



Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 16th October 2023, 7pm at the Town Hall

Present:

Councillors: Councillors: Rachel Armstrong, John Callinan, Keith Creighton, Debbie Curtis, Mike Davis, Marcus Dixon, Neil Gibbs, Carol Kambites (Chair of Council) Gary Powell, Val Randell, Keith Terry, Wendy Thomson and Theresa Watt (Vice Chair of Council).

In Attendance: Town Clerk, Carlos Novoth, Town Council Project Officer, Gary Wetson and a Member of the Public

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

The Chair called on a member of the public attending the meeting wishing to draw the council's attention to a recent visit by the Police to his home to discuss issues surrounding Verney Fields. The gentleman explained that he felt intimidated; he was asked to avoid going up to Verney Fields and to refrain from talking to the owner. The Policeman explained that he was visiting other residents to ask them to do the same and to refrain from using social media with regards to Verney Fields - the gentleman explained that he didn't use social media. It was also explained that the Police had received thousands of hours of CCTV site footage that they were having to look through.

The Council thanked the gentleman for his efforts to raise this in person with the town council; the councillor speaking on the issue said he was sorry for the gentleman's experience and that it would be raised by the town council with the Police - he would be advised on the outcome.

TC3114 To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Mark Edwards

TC3115 To receive declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest

TC3116 To approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 18th Sept 2023

Council **APPROVED** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting

- TC3117 To receive reports from Chair of Town Council and town councillors**
Chair - Attended:
the recent Strategy and Resources meeting at SDC where a decision was made to release the Ship Inn site from the Housing Committee and allow the community to put forward a business plan for the site for use as a community facility;
the Open Day at Sherbourne to look at the new cooking facilities the town council and others helped to fund
the Home Energy Project - whilst not very well attended, those who did had raised many questions
Congratulating Stonehouse in Bloom for their success in receiving the Gold award this year along with 'Best kept village'
Cllr Mike Davis - attended SDCs Health and Safety Seminar
Cllr Gary Powell - highlighted dog fouling issues at Oldends Lane recreation field and Meadow road playing field
- TC3118 To receive reports from County and District Councillors**
Ward Cllr Mattie Ross mentioned the following:
Reiterated the congratulations to the In Bloom committee for their recent success
Will be attending Development Control Committee to support the TPO application for the Oak tree at Arrowsmith
Attended the visual impairment simulation walkabout of the town organised by the district council - this proved very fruitful as it was explained that of all the towns visited, Stonehouse had inherent features that felt welcoming to people with visual impairment.
Attended the Sherbourne Open day
Queried the Carol Service - Cllr Gary Powell was asked to provide an update
Thanked the town council members attending S&R meeting at the district council re the Ship Inn site
Cllr Ross explained that neither she nor Cllr Chris Brine received the support papers for the meeting - The Chair explained that she and Chris Brine had been copied into the Clerk's email that provided the support papers.
The Chair thanked Cllr Mattie Ross for her update.

With town council agreement, the Chair brought forward agenda item TC3124 for discussion (7.30pm)

- TC3124 To award the Phase 1 works contract for Stagholt Fields (The Allotments)**
The Project Officer provided an overview of the project in line with the supporting papers and updated Members with the late quotation received from JPR Environmental. It was recognised that the detail of the site work requirements had not been fully discussed (issues such as the inclusion of a new concrete bases for composting, additional parking space and the need for a fence being questioned) and so Council RESOLVED to defer the Officer's 1st recommendation and delegate the

decision to go ahead with ground works to Environment Committee once it had received comments from the Recreational working group and both the outstanding planning and covenant issues had reached conclusion. It was however highlighted that any ground preparation works, once the outstanding issues were resolved, would need to commence as soon as possible; to this end, Council **APPROVED** an increase in the earmarked for the Stagholt project by £17,000 - this would reflect the rough cost of undertaking all work advocated by the Allotment Association

