



## **Minutes of a Town Business Committee held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October '23 at 7.00pm at the Town Hall**

**Present:** Councillors, John Callinan (Committee Vice Chair), Keith Creighton, Carol Kambites, Gary Powell, Wendy Thomson and Theresa Watt

**In Attendance:** Carlos Novoth (Clerk)

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

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There were no members of the public wishing to talk to the Committee

In the absence of Cllr Mike Davis, Cllr John Callinan (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting

**B/600 To receive apologies**

Committee received apologies from Cllrs Mike Davis and Mark Edwards

**B/601 To receive Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**B/602 To approve the minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept '23**

(Cllr Wendy Thomson apologized for not attending the previous committee meeting).

Committee APPROVED the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting

**B/603 To receive the latest budget position**

Committee NOTED the latest budget position: Actual Net Expenditure of £172,197.19; Actual Net Income of £196,354.07 and Reserves totalling £14,223.35.

**B/604 To approve the latest payments list**

Committee APPROVED the latest payment list totalling £14,994.10

**B/605 To receive the outcome of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 'Internal Control Checks'**

The Clerk could not include evidence of the completion of the Q1 and Q2 Internal Control checks undertaken by the internal audit panel and so the matter was deferred to full town council on 16<sup>th</sup> October '23

**B/606 To agree arrangements for the 2023/24 budget setting process**

The Clerk highlighted the need for town council to consider its approach in its budget setting process. It was stated that the town council regularly underspent on its budget but now that the council has a projects officer, it was felt that this would change.

Committee agreed with the Officers recommendation for

**‘Committee Clerks to liaise directly with the Chairs and Vice Chairs to review budgets and report on their findings and recommendations to their respective committees for discussion and agreement.’**

In addition, the following was agreed

**‘Council to receive budget setting updates ahead of its final decision in January - this would allow a more cohesive input from the council’s Working groups’.**

**B/607 To receive an update on the council’s financial investments**

Whilst CCLA have demonstrated a good return on the council’s investment, there was concern in placing all of the town council’s investments through the company. The Nat West bank is querying whether the council wished to continue to remain with them using its existing account bearing in mind the lack of transactions made. It was suggested that whilst the investment was generating a return, it may be sensible to move this funding to CCLA.

Committee **RECOMMENDS** to Town Council moving its investment of £85,378 (as of 30<sup>th</sup> June ’23) from Nat West Bank to either CCLA or a more suitable investment account with a Building Society.

**B/608 To receive an update on developments with the High street Car Park**

The Clerk provided an update on discussions with the District Council and that a new update was expected any day. It was accepted that there was a growing feeling from shoppers and local businesses that the town had inadequate parking and that changes to the use of the High street car park needed to be made. This led to discussion around exploring the potential for the town council to acquire and manage the car park; this to be discussed further at a future meeting.

Committee **NOTED** the update

**B/609 To approve the purchase of a water tank, pump and retractable hose reel for the town council’s van to enable the future watering of the town’s planters**

Committee **APPROVED** the Officer’s recommendation for the purchase of a 500 Litre water tank at £207 plus vat, an electric pump at £412 plus vat and retractable hose reel at an approximate price of £100 plus vat to ensure a safer watering process in the town.

**B/610 To approve recommendations in relation to the council’s future grounds maintenance**

There was wide debate on the list of Officer recommendations. The main area of concern was in relation to adding grass areas that are considered by the town council as having a high level of importance and that including these areas as provisional items in the grounds maintenance contract should not deter from the council’s intention to have the areas maintained by the town council’s own workforce. It was further felt that discussion on the new contract should take place at Environment Committee and, that Cllrs need to

be given a little time to consider whether changes to the specification ie Stagholt. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair of Council supports the Officer in determining the final tender document. The following Officer recommendations were RECOMMENDED for approval by full town council subject to possible revision to the service specification:

1. Use of the Tender process in line with clause 11b of the council's Financial Regulations and Public Procurement Regulations
2. Increase the length of contract to a period of five years with a break clause on year three
3. Apply indexation to the contract price ensuring inflation is accommodated throughout the period of the contract - this is usually through the application of the RPI or successor index
4. No change to the current service specification
5. Add provisional items to the contract to allow for new elements to be added to the contracted works - Provisional items covering three key areas namely, Play areas, Town Greens and Court View within the contract would allow the town council to agree on an annual basis with the successful grounds maintenance contractor whether to add or remove one or more of the provisional items at a price agreed at the tendering stage. Any changes would need to be agreed on an annual basis prior to the commencement of the financial year. Committee to note that the town's play areas and town greens are currently maintained by its 'In House' team - provisional items would only be used as a fall-back measure in cases of urgent need.
6. The application of weightings to Tenders to support their evaluation.
  - 50% Cost and 50% Quality.
  - The quality element is further broken down to the following weightings:
    - Environment - 40%
    - Health and Safety - 30%
    - Resource and maintenance support arrangements - 30%

**B/611 To receive updates from the following working groups:**

1. **Climate Change Action Forum**  
An event on Solar energy was held on 12<sup>th</sup> Sept for businesses at the community centre
2. **Oldends Lane Development**  
Demolition of the old changing rooms is waiting for confirmation from utilities companies that the services have been safely cut off. Awaiting technical response from Hitchins with regards the new sewer line. The working group is to reconvene shortly
2. **Support Stonehouse**  
The working group is meeting Wednesday 4th Oct. Earmarked Reserve funding of £10,000 is currently in place. Clerk to seek permission from FTC to continue to use the reserve
3. **Youth**  
Quarterly meeting took place 10 days ago - quarterly report highlights a range of activities undertaken by the Door and supported by the town council. The Door have undertaken review of its service and have identified some very positive outcomes. Further additional funding from the town council is currently being sought - to be brought to FTC for approval.
4. **Policy**  
Currently working on the council strategy - there has been good input

from Cllrs to date

**5. Internal Audit Panel**

ICCs Completed for Quarters 1 and 2

**B/612 To note the date of the next meeting - Monday 30th October 2023**

Committee NOTED the date of the next BC meeting

Committee voted in favour of excluding members of the public from the meeting to discuss agenda item B/613

***Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960***

***The Council will by resolution exclude the public from the following items as due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted publicity of the item would be prejudicial to the public interest.***

**B/613 To approve HR Sub Committee recommendations**

The Chair of HR Sub Committee provided an overview of the work undertaken in relation to reviewing the posts of both grounds staff in light of the senior grounds person's recent resignation. It was made clear that having recruited good members of staff, the council needed to ensure that it put measures in place to retain them. Salaries were benchmarked with comparable posts in a number of other local authorities and it was found that STC were paying under the accepted salary levels - this would increase the council's salary costs by £5,769 over a full financial year. HR Sub Committee identified a number of changes to the job description for both posts including renaming the posts as Town Maintenance Officer and Senior Town Maintenance Officer - this reflected the wider range of the work the postholders are currently undertaking to maintain the town generally.

The following recommendations were presented, recommending approval by full town council:

- 1. To increase the Grounds Person's salary (SCP5 - £21,575) in line with the post of senior grounds person (SCP10 - £23,620) until such time as the senior position is filled - payment to be backdated to 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**
- 2. To increase the Grounds Person's salary permanently in line with that currently paid to the Senior Grounds person's (SCP10 - £23,620), once the vacant post has been filled**
- 3. To increase the Senior Grounds Person's salary from SCP10 (£23,620) to SCP18 (£27,344)**
- 4. To commence the immediate recruitment for the Senior Grounds position**

Committee RECOMMENDED all four recommendations (1, 2, 3 and 4) for Town Council approval