

01/24

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 May 2024

Present: Susan Crooke-Williams, David Fenwick, John O’Dowd, Marcus Themans, Duncan White.

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

It was RESOLVED to elect Councillor Marcus Themans to chair the meeting.

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 19th March 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. She reported that the work to clear the Corn Exchange roof valley and replace loose tiles had been completed. The Clerk would now seek quotations for replastering and decorating in the Council office to repair the internal damage.

The Clerk was asked to request that the tenant of Linden Lodge cut back ivy on the fence panels and the vegetation overhanging the footpath at the front of the house.

6. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. The year-end closedown on the Rialtas system took place on 7th May 2024. The closedown went smoothly and there were no problems to report. Subsequent to that, Cllrs Themans and Crooke-Williams came into the office to review and sign the March bank statements and bank reconciliations. Cllr Crooke-Williams also undertook a quarterly review of the petty cash.

Expenditure for the 12 months to 31st March 2024 was £304,178 for the year, which was 0.9% (£2,761) below budget, and income was £87,191 for the year, which was 17.5% above budget, mainly due to the increase in interest rates. These figures excluded various income and expenditure for grant funding and property sales, etc.

The internal audit review would be carried out on 23rd May by DM Payroll Services, after which the RFO would prepare the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for approval at the June Town Council meeting.

Members wished to formally thank Diane Barlow for her work as RFO and for agreeing to help with the transition of the role to a new member of staff.

- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 30th April 2024.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 30th April 2024.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 30th April 2024. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 30th April 2024.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 20th March 2024 to date.**

7. Rural Market Town Group

It was RESOLVED to continue membership of the Rural Market Town Group at a cost of £100 + VAT p.a.

The Clerk was asked to forward the Area Profile for the town to Councillor White.

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8. The Guildhall Project

It was noted that full Council had delegated to the Finance & Asset Management Committee authority to take forward the project to the stage of an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Greenwood Projects would be drafting the application for Council review. The cost of the project was expected to be around £2.5m.

9. Public Toilets

Members noted recent vandalism to Queen Street toilets and repairs needed at St Mary's toilets. The vandalism had been logged with the police and reported to the local policing team but there was no further action to be taken. A quote was awaited from Healthmatic for the repair to the toilet in the gents at Queen Street. It was suggested that a stainless steel toilet pan would be more durable than porcelain. A local contractor had been asked to replace the damaged windows at Queen Street. A toilet and drain were blocked at St Mary's and repairs by Healthmatic were awaited. It was noted that sand from sandbags stored nearby had been tipped down the toilet at St Mary's. Councillors agreed to speak to a neighbouring resident about storage of the sandbags.

Members advised that the signpost located in Station Road was pointing in the wrong direction for the toilets, as was the signpost for the play area. The Clerk was asked to arrange for these to be changed.

10. Car Park at the rear of the Corn Exchange

- a. Members noted that there had been no apparent change in the behaviour of those flouting the rules in the car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange.
- b. Councillor Themans and the Clerk had met a representative of National Parking Management the previous day and discussed how they could manage the car park. This would involve the installation of an ANPR camera and fines being issued by the company to those abusing the system. It would be necessary to consider more standardised parking arrangements, eg. 2 hours free parking at any time and a charge thereafter. This would be a similar arrangement to that operated by many supermarkets. Specific number plates could be registered for staff, tenants, etc. and the system suspended for major events in the town. Written information was awaited from the parking management company for detailed consideration by Councillors.

11. Street Lighting

- a. Members noted that the planned conversion of SON lighting to LED had been delayed due to an oversight on the part of the contractor and that the work would be scheduled in as soon as possible.
- b. Members noted that the Council's long-term contact at E.ON Highways Lighting would be retiring at the end of July and that a new appointment had been made.
- c. Members noted that new lighting had been installed on the footpath from Pinefields Close to Victoria Road by STAR Housing and that the Clerk was awaiting details of the installation. The Council had previously agreed to take on responsibility for the energy costs and maintenance of the lights if STAR Housing paid for the installation. The Clerk was asked to include this information in the next edition of the Wenlock Herald.

12. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 23rd July 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.

13. Summer Floral Arrangements

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the quotation of £911 from Abbey Nursery for the summer planting scheme.

It was **RESOLVED** to move forward with the purchase of new hanging baskets/planters for the church yard.

14. Cemetery Chapel

Members noted that repairs to the cemetery chapel porch were still outstanding. The Clerk was asked to obtain further quotations for the work.

Members requested that renovation and display of the First/Second World War memorial board, currently stored in the Chapel, be considered at the next meeting.

15. Much Wenlock Library

Members considered actual costs from Shropshire Council for the operation of Much Wenlock Library for the financial year 2023/24. It was noted that the Council contributed £19,030 towards costs in 2023/24 and would contribute £19,260 in 2024/25. The Clerk was asked to obtain library usage information for Much Wenlock Library.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Signed.....
Chairperson

Date.....

DRAFT