



DRAFT
Minutes of a Town Business Committee
held on Monday 26th October 2020 at 7.00pm
in the Stonehouse Community Hall

Present: Councillors: Leigh Binns, Mike Davis, Neil Gibbs (Chair) Carol Kambites (Vice Chair), John Parker, Sally Pickering, Pam Swain and Theresa Watt

In Attendance: Carlos Novoth, Town Clerk

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

B/141 To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr David Thorpe

B/142 To receive Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

B/143 To approve the minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on 28th September 2020

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record; they are to be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity.

B/144 To consider the latest budget position

The Clerk/RFO presented the latest budget position up to 30th September '20.

The Clerk raised issue with regards to a potential increase in two previously approved projects;

- the water fountain at Old Chapel Garden - total costs for the preparatory works were considered to be in the region of £2,000. This is the contribution recently offered by the Rotary club and accepted by the Town Council - a quote totalling £2,600 plus vat has since been received for only the ground works; in light of this, it was agreed that the council should underwrite additional costs up to a maximum of £2,000 for the completion of the project

that would be important to the development of the Old Chapel Garden area and has sound environmental credentials.

- and the replacement of the rail at Laburnum - Council agreed to progress this project on the basis that the old rail was deteriorating, the council had surplus metal rails available and that the Council could recoup the cost of the project through the sale of its ARMCO barrier. Since this decision, additional materials have been identified requiring additional budget. It was agreed that an additional £400 would be allocated to the completion of this project

Business Committee **NOTED** the latest budget report up to 30th September 20 as reported to Full Council on 19th October 20 and,

APPROVED additional expenditure of up to £2,000 for the installation of the drinking fountain in the Old Chapel Garden and £400 for the completion of the replacement barrier separating Laburnum playing field and the community centre

B/145 To approve payments in accordance with the budget to date as listed

Committee **APPROVED** all payments detailed in the payments list totalling £14,210.13

B/146 To consider revisions to the proposed Business Committee budget for financial year 2021/22

The Clerk provided Members with a detailed spreadsheet and an explanation of his suggested approach to revising the 2021/22 budget in preparation for setting the Council's Precept. Key highlights included assuming a business as usual approach to expenditure with some revisions to individual budget headings, reviewing the council's charging policy on the use of its assets (for local organisations, this should be based on a proven need) and the potential to use a small proportion of the council's reserves. It was generally felt that there should be no increase in next year's Precept and that this should be communicated to residents once a decision had been reached. The Clerk highlighted that there was still detailed work to be completed. It was suggested that with a recommended increase in the grants budget, support could be extended to local schools i.e. play equipment or local residents could be encouraged to match fund home improvements to reduce utility bills; the Clerk stated that it could not normally consider provide direct support for individuals but would seek advice. A query was raised in relation to carrying over underspent budget to next year.

B/147 To consider the Youth Project contract for 2021/22

The Clerk highlighted the fact that the contract for the provision of the Town's youth services would be naturally terminating on 31st March 2021. It was accepted that the Covid situation had caused considerable disruption to the service and that social activities had been severely restricted for several months and that this could continue for some considerable time. As a result, the Clerk suggested that the Town's youth would benefit from the continuity and familiarity, securing the services of The Door would bring at this critical time. As a result, an extension to the current contract for up to a year should be considered. The Clerk would seek advice from GAPTC as to whether the Council's Financial Regulations would accommodate the extension.

The matter was discussed at length with some Members of the opinion that the service should be subjected to competition with a view to starting a new contract from either April 21 or within a few months and others believed that stability at this

critical time would be beneficial to young people in need of the support offered by The Door and its staff.

Committee RESOLVED to delay a decision until the council received the necessary legal advice

B/148 To receive updates and consider recommendations from the following working groups:

Support Stonehouse - Cllr Parker highlighted the decision made by council at its most recent meeting to provide a budget of £2,000 for the provision of food and other necessary consumables for people in need in the Stonehouse area - this would be distributed through APT. He mentioned a few other ideas that were currently being considered such as supporting the provision of free school meals although APT are currently coping with demand, providing Christmas presents to include food and essential items.

Stonehouse Community Climate Change Forum - Cllr Pickering confirmed that there has been a recalculation of the Council's carbon footprint and that this had reduced by 85% - The Council should promote this. She would have liked more inputs to the Active Travel consultation albeit the information received was useful in highlighting areas for future improvements and, it is now one year since the launch of the Council's Community Climate Change Forum.

Canal Rejuvenation - Cllr Gibbs highlighted a recent canal rejuvenation meeting involving the Director of Place, Brendan Cleere and Ward Members. Whilst no decision were made, it was felt to be a useful meeting in highlighting the town council's eagerness in establishing a wharf at Stonehouse and its willingness to actively pursue the development of the canal as the Gateway to Stroud and neighbouring towns. Cllr Pickering mentioned that Creative Sustainability stated that the town had been very productive and supportive of its work.

B/149 Date of next meeting: 30th November 2020