

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2020/10/19 – 03

Minutes of the Meeting held by Zoom on Monday 19th October 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Cllrs A Harley (Chairman), J Carr, R Holmes, S Holmes and W Leach

Cllr S Turner

Cllr S Stockham

Mr S Holley – Town Clerk

Miss C Wheeler – Assistant Clerk (Minute Taker)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received and noted from Cllr Kemsley.

The Committee was informed that Cllr Kemsley would be stepping down from membership of the Committee with immediate effect.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Committee held on 5th October 2020 were confirmed as a true record. Proposed by Cllr A Harley. Vote carried.

4. **OPEN FORUM**

None.

5. **CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH-ON AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee was requested to consider a report from the Grants and Events Administrator regarding the arrangements for the 2020 event.

Attention was drawn to the limited scope for improving the existing Christmas lights for the amounts specified at the previous meeting (i.e.£500, £1,000 and £1,500).

Accordingly, the Council's contractor had provided an option for £550.00 plus VAT to add additional lights to the trees at Hylton Court which would increase the ongoing maintenance contract price to £500 per annum (an increase of £50.00). Acceptance of the option was Proposed by Cllr Harley. Unanimously APPROVED.

Action by – the Clerk

The Committee was aware of a proposal by St Mary's Church to organise a Christmas Tree Exhibition. Details were not available for the present meeting, but it might be possible for them to be included in the Council's poster for the Christmas Shop Window competition.

Cllr Leach (as Mayor) gave a commitment to inform the Grants and Events Administrator of the theme for the Christmas Shop Windows by the end of the month.

Action by – Cllr Leach

The Committee also noted the following proposals in the circulated report:

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2020/10/19 – 04

- That the Christmas Shop Window competition prizes which will be allocated to the winners in 2020 would be: 1st prize = £100; 2nd prize = £60; 3rd prize = £40 (a total of £200)
- To note that the Mayor's Civic budget would contribute £100 towards the Christmas Shop Window competition winners award money and the remaining £100 would be allocated from the Amenities Committee budget
- That the Amenities Committee would delegate the installation and date of turning on the Christmas Lights to the Town Clerk

Following a Proposal by Cllr Carr, Seconded by Cllr S Holmes, the above package of proposals was unanimously APPROVED.

Action by – the Clerk

The Mayor would liaise with the Clerk to arrange a photograph of the Mayor turning on the lights for publication in the local press or a future newsletter.

Action by – the Mayor and Town Clerk

A member requested that when the time came to replace the Council's current lights consideration be given to investigating if solar powered options were available.

At this point the Committee Chair elected to defer consideration of Agenda Item 6 – Council Budget for 2021/22 until after Agenda Item 11; however, the minutes reflect the order as shown on the agenda.

6. **COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2021/22**

The Committee was requested to consider the circulated report which detailed the current annual budget and the Clerk's suggestions for the 2021/22 budget. The Committee had also been provided, by e-mail, with a copy of the Committee's actual spend over a three-year period in order that Members could be better informed when considering the budget for 2021/22.

Due to a number of Members not viewing the 'actual spend' document it was felt that the Committee could not consider its budget at the current meeting. The Clerk offered to produce a predicted budget for the Committee's consideration, to include the Chair's request that it include a new 'Special Environmental Projects' budget heading, the funding for which would be ring-fenced from any underspend in the current financial year. It was agreed that the current budget provision of £10,200 in respect of the Christmas Event would remain at the same level for 2021/22 in order that the Council may consider how it could improve the 2021 Switch On Event.

The Council noted that the current litter collection contract would expire at the end of the financial year and that discussions would need to commence on a new contract. It was Proposed by Cllr Harley that the requirement to collect litter on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day would be removed from the new contract. Unanimously APPROVED.

The Clerk was also asked, as part of the new contract, to enquire what recycling options the contractor was available to offer. It was Proposed by Cllr Leach, Seconded by Cllr

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2020/10/19 – 05

Carr, that the Clerk be requested to commence a tender process for a three-year contract which would exclude the three Bank Holidays previously mentioned. Unanimously APPROVED.

Action by – the Clerk

It was Proposed by Cllr S Holmes, Seconded by Cllr Carr, that the Clerk be requested to provide the Council with an updated 2021/22 budget based on the “actual spend” three-year figures. Unanimously APPROVED.

Action by – the Clerk

The Clerk reminded all present that previously the Council had operated its budget on a Gross basis and had now moved to a Nett basis so was very much in a transitional period.

7. **REGENERATION AND COVID-19 RECOVERY PROJECT**

The Committee was requested to consider providing the Council with any views on reviving the previously discussed Regeneration Project for the Town, perhaps with an updated specification to include Covid Recovery.

The Clerk advised that the Committee was not being asked to make a decision so much as to provide its view on taking the project forward, to assist the Council. Additional quotations would be obtained for consideration by the Council and any Project should make appropriate reference to the current Neighbourhood Development Plan. It was suggested that the Project could be used as an initiative to encourage the formation of a Chamber of Trade or Commerce. It was noted that the Council held an Earmarked Reserve for a Regeneration Project. Several members spoke in support of revising the NDP as part of the Town’s regeneration. It was suggested that the Council could seek advice from an organisation which had undergone a regeneration project to provide it with advice. Noting that an indicative figure of £9,000 had been included in the circulated report, it was suggested that the sum be included in the Council’s budget and that the Clerk be requested to obtain a further two quotations for the project.

