

19/23

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, 19th March 2024

Present: Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, John O'Dowd and Marcus Themans.

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

1. Apologies

Cllr. Christian Toon – family matter, Cllr. Duncan White – urgent personal matter (received after the meeting).

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 January 2024 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. The Clerk reported that progress was slow with some matters due to the difficulty with obtaining quotations or arranging for work to be carried out.

6. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. She advised that the current financial year would end on 31st March and that the year-end closedown on the Rialtas accounting system was planned for 7th May. This would be carried out by an independent contractor who had previously worked for Rialtas and carried out the Council's year-end closedown. The cost would be significantly lower than that charged by Rialtas. The RFO reported that income to 29th February was £78,007 (excluding precept, income from grant awards and proceeds from property sales), which was 48.24% above budget for the time of year. Expenditure to 29th February was £280,650 (excluding NL Heritage Fund and AHF grants), which was 0.25% below budget for the time of year.
- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 29th February 2024.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 29th February 2024.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 29th February 2024. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 29th February 2024.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 24th January 2024 to date.**

7. Proposed Virement of Funds and Movement to Earmarked Reserves

Members considered a report on recommendations for virements and movements to earmarked reserves proposed by the RFO.

It was RESOLVED to approve the virements and movements to earmarked reserves recommended by the RFO.

8. Financial Risk Assessment

Members reviewed the updated Financial Risk Assessment.

It was RESOLVED to approve the updated Financial Risk Assessment dated March 2024.

9. Asset Register

Members reviewed the updated Asset Register for the Council and noted changes made.

It was RESOLVED to approve the updated Asset Register as at 31st March 2024.

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10. The Guildhall Project

- a. Members noted an update on the Guildhall project. 'Get a Word in Edgeways' had been approached to devise activities to engage visitors with the Guildhall as part of the project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). It had been agreed to move forward with various activities: a storytelling day at the Guildhall on 20th April, the production of a digital audio trail based on the history of the Guildhall and town, and storytelling activities connected with the Guildhall for older people and those attending the local 'Carers Café'. Greenwoods were overseeing this element of the project.

An interim payment claim had been submitted to the NLHF and the required report and supporting documentation for the claim had been prepared and would be forwarded later in the week.

Focus had completed the Audience Development report and this had been distributed to members of the Property Working Group. Focus and Greenwoods were exploring ways of sharing the outcome of the report with the community.

- b. Members considered an offer from a local historic building specialist to remove damaging lead and cement from the base of the oak support posts at the Guildhall. **It was RESOLVED to accept the offer with thanks and to arrange for the work to be carried out.**

11. Public Toilets

- a. Members noted that Healthmatic would be restoring a cash payment facility to the left-hand unit at St Mary's car park. Parts were awaited and the work would be carried out once these were to hand.

Maintenance work to the building had been carried out by a local contractor to replace missing roof tiles, re-fit loose guttering and repair the damaged railings at the front of the building.

The hand drier in the gents' toilets at Queen Street had been found to be faulty during the electrical work carried out. The faulty drier had been disposed of and a new anti-vandal drier had been ordered for installation.

There had been no response from Travis Perkins to the Council's letter seeking sponsorship for refurbishing the toilets at Queen Street.

12. Cemetery Fees

Members considered a proposed increase in cemetery fees for Much Wenlock Cemetery for the next financial year.

It was RESOLVED to increase all cemetery fees by an average of 5% with effect from 1st April 2024.

13. 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. There had been no apparent change in the behaviour of certain individuals working in the town who regularly ignored the one-hour public parking restriction between 8am and 3pm, and who continued to park all day long, thus preventing others from using the car park. Officers had explored options for enforcement of the parking restrictions.

It was RESOLVED to write again to those individuals who were continuing to ignore the parking restrictions to request their cooperation. They would be informed that the Council was now looking into the possibility of working with an external company to install ANPR cameras and issue fines to those abusing the parking restrictions.

14. Part-night Street Lighting

Members considered a report on the possible introduction of part-night lighting for the Town Council's street lights. It was noted that this would generate financial benefits after around 28 months and reduce energy use. However, a thorough risk assessment would first need to be carried out as well as public consultation and this would require considerable staff resource.

It was RESOLVED to defer consideration of part-night lighting to a later date when the current large projects the Council was engaged in had been completed.

15. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 21st May 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.

16. Linden Lodge

Members reviewed the most recent property inspection report for Linden Lodge. They noted that the chimney had been swept and two bird's nests removed. It was hoped that removal of the nests would resolve the internal damp problem which had arisen.

It was RESOLVED to seek quotations for necessary repairs to the boundary fence.

17. Much Wenlock Library

Members considered information from Shropshire Council about the budget for the operation of Much Wenlock Library. They noted that the Town Council made a significant contribution to the running costs of the library. The Clerk would seek updated figures at the end of the financial year.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Signed.....
Chairperson

Date.....

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