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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, 21st March 2023

Present:

Cllrs. Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, John O'Dowd, Marcus Themans, Linda West, Duncan White (in the chair).

In attendance:

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

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 24th January 2023 be APPROVED and signed as a true record.

5. Town Clerk's report

The Clerk provided a written and verbal report. **Members noted the report.**

6. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. She advised that Unity Trust Bank's relationship with the Post Office was coming to an end and that from 5th May 2023 it would no longer be possible to pay in cash receipts at the Post Office. However, it would still be possible to make cash deposits into Barclays Bank at the Post Office and cheques could continue to be deposited into both accounts.

The RFO had been in correspondence with SSE SWALEC, the Council's street lighting energy provider regarding the Council's eligibility for the Business Energy Relief Scheme. She had also arranged for the Council's street lighting inventory to be updated to reflect recent street light conversions from SOX to LED lamps. The reviews had been completed and with effect from the end of January 2023 a credit of £7,333.17 had been applied to the Council's energy account, which would be used to offset future invoices. The RFO had asked if this amount could be refunded and was awaiting a response.

Income to 28th February excluding precept was £57,595, which was 17.26% above budget for the time of year. Expenditure for the same period was £240,830 which was 4.63% below budget for the time of year, however, the invoice for library support, in the amount of £18,800, had been paid in March. The RFO anticipated that the Council would finish the current financial year slightly over budget.

Members noted the report.

- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 28th February 2023.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 28th February 2023.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 28th February 2023. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 28th February 2023.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 25th January 2023 to date.**

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7. Proposed Virement of Funds and Movement to Earmarked Reserves

Members considered the report on virements and movements to earmarked reserves recommended by the RFO.

It was RESOLVED to approve the RFO's recommendations for virements and movements to earmarked reserves.

8. Review of Town Council Banking Arrangements

Members considered the Council's banking arrangements and recommendations from the RFO on how to achieve a better rate of return on funds. It was noted that the Public Sector Deposit Fund, in which the Council already had £25,000 invested, was offering a current yield of 3.9%.

It was RESOLVED to approve the recommendation to transfer £60,000 of Council funds to the Public Sector Deposit Fund.

9. Corn Exchange – Gate Brackets

Members noted that the gate brackets at the front of the Corn Exchange had been removed for safety reasons, as agreed. Subsequently a request had been received for a handhold in the same place, as some members of the public had used the bracket as a support to help them down the small step to the pavement. It was noted that there was level access from the frontage of the Corn Exchange to the pavement directly in front of the library.

It was RESOLVED to take no action with regard to provision of a handhold on the wall of the Corn Exchange.

10. The Guildhall Project – Renovation and Future Use

Members noted that the documentation required for an application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant towards the viability study was nearing completion.

11. Guildhall Opening on Saturday 6th and Sunday, 7th May 2023

Members considered whether to open the Guildhall to the public on Saturday, 6th May, the day of the coronation of King Charles III, and on Sunday, 7th May 2023.

It was RESOLVED to ask the preference of the Guildhall custodians with regard to opening on Coronation Day and to act in accordance with their preference.

It was RESOLVED to open the Guildhall to the public on Sunday, 7th May 2023.

12. Cemetery Fees 2023/24

Members reviewed cemetery fees for the financial year 2023/24. Councillors were mindful of the cost of grave digging, which had to be paid by the person arranging a burial, in addition to the Council's interment costs. It was noted that the current, independent gravedigger used by the Council was reducing his workload and would no longer be working in Much Wenlock. The charges of the new gravedigger were expected to be higher.

It was RESOLVED to make no increase to interment and grave purchase charges at this time and to increase charges for memorials by 5% from April 2023.

13. Request for Memorial to Alice Glaston

Members considered a request from a member of the public for a memorial to Alice Glaston, an 11 year old girl buried in the churchyard, who may have been hanged. Members noted information provided by a respected local historian on the inconclusive evidence that the girl had been hanged and the difficulty of proving where she might have been tried and imprisoned, if this had taken place at all.

It was RESOLVED that there was insufficient evidence to prove that Alice Glaston had been hanged and buried in Much Wenlock and to decline the request for a memorial.

Members noted that it was expected that the history of the court room in the Guildhall would be told more comprehensively upon completion of the Guildhall renovation project.

14. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Finance & Asset Management Committee would be held on Tuesday, 23rd May 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. Replacement Street Light for High Causeway

Members noted that there was a gap in the streetlighting on High Causeway, with column 9 being missing. It had been discovered that a light had been removed at some time in the past and not been replaced. **It was RESOLVED to install a replacement street light on High Causeway and to accept the quotation from E.ON Energy Solutions.**

16. Additional Street Lighting for Pinefields Footpath

Members noted the cost of the installation of three bollard lights on the Pinefields footpath from High Causeway to Victoria Road. Lighting in this area had been requested by STAR Housing and the RFO had obtained quotations. STAR Housing had been advised of the cost.

It was RESOLVED to suggest that STAR Housing pay for the installation and that the Town Council pay for the ongoing maintenance and energy costs of the bollard lights.

17. Linden Lodge Property Report

Members reviewed the most recent property report for Linden Lodge dated 25th January 2023. Members noted that the garden fence was deteriorating and that an estimate had been obtained for a full replacement. Due to the high cost, repairs would be considered. Members wished to ensure that the garden of the property was kept tidy.

18. 2 Burgage Way

Members noted progress with the sale of 2 Burgage Way.

19. 10 High Street

It was RESOLVED to defer consideration of the refurbishment of 10 High Street to the next full Council meeting.

20. Cemetery Chapel

Members considered quotations for work required to the cemetery chapel, lychgate and boundary wall.

It was RESOLVED to demolish the open section of the lean-to, subject to advice from the Shropshire Council Conservation Officer.

It was RESOLVED to commission Sam Coldicott to demolish the open section of the lean-to, to re-roof the remaining lean-to building and to carry out repairs to the roof of the chapel.

It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation from AMS Improvements for repairs to the boundary wall.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Signed.....
Chairman

Date.....