

09/24

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, 22nd October 2024

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

In attendance: Trudi Barrett – Town Clerk, Janet Evans – Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), six members of the public.

1. Apologies

Councillor Toon – unwell.

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.

Cllr White declared an interest in agenda item 8, Grant Awards, as a Trustee of the Much Wenlock Windmill Trust.

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 September 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 nobody had come forward to help with renovating the War Memorial Board. Councillors Fenwick and White offered to re-varnish the front of the board.

For the convenience of the members of the public in attendance, agenda item 13 was brought forward.

6. Car Park at the Rear of the Corn Exchange

At the full Council meeting held on 3rd October 2024, Councillors had referred management of the car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange back to the Finance & Asset Management Committee. The Mayor introduced this agenda item, explaining that for several years parking spaces in the car park had been unavailable for members of the public to 'pop and shop' as spaces were being taken up by unauthorised, long term parking. There was a one-hour parking restriction in the car park between 8am and 3pm, Monday to Saturday. The Council had looked at the possibility of a parking management company taking over management of the car park and monitoring one hour, or even two hour, parking.

A member of the public outlined his concerns, which included costs associated with the introduction of a parking management company, the views of tenants of the Corn Exchange, the need for a legal agreement governing any parking management arrangement and the fact that the Town Council had objected to increases in parking charges imposed by Shropshire Council.

Councillors explained that the parking management company would not charge for their services but would retain any income from fines. Any agreement could be cancelled if not working satisfactorily. The Council was exploring different options to find a solution to the ongoing problem of unauthorised parking.

A second member of the public raised a concern about a procedural matter and suggested that a decision on the management of the car park be deferred for six months. He hoped the individuals ignoring the parking restrictions would be mindful of the trouble that their behaviour was causing and that this would give them time to reconsider and change their habits. He did not believe that the use of a parking management company was an appropriate solution for the town, as such companies made their money from fines and the possibility of incurring a parking fine could deter visitors.

It was RESOLVED to leave management of the car park at the rear of the Corn Exchange in abeyance for six months, and to reconsider the matter after that time in the light of the prevailing situation.

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7. Finance

- a. The RFO presented a written and verbal report. She advised that the gas contract for two meters (Corn Exchange and Guildhall) had been signed with EDF for the period April 2025-March 2026, after obtaining four quotes and discussion with the Mayor. The length of the contract was selected to bring gas and electricity contracts into line. The contracts were now with two different suppliers but better rates were usually given for dual fuel and this could be considered at renewal next year.
Installation of the pigeon deterrent at the front of the Corn Exchange was scheduled for 3rd November (pending permission for road closure). The estimated cost for manufacture, supply, installation and hire of the cherry picker and driver was £850
- b. Members noted the balance sheet as at 30th September 2024.
- c. Members noted the income and expenditure to 30th September 2024.
- d. Members reviewed the bank reconciliations to 30th September 2024. **It was RESOLVED to approve the bank reconciliations to 30th September 2024.**
- e. **It was RESOLVED to approve payments from 25th September 2024 to date.**

8. 2025/26 Budget

Members considered the first draft of the 2025/26 budget and suggested items for inclusion. The RFO was asked to update the draft and send out to Councillors thereafter.

9. Grant Awards

- a. Members considered grant awards to local organisations. **It was RESOLVED to make the following awards:**

	£
Much Wenlock Windmill Trust	400
1 st Much Wenlock Scout Group	200
Much Wenlock Fencing Club	250
Wenlock Warriors	250
1 st Much Wenlock Rainbows, Brownies & Guides	200
Friends of Much Wenlock Primary School	400
Wenlock Olympian Games Arts Sub-committee	250
Much Wenlock Community First Responders	900
Cuan Wildlife Rescue	100
Royal British Legion	50
Total	3,000

- b. **It was RESOLVED to approve a donation of £250 to the Wenlock Herald to support publication of the Town Council’s regular contribution to the magazine.**

10. The Guildhall Project

Members received a verbal report from the meeting held on 7th October with the Council’s allocated contact at the NLHF. Following the Expression of Interest, the Council had been invited to submit a full application for funding and had a year to do so. The latest date for submission would be August 2025, although the Council would aim for May 2025, the earlier possible submission date. This would be a challenging deadline. A further meeting with Greenwood Projects was being arranged.

11. Cemetery Extension

Members received a verbal update on the Clerk’s enquiries about the procedure for extending the cemetery. Councillors requested that the Clerk press on with the work.

12. Environmental Maintenance

Members considered measures and funding to improve the condition of public areas in Much Wenlock. A small group of volunteers had already improved the flower bed at the rear of the Guildhall and had moved on to the triangle in front of the church. There were several areas around the town that would benefit from work, such as Back Lane car park and St Mary’s car park. However, many of these areas were the responsibility of Shropshire Council. Councillors Fenwick was asked to put forward a proposal at a future meeting.

13. 'A' Boards in the Square and under the Corn Exchange

Members discussed the Council's position with regard to the placing of advertising 'A' boards in the Square and under the Corn Exchange. **It was RESOLVED to confirm the Council's position that advertising 'A' boards are not permitted in the Square and under the Corn Exchange.**

14. Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday, 19th November 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.

15. Linden Lodge

Members considered repairs to the garden fence of Linden Lodge. **It was RESOLVED to accept the quotation from Carl Vickers in the amount of £1,952.00.**

16. Christmas Lights for the Buttermarket

Members considered the purchase of replacement Christmas lights for the Buttermarket. **It was RESOLVED to replace the old lights within a budget of up to £250.**

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue past 9pm.

17. 10 High Street

Members received an update on progress with the rental of 10 High Street.

It was RESOLVED to recommend to full Council that the Council consider marketing the property for rental or sale.

18. Meeting regarding Library SLA and Lease

Members received a verbal report on the meeting with Shropshire Council to discuss renewal of the agreement for financial support for Much Wenlock Library and the lease for the premises. Further contact from Shropshire Council was awaited.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

Signed.....
Chairperson

Date.....