



Minutes of a Town Business Committee held on Monday 30th October '23 at 7.00pm at the Town Hall

Present: Councillors John Callinan (Committee Vice Chair), Mike Davis, Keith Creighton, Carol Kambites and Wendy Thomson

In Attendance: Carlos Novoth (Clerk); Jacqui Sanders (Deputy Clerk); Town Councillors Debbie Curtis and Marcus Dixon

Attendees were reminded that the Proceedings of the meeting could be filmed, photographed or recorded.

B/614 To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Theresa Watt and Gary Powell

B/615 To receive Declarations of Interest

There was a declaration of interest raised by Cllr Carol Kambites in relation to agenda item B/618

B/616 To approve the minutes of the Business Committee meeting on 2nd Oct '23

Subject to the addition of the following - 'Committee APPROVED the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting

B/617 To receive the latest budget position

Committee NOTED the latest budget position totaling 'Net Actual Expenditure' of £191,834.66; 'Net Actual Income' of £383,340.57; Reserve movements of £14,223.35

Cllr Kambites left the meeting at 7.10pm in light of her declared interest in agenda item B/618

B/618 To approve the latest payments list

Committee APPROVED the latest payment list totaling expenditure of £19,380.13

Cllr Kambites returned to the meeting at 7.12pm

B/619 To discuss budgetary concerns/issues in relation to the 2024/25 proposed Budget

The following ideas/issues/concerns were raised in support of the budget setting process:

- The purchase of stalls for the Goodwill event. This was considered in past years and it was established that whilst it may save money in the long run, the setting up and breaking down processes would necessitate a lot of resource on a day that was already very labour intensive.
- Allocate funding to encourage and support 'Sport of Girls' - it was found nationally that girls generally ventured away from sports. Cllr Wendy Thomson to seek guidance and experience from other organisations
- Allocate funding to support the 'Ship Inn' site working group for the period considered as 'Meanwhile Use' - A budget proposal was put forward totaling £22,500 - this includes the setting up of an on site café with toilets, picnic benches and the provision of a small jetty - general working capital was also proposed. It was felt that the town council wished to demonstrate its willingness and drive into making the site a success to support it being used as a community space.
Committee **RECOMMENDS** town council approve a new earmarked reserve for the site headed 'Ship Inn site - Meanwhile Use' with a budget of £20,000.
- Increase the Youth work budget to accommodate increased costs

B/620 To recommend for town council approval a new three year IT support contract

The Deputy Clerk provided a detailed analysis of the quotations received by four IT providers. It was found that some IT contractors either would not provide quotations based on the council's requirements or had quoted differently to others making the analysis more difficult. The fore runner for the contract was in the incumbent contractor albeit, it was acknowledged that Cllrs had experienced problems with their service prompting unease at awarding a longer-term contract to them. One Cllr felt that the options were limited to just one contractor and asked whether Officers had researched the contractors used by other local authorities.

Following discussion, a proposal was made and seconded for the matter to be put to a vote. The Clerk asked to be heard and explained that whilst it has taken some considerable time for Officers to reach the current outcome, in light of the concerns shown at the meeting, he was prepared to seek further quotations with a view to incorporating those contractors used by other authorities. On request by the proposer and seconder, the proposal was withdrawn.

Committee voted to DEFER the matter to the next Business Committee meeting

B/621 To receive updates from the following working groups:

1. Climate Change Action Forum

The group is currently looking at a 'Bike Drop' (electric bike hire) initiative and are looking for space to house them and support volunteers

The SWEA project is entering its third year of the current project - details of which are to be determined

2. Oldends Lane Development

There has not been a recent meeting

Old changing rooms building - disconnection of utilities to be confirmed prior to work starting

New sewer line - yet to hear back from Hitchins

3. Support Stonehouse

Meeting took place recently and a further one planned

Restarting 'warm spaces' but need to consider potentially opening only one or two site - Bridge café being one potential - John Callinan to ask James Thomson - need to find out why there was a low take up last year. New leaflets planned

4. Youth

No recent meetings - The Door Annual event held in November - invitation from the Door forwarded to town councillors

5. Policy

H&S policy and council strategy being brought to committee and council soon. Also looking to bring forward next year's planned reviews to help support the administration, post-election.

6. Internal Audit Panel

Nothing to report

B/622 To note the date of the next meeting - Monday 27th November 2023

Date of the next meeting noted