



## **Minutes of a meeting of the Town Council held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 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 and Ward Cllr Mattie Ross

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

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| <b>TC3147</b> | <b>To receive apologies</b><br>Council received apologies from Cllr Debbie Curtis with Cllr Theresa Watt - Cllr Watt stated that she would be late to the meeting  |
| <b>TC3148</b> | <b>To receive declarations of interest</b><br>Council received a declaration of interest by the Chair of Council, Cllr Carol Kambites in relation to agenda item TC3154; Cllr John Callinan raised a declared interest in relation to agenda item TC3157                       |
| <b>TC3149</b> | <b>To approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> November '23</b><br>Council <b>APPROVED</b> the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting  |
| <b>TC3150</b> | <b>To note Cllr Mark Edward's resignation from Stonehouse Town Council</b><br>Council <b>NOTED</b> Mark Edward's resignation and thanked him for his contributions to the Stonehouse community. Council agreed to co-opt a replacement as soon as possible                     |
| <b>TC3151</b> | <b>To receive reports from Chair of Town Council and town councillors</b><br>Cllr Kambites - pushed for an update from the Rail Minister through Shiobhan Baillie MP; she attended the second Anchor group meeting relating to the Ship Inn site - there was concern about the |

implementation of adopted Biodiversity regulations requiring pre work baseline assessments for Bio Net Gain on land to be developed.  
Cllr Thompson - continuing to meet with organisations such as 'The Door' to discuss encouraging young girls back into sport - She is currently trying to engage with Maidenhill school  
Cllr Terry - attended the Stonehouse Community Association Trustees meeting recently. The Chair of the Trustees is currently taking a back seat until her health improves

- TC3152 To receive reports from County and District Councillors**  
Ward Cllr Mattie Ross provided the following update:  
Government is asking district councils to commit to housing refugees - SDC have committed to house 2 families

Cllr Theresa Watt arrived and took her place at the meeting at 7.10pm

New Market Towns vitality funding to be made available through the district council  
Cllr Ross highlighted the town's Carol concert this coming weekend

Ward Cllr Mattie Ross gave her apologies for the rest of the meeting and left at 7.18pm

- TC3153 To receive RFO's budget report and bank reconciliation for Nov '23**  
Council **NOTED** the Bank Reconciliation for November '23 with an opening balance of £60,713.48 and a closing balance of £25,426.06.  
Council also **NOTED** the latest budget report for November '23 showing a Total 'Actual Net' income of £393,361.82, a total 'Actual Net' Expenditure of £282,690.18 and a reserve movement of £19,415.05

In light of her declared interest in agenda item TC3154, Cllr Carol Kambites handed the Chair of the meeting to the Vice Chair Cllr Theresa Watt and left the room at 7.22pm

- TC3154 To approve the latest payment list**  
Council **APPROVED** the latest payment list totalling £12,123.53

Cllr Carol Kambites returned to the meeting 7.25pm and took over as Chair

- TC3155 To receive an update on the budget setting process for the 2024/25 financial year**  
The Clerk provided the latest proposed budget details and calculations based on the latest taxbase estimate from the district council. Estimated out turn figures were also provided. Based on the initial proposed budget and without support from the council's reserves, the percentage increase would extend beyond 10% even though the level of interest earned from the council's financial investments have significantly increased in the past year and will hopefully continue to yield a reasonable return. A significant reason for the proposed

increased budget is due to a lowering of the taxbase following a change to the parish boundary with Great Oldbury/Eastington.  
Council agreed for both committees to further review the proposed budgets in time for its meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

**TC3156 To receive the minutes of the Business Committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov '23 and approve its recommendations:**

Council received the draft minutes of the Business Committee meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> November

- **To award a three year IT support contract to the council's incumbent IT provider 'Jireh Solutions' at an annual cost of £3,367.88 plus vat totalling £10,103.64**

Town Councillors noted the time and effort spent by officers in securing quotations from six contractors to provide the council's future IT support service. Four of the contractors were asked to provide costs over one, two and three year periods. Councillors acknowledged that 'Jireh Solutions' were the council's incumbent service provider; they had provided the lowest price and that they would offer the option of a disruption free, start to the contract.

Council **RESOLVED** to award a new three year IT support service contract to 'Jireh Solutions' at an annual cost of £3,367.88 plus vat each year for three years

Cllr John Callinan left the meeting in light of his declared interest in agenda item TC3157

**TC3157 To receive the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December '23 and approve the following recommendation:**

- **To award the provision and installation of a 10 feet high swing and new surfacing at Laburnum playing field at a total cost of £15,581 plus vat to 'GB Leisure' (funding to be provided through the council's 'Reserves')**

Council **APPROVED** the purchase and installation of a new 10 foot tall two bay swing frame with new play surfacing and additional round swing seat that could be used by both able bodied children and children with disabilities at a total cost of approximately £19,000 plus vat(cost of the swing seat to be confirmed). Council also **APPROVED** the use of £660 funding to protect the surrounding grass area in the event that works are undertaken during prolonged wet weather. Project to be funded through the council's Earmarked Reserve - 'Assets Renewal Reserve'.

**TC3158 To receive updates on:**

- **High street Car Park consultation**  
The Clerk was asked to request SDC to erect further signage relating to the consultation nearer the entrance to the car park.
- **Tender process for the council's Grounds Maintenance Service contract**

It was agreed for the Chairs of Business and Environment Committees to undertake tender evaluations.

- **Sewer design for the town council facilities at Oldends lane**  
The Clerk suggested that based on conversations with the company preparing the drawings for the sewer design that good progress was being made.

- TC3159 To approve communications in support of the meeting's decisions**
- The purchase and installation of new swings at Laburnum
  - Stagholt project

- TC3160 Date of next meeting - Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January '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.***

A proposal was made to exclude members of the public from the meeting for agenda item TC3161. The proposal was seconded and agreed by all present.

- TC3161 To receive an update from the Council's HR Sub Committee and to approve its recommendations:**
- **To approve the recruitment of a short-term replacement to the current Business Support Officer during their time on leave**  
Council **APPROVED** the recruitment of a short-term replacement for an existing member of staff from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 on full time for a period of at least 8 months on SCP4.
  - **To approve the ad-hoc use of a 'Locum' as and when required**  
Council **APPROVED** the ad-hoc use of a Locum in case of need.