The Clerk gave a commitment to contact the Gloucestershire Chamber of Commerce to ascertain if it could assist with the formation of a local branch. Cllr Leach, the Council’s representative on the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum, felt that it may also be willing to provide assistance.

Action by – the Clerk

8. **PROPOSED MARKET ON NEWERNE STREET**

The Committee was reminded of correspondence from District Cllr Claire Vaughan to the Council requesting that it consider leasing an area of the Newerne Street Car Park to provide a location for a market. No further information had since been received from the landowner, Forest of Dean District Council, and attention was drawn to the Motion proposed by Cllr Leach at the last meeting of the Council for the Town Council to initiate discussion with the District Council on the feasibility of using a 20 m x 40 m area at the rear of Lloyds Pharmacy and the side of the Co-operative Store to create a Community Space. Whilst she was happy for such a dialogue with the Forest of Dean District Council on the proposal, Cllr Harley expressed a desire to know the likely charges.

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2020/10/19 – 06

9. **REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP**

Grass Cutting

As Lead Member for the Environmental Working Group, Cllr Carr informed the Committee of the work by the Head Groundsman to identify areas where grass cutting could be taken back ‘in-house’ and areas where wildflowers could be planted to reduce cutting even further. A meeting had taken place earlier that day between the Head Groundsman, Cllrs Carr and Harley, together with the Town Clerk to review the identified areas. It was felt the Gateways would still need to be contracted out but all other areas could be brought back ‘in-house’. Cllr Carr provided the Council with an overview of the suggestions made by the Head Groundsman to improve areas for wildlife which members felt had the potential for collaboration with local schools.

Cllr Carr also spoke on the need to create a ‘Special Environmental Projects’ budget heading, into which an agreed unspent sum from the current budget could be transferred. It was Proposed by Cllr Carr, Seconded by Cllr Leach, that such a heading be added to the Committee’s budget; and the Clerk requested to determine the amount of funding which could be transferred into said heading. Furthermore, that the Head Groundsman would take over the grass cutting of areas previously contracted out, with the exception of the Gateways, with the Clerk requested to invite tenders on reduced contract area. Unanimously AGREED.

Action by – the Clerk

10. **REPORT FROM THE GREEN SPACES PROJECT**

The Chair advised that the Green Spaces Project was an offshoot of the Environmental Working Group for which she would like the Council to take forward the Project’s proposals.

The Chair felt that the decision to take the grass cutting back ‘in-house’ provided the opportunity to engage with residents in residential areas where the Council undertook grass cutting. A number of alternatives could be offered to the current practice of grass cutting, e.g. a community orchard, an outdoor space, a ‘guerrilla gardening space’ or a wildflower area. The Chair also spoke on a desire for residents to take on responsibility and control for their areas and expressed a wish to trial the approach in Willow Heights and Lancaster Drive.

During the discussion it was suggested that the Council should examine the status of green spaces, particularly Lancaster Drive, because planning conditions may restrict what could be undertaken on the area. The Clerk was requested to contact both Forest of Dean District Council and Gloucestershire County Council to ascertain if any restrictions had been placed on either location.

Action by – the Clerk

11. **GRASS-CUTTING CONTRACT AND LITTER-PICKING CONTRACT**

The Council noted that discussion concerning the grass cutting contract had taken place earlier in the meeting.

Litter-Collection

The Clerk informed the Council of the current budget provision for litter collection for the Council’s play areas, dog waste bins and the Harbour and advised that Officers had no complaints regarding the current contract.

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING – 2020/10/19 – 07

The Committee was advised that the contract was due to expire at the end of March 2021 and the Clerk would commence a tendering process for a new three-year contract in line with the terms of the existing arrangements. In response to a member's question regarding a likely increase in public use of the Harbour (arising from the Destination Lydney Harbour project) and the consequent increase in litter, the Clerk suggested that it may be necessary to review the frequency of the litter collection if a significant problem arose. It was noted that the Environment Agency was responsible for the Harbour and provided a contribution to the Town Council in respect of litter collection and grass cutting.

It was Proposed by Cllr Carr, Seconded by Cllr S Holmes, that Officers be requested to commence a tendering process for a new three-year contract which would be based on the current contract. Unanimously APPROVED.

Action by – the Clerk

12. **COMMITTEE INPUT INTO A COUNCIL FIVE-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN AND TO AN ANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

The Committee was requested to consider whether it had any aspirations or plans that needed to be included in the development of a new Five Year Plan (setting out the Council's longer-term overall strategies for the town) and an Annual Action Plan (setting out the coming year's steps or objectives towards the Five Year Plan). Both documents would be closely linked with the Budget and financial planning for the longer term. The matter would be considered again by the Council and all of its Committees in due course.

13. **PLAY INSPECTION REPORTS**

The Committee was requested to note the circulated Annual Inspection Reports. Attention was drawn to the fact that no equipment was in dangerous condition and action had already been taken to address some minor repairs. Thanks were expressed to the Head Gardener / Grounds Supervisor and to the Assistant Clerk for the actions undertaken to date.

14. **COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

Cllr R Holmes requested that the gate in the wooden fence at the rear of The Mesne be inspected as it was not closing properly.

Action by – the Clerk

15. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place on 18th January 2021, however, it may be necessary for an Extra Ordinary meeting to take place for the Council to consider its draