

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 JULY 2021

PRESENT

- The Mayor - Councillor Rushton
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Jackson
- Councillor Lawton
- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Yates

26. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Adams, Councillor Garvey and Councillor Hawley.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Sheldon declared an interest in any matter relating to Biddulph in Bloom.

Councillor Jackson declared an interest in item 43, having a friend that has provided a quote. He left the room for the duration of this discussion.

b) Other Interests:

None declared.

28. MINUTES

- a) The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 (approved at the Town Council meeting on 22 June 2021) were confirmed.

- b) The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 (approved at the Town Council meeting on 22 June 2021) were confirmed.

FINANCE

29. TO RECEIVE RECONCILIATIONS FOR APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 2021 FOR:

- Current Account/ Reserve Account
- Petty Cash
- Credit Card
- CCLA

Councillor Yates asked for ongoing accounts for the different sites, the Chief Officer said that this will be considered for the year to date financial report, which will be prepared for the September meeting. Councillor Jackson asked for comparison cost for different years for the Town Hall management.

All voted in favour to receive the documents received.

30. TO RECEIVE YEAR-TO-DATE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE INFORMATION (ATTACHED)

Councillor Harper asked for clarity in the figures for the grants. It was explained as that the grants hadn't been issued within the quarter; they weren't showing as expenditure incurred.

31. COUNCILLORS TO RECEIVE THE DRAFT THREE-YEAR FORECAST DOCUMENT AND PROVIDE FURTHER FEEDBACK (ATTACHED)

The Chief Officer confirmed that the projected accounts suggest there may be a need to increase the precept in coming years. This is mainly due the cost of maintaining assets, and a particular concern was identified regarding Biddulph Grange Country Park Visitor Centre where cleaning costs are currently paid for from Ear-Marked Reserves. A more sustainable income is needed to cover this cost.

Councillor Yates asked whether the allocation Staffordshire Moorlands District Council holds for Biddulph will offset some of the Town Hall running costs.

Councillor Hart moved and Councillor Perkin seconded to receive the forecast. All voted in favour.

32. TO RECEIVE THE CURRENT ASSET REGISTER, UPDATED 31 MARCH 2021 (ATTACHED)

Councillor Harper asked that the mining wheel be considered for addition to the Asset Register.

Councillor Hart moved to receive the Asset Register, Councillor Rushton seconded. All voted in favour.

33. TO CONSIDER A PROCESS FOR DISPOSAL OF ASSETS, WHICH WILL BE ADDED TO THE ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY. THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS STATE:

14.2. No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £250.

IT IS PROPOSED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A STANDING AGENDA ITEM FOR EACH FINANCE STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING TO APPROVE DISPOSAL OF ANY ASSETS; A REPORT WILL BE PREPARED BY THE CHIEF OFFICER.

Moved by Councillor Hart, seconded by Councillor Harper, all voted in favour of the proposal.

34. TO CONFIRM THAT THE BALANCE FOR THE MAYORAL ACCOUNT FOR 2020-21 IS £5215.82; THIS WILL BE GIVEN TO CARDIAC RISK IN THE YOUNG (CRY)

Councillor Salt said in the past, money could not be donated direct to CRY and it may need to be distributed among memorial accounts.

35. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON CCTV CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN THE TOWN HALL

The Chief Officer gave a summary of the issues related to CCTV recording following the quotes at the Town Hall.

Councillor Jackson asked if a camera down at Station Road Gardens could be considered in the future. Councillor Hart supported this idea. Councillor Yates said the range of the camera needs to be considered.

Councillor Rogers asked if the CCTV system would be viewable from home, to support the consideration of intruder alarm activation. It was confirmed that is the case.

Councillor Hart moved that a new CCTV recording system be installed by Securitek and options for CCTV at Station Road be explored. Councillor Rushton seconded. All voted in favour.

36. TO AGREE A BUDGET FOR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ENHANCEMENTS, AND THE LOCATION OF NEW LIGHTS

The Chief Officer outlined that £26,000 is the current budget for the Christmas lights. This covers the switch-on event and associated costs. The bulk of this budget is spent on replacement of lamps, installation of the lights and storage costs. There had previously been discussion about improving the lamps used for the Christmas Lights. The current lighting kit is in reasonable condition.

Councillor Salt said she wasn't in favour of increasing the budget particularly as the ongoing pandemic may prevent an event going ahead. She moved that the budget remain as it stands. This was seconded by Councillor Brady.

Councillor Hart said it is important to improve what the Town Council offer. He proposed developing the Christmas Lights offer and absorbing the associated budgetary increases. Councillor McLoughlin seconded.

Councillor Sheldon said that the Town Council should consider getting sponsors for the Christmas Lights.

Councillor Yates said he would like to see several costed options to consider.

Both proposers agreed to defer until the next Finance Strategy and Management Committee where costed options would be presented.

37. TO NOTE THAT WELCOME BACK FUNDING HAS BEEN ALLOCATED TO BIDDULPH AND TO CONSIDER IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED ACTIONS THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER MONTHS (ORIGINAL PROPOSAL ATTACHED) TO MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS

Please note, the draft Service Level Agreement was agreed at the 15 June Finance Strategy and Management Committee meeting; this will be signed when received from Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

The Chief Officer outlined that the grant is for temporary enhancements only and presented the original proposal.

Councillor Yates asked if funds could be used for some of the temporary costs associated with the Christmas lights switch on, releasing funds for Christmas light improvement without increasing the budget.

Councillor Jackson thanked the officers for the work on their proposal, though raised concerns about the temporary nature of the funding that had been granted.

Councillor Sheldon also shared disappointment that longer term town enhancements could not be considered.

Councillor Hart proposed to accept. All voted in favour

IT AND COMMUNICATIONS

38. TO CONFIRM THAT THE IT WORKING GROUP WILL MEET DURING SUMMER 2021 TO CONSIDER:

- Virtual meeting capability in the Council Chamber
- Management of virtual meetings, including retention of recordings
- Provision of email addresses and laptops for Town Councillors in order to ensure GDPR compliance

Councillor Hart said he was keen for this to be progressed. All Councillors voted in favour.

POLICIES

39. TO CONFIRM THE REVISED POLICIES

- Partnerships Protocol.
- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
- Flexible Working Policy.
- Publication Scheme and Guidance.
- Information Management and Data Protection Policy (policy to follow).
- General Privacy Notice (document to follow).

With regard to the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, Councillor Salt expressed concerned that the Mayor and Chief Officer were allocated as designated safeguarding leads. She did not feel it was feasible for each Mayor to be trained in safeguarding. She proposed that the Mayor be removed as a safeguarding lead, and where the Chief Officer cannot act as lead, this matter is referred to the police or First Response team. All voted in favour.

All other policies were moved by Councillor Hart, all voted in favour.

GENERAL ISSUES

40. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE 'CONWAY ROAD GREEN' WORKING GROUP MEETINGS AND TO AGREE THAT AN INVOICE WILL BE SENT TO STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TO COVER THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS GROUP

The Chief Officer outlined that the Town Council had agreed to support Councillor Flunder's initiative to establish a Working Group regarding parking issues and vehicle related anti-social behaviour at Conway Road. The administration of the Working Group and associated consultation uses a significant amount of Town Council resources, for which Staffordshire County Council has a budget of £500 to cover such costs.

Councillor Jackson and Councillor Lawton said clarity was needed regarding the scope of the project, both geographically and measures that will be considered.

Councillor Salt said a Service Level Agreement should be put in place to ensure Biddulph Town Council's resources are not drained beyond the budget allocated by Staffordshire County Council.

The Chief Officer noted the scope of the project had changed from the initial Town Council proposal. She suggested developing a terms of reference and getting a clear outline of what Staffordshire County Council are willing to fund, as well as limiting the Town Council's involvement to this matter.

Councillor Harper said he was against the Town Council's involvement in the project.

Councillor Jackson asked that it be reiterated that the Committee's support only extends to exploring addressing the parking around the green at Conway Road.

Councillor Yates said that he is concerned that parking related to the schools is being considered by the Working Group as this affects a much wider area and there are many issues that fall well outside the Town Council's remit.

Councillor Hart moved to receive the update and invoice the County Council; seconded by Councillor McLoughlin. A majority of Councillors voted in favour, two voted against.

41. TO APPROVE THE OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN THE 2021-22 ACTION PLAN, PROVIDING FEEDBACK BEFORE ADOPTION BY TOWN COUNCIL (DOCUMENT TO BE SENT SEPARATELY)

Councillor Sheldon and Councillor Hart declared an interest as Chair and Vice-Chair of Moorlands Partnership Board.

Moved by Councillor Hart and seconded by Councillor Jackson. All voted in favour to approve.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, s1, the Council is to determine which items, if any, should be taken with the public excluded.

42. It was agreed to place an advert in the Chronicle to recruit a part-time Caretaker.
43. It was agreed to accept quotations for new flooring in the bar and annexe in the Town Hall and new blinds in the Hall and annexe areas.
44. It was agreed to accept a quotation for the provision of a bin at the Visitor Centre.
45. It was agreed to allocate additional funds for planting at Dorset Drive Pocket Park.
46. It was agreed to continue with retained HR support for a further year.
47. An update was provided with regard to tenant leases and service changes in the Town Hall.
48. It was agreed to investigate CCTV options at the Station Road site.
49. A grant award of £2000 was approved.

The meeting closed at 9.18pm.

SignatureDate