- TC3119 To receive RFO's budget report and bank reconciliation for September '23**
Council **NOTED** the latest budget report with Actual Net Income of £384,640.57; Actual Net Expenditure of £209,155.53 and total reserve movements of £19,415.05.
Council also **NOTED** the bank reconciliation for September 2023 with a closing balance of £196,288.97
- TC3120 To approve the latest payment list**
The payment made to the Deputy Clerk was highlighted and it was explained that the payment made for the lights expedited the necessary repairs.
Council **APPROVED** the latest payment list totalling £7,135.05
- TC3121 To receive the outcome of Quarter 1 and 2 Internal Control Checks (ICCs)**
Council **NOTED** the Internal Control Checks for quarters one and two and thanked the auditor for his work
- TC3122 To approve the town council's representative on Stroud District Council, Community Engagement Group for the Canal**
Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Town Councillor Debbie Curtis as a town council representative on the District Council's Community Engagement Group for the Canal
- TC3123 To approve meeting dates for Town Council and its committees for the 2024 calendar year**
Owing to the fact that 2024 is the year of elections, it was suggested that the first full town council meeting should be held on Monday 13th May.
Council **APPROVED** the calendar of meetings as presented subject to the change mentioned above.
- TC3124 To award the Phase 1 works contract for Stagholt Fields (The Allotments)**
Agenda item brought forward - See above comments
- TC3125 To award the contract to clear the vegetation from Stagholt Brook**
Council **RESOLVED** to award the contract TW Hawkins at a cost of £1,450 plus vat

- TC3126 To award the contract for insulating the Pavilion loft area and for the lagging of pipework**
Council realised the need to progress this work urgently and was pleased that Officers were able to secure pricing from three contractors. The Clerk was asked to establish whether external funding was currently available to support the town council's efforts to make the sports pavilion more energy efficient. In the likely event that there are no external funding opportunities, Council **RESOLVED** to award the insulation and lagging work required in the loft of the Sports Pavilion at Oldends Lane at a cost of £6,750 plus vat.
- TC3127 To receive the minutes of the Business Committee meeting on 2nd Oct '23 and approve its recommendations:**
- **To approve the recommended approach to the town council's budget setting process B/606 and EC/683**
Council **APPROVED** the Business Committee and Environment Committee in respect of the council's budget setting process which is to:

 '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, to:

 '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'.
 - **To transfer the council's investment from the Nat West Bank to CCLA or such other financial institution as may be determined B/607**
Council **APPROVED** the Business Committee's for Town Council to move its investment of £85,378 (as of 30th June '23) from Nat West Bank to either CCLA or a more suitable investment account with a Building Society.
 - **To approve the recommended approach to securing the council's contracted out grounds maintenance service B/610 and E/687**
Council **APPROVED** the recommendation put forward by both Environment and Business Committees which included:
 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. Minor changes to the current service specification to allow for the cut and removal of grass in the wildflower/hayfield areas.
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.
 - a. 50% Cost and 50% Quality.
 - b. The quality element is further broken down to the following weightings:
 - i. Environment - 40%
 - ii. Health and Safety - 30%
 - iii. Resource and maintenance support - 30%

TC3128 To receive the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting on 9th Oct '23 and approve its recommendations
 Council received and NOTED the minutes. The recommendation from the meeting, agenda item E/683 was discussed under agenda item TC3127 on this town council meeting and was approved

TC3129 To confirm support for the introduction of parking restrictions to the High street car park
 Council acknowledged the need to progress the issue as quickly as possible as car park users were frustrated by the current situation with drivers often unable to find parking spaces. There was a strength of feeling that the town car park was a hugely important facility within the town and a question was raised with the attending ward councillor about the prospect of the town council purchasing the land. The ward councillor said she would take the matter up with the District Council.

Council **RESOLVED** to write to Stroud District Council confirming support for consultation on implementing restrictions on car park users' stay and in doing so, would wish to ensure that the consultation is undertaken widely enough so as to positively seek feedback from each of the stakeholder groups, namely High street businesses, car park users (residents and shoppers), rail commuters, Doctor's surgery etc. Should the District Council need support for the consultation, to advise the town council accordingly.

TC3130 To approve funding for the provision of additional costed services by 'The Door'

Council **APPROVED** the expenditure of £3,669 for the provision of additional services provided for the period 1st Sept to 30th Nov 2023, as detailed in its latest quarterly report.

TC3131 To approve the purchase of a new wreath to send to London's Remembrance Service via GWR's Poppy Train

Council **RESOLVED** not to contribute towards the Poppy Train initiative owing to the lack of time to purchase an environmental wreath option

TC3132 Date of next meeting - Monday 13th November '23

Council **NOTED** the date of the next meeting

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.

TC3133 To receive Business Committee's recommendations following the recently completed review of the town council's grounds staff

Recommendation 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 11th September 2023.

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation

Recommendation 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
Council **APPROVED** the recommendation

Recommendation 3. To increase the Senior Grounds Person's salary from SCP10 (£23,620) to SCP18 (£27,344)

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation

Recommendation 4. To commence the recruitment for the Senior Grounds position

Council **APPROVED** the recommendation