Town Hall, consideration was necessary to ensure a quality product was purchased. Howden's had been recommended as a quality provider.

Councillor Salt wondered about the energy ratings of the dishwasher and whether a baby changing area had been installed in the Town Hall. The Chief Officer noted that she would investigate the energy ratings and she believed that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) had installed a baby changing facility in the disabled toilet area.

Councillor Hawley proposed that the Chief Officer should investigate reasonable quality goods, which were cheaper than the Howden's quote.

Councillor Yates emphasised that a commercial standard of product would be necessary. A more heavy-duty product may be required.

Councillor Jones felt that cheaper bathroom quotes were possible; he would like to support a local company.

The Chief Officer confirmed that the quotation was for all items, including plumbing, and not just two porcelain items.

Councillor Hall asked that this should be added to the agenda for the Town Council meeting the following week. Subject to additional clarification, approval was given to spend Council resources on all three areas.

Councillor Hall queried whether a decision could be taken at the meeting on the purchase of a dishwasher.

Councillor Salt proposed the most energy efficient dishwasher.

Councillor Hawley noted that these were not high quality makes of dishwasher. Councillor Yates noted that there would be a domestic guarantee; perhaps consideration should be given to a commercial guarantee.

Councillor Yates agreed that consideration should be given to the energy efficiency of the dishwasher.

Councillor Jones wondered whether spending more money would be preferable.

The Chief Officer would make further investigations about warranties in advance of the Town Council meeting.

Jodie Hancock advised that all machines were A-rated.

The Chief Officer noted that this dishwasher would have light usage; a different specification would be required for the main Town Hall kitchen.

Councillor Davies felt that the cheapest machine would still be preferable; Councillor Hart agreed. There was a show of hands and it was agreed to investigate the purchase of the cheapest model. Councillor Rogers abstained from the vote.

#### **10. TO NOTE THAT NEW ROLES WITHIN THE TOWN COUNCIL WILL BE ADVERTISED W/C 6 JULY 2020**

The Chief Officer noted that the Customer Support Assistant roles and the Finance and Admin Officer role were all advertised on the Town Council website. She would speak about the cleaning roles in more detail later in the meeting.

Councillor Jackson queried whether they would be advertised elsewhere. The Chief Officer would add the opportunities to social media and usually tried to get these on the SMDC website and SPCA bulletins.

#### **11. TO NOTE THAT TOWN COUNCIL STAFF WILL BE COMPLETING ONGOING ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF ACCIDENTS (ROSPA) TRAINING COURSES AS PART OF ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (E-LEARNING BROCHURE ATTACHED)**

The Chief Officer noted that, as this Committee had a responsibility for personnel issues, she wanted Councillors to be aware that there was a continuation of professional development opportunities. Over the lockdown period, Officers had attended a number of webinars, with more planned. These sessions would build useful skills going forward.

**12. TO CONSIDER HOW PROJECTS WITHIN THE TOWN HALL WILL BE DEVELOPED AND APPROVED**

**For example, there are a number of non-essential enhancements to be made. Would a Working Group be appropriate, or should all decision-making come directly to this Committee?**

The Chief Officer noted that there would be a number of 'priorities' for development within the Town Hall; she queried whether Councillors wanted to have those discussions in this Committee setting, or whether it would be appropriate to consider options and then provide recommendations from a Working Group.

Councillor Salt wondered whether a Working Group would be beneficial, as a when a project needed significant discussion. She also noted that there should be a 'changing places' space within the Town Hall.

Councillor Jones felt the Working Group could scope the requirements and bring back proposals to this Committee. The first priority should be to get the Twinning plaque back on the wall.

The Chief Officer queried whether a short-term Working Group on Town Council development would be appropriate. There was a show of hands and this was agreed.

**13. MOBILE PHONES: TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF A PHONE FROM ARGOS AND TO ENTER A CONTRACT WITH FIFTEEN FOR THE PROVISION OF A SIM (£12+VAT PER MONTH) FOR CARETAKING STAFF**

Councillor Jackson proposed that this should be accepted.

Councillor Hawley wondered whether cheaper deals were available on the internet.

Councillor Rogers confirmed that it was one phone for all the caretaking staff.

Councillor Davies felt a cheaper deal was possible.

There was agreement in principle, but further deals would be explored in advance of the Town Council meeting the following week.

**14. TO APPROVE A GDPR GAP ANALYSIS PACKAGE FROM STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DATA PROTECTION SERVICE (£150)- ATTACHED**

The Chief Officer noted that the new Finance and Admin Officer would take on responsibility for the Council's day-to-day management of GDPR. It would be helpful to have an audit of the current situation. This was a one-off piece of work.

Councillor Jackson noted that the County Council would look at the Town Council's provision, but wouldn't take on the responsibility of delivering this.

Councillor Hawley proposed that this was accepted; seconded by Councillor Perkin and agreed.

- 15. TO APPROVE DEVELOPMENT AT MOORLAND ROAD ALLOTMENTS:**
- a) THE REPLACEMENT OF 15 FENCE PANELS**
  - b) PURCHASE AND DISTRIBUTION OF hardcore AROUND BIN AREA**

The Chief Officer presented estimates for both areas of work, based on information from Chell's Building Supplies. Councillor Jones proposed that both areas of work were completed; seconded by Councillor Hart and approved.

Councillor Jackson queried whether there would be a contractor involved

The Chief Officer confirmed that neighbours and allotment holders would complete the work, supported by the Lengthsman as necessary.

- 16. TO APPROVE WORK TO THE MAYOR'S CHAIN AND PURCHASE OF PAST MAYOR MEDALS (QUOTATION ATTACHED)**

Proposed by Councillor Jones; seconded by Councillor Hart and agreed.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair to move: -

"That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 10 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated."

### **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

#### **17. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON BIDDULPH ARTISAN MARKET AND FRESH FOOD FRIDAY AND FUNDING REQUEST MADE TO STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

An image of the High Street was shared to the screen, for information.

All agreed that a return in September would be appropriate.

#### **18. TO APPROVE A QUOTATION FOR THE NEW IT SYSTEM FOR BIDDULPH TOWN COUNCIL, SPECIFICATION ATTACHED (QUOTATIONS TO BE SENT SEPARATELY)**

The quotations were considered and agreement reached.

#### **19. TO APPROVE A QUOTATION FOR ELECTRICAL WORK ON TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE SPACE, SPECIFICATION ATTACHED (QUOTATIONS TO BE SENT SEPARATELY)**

The quotations were considered and agreement reached.

#### **20. TO APPROVE A QUOTATION FOR TEMPORARY CLEANING CONTRACTORS AT WHARF ROAD TOILETS AND COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE (QUOTATIONS TO BE SENT SEPARATELY)**

There was a show of hands and all agreed to enter into an ongoing when the transfer of responsibilities had been completed with the District Council at both sites.

#### **21. TO APPROVE QUOTATIONS FOR TOURISM PRODUCTS (QUOTATIONS TO BE SENT SEPARATELY):**

- a) **Map**
- b) **2021 Calendars**

The quotations were considered and agreement reached.

#### **22. TO REVISIT THE IDEA OF FOOTFALL ANALYSIS WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRE (PROPOSAL ATTACHED)**

There was a vote; Members were in favour of a review of this proposal in six-months' time.



**23. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE COUNTRY PARK VISITOR CENTRE LEASE**

The Chief Officer noted that this lease had still not been signed. A course of action was agreed.

**24. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON TOWN HALL MANAGEMENT**

The Chief Officer would provide updates as this progressed.

**25. TO CONSIDER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED FOR DEFERRED GRANT APPLICATION IN JUNE 2020 (NOT PROVIDED AT TIME OF AGENDA SETTING)**

The Chief Officer had received an email to state that the organisation could not provide additional financial information at this time. The grant application would not be considered on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 8.07 pm

Signature .....

Date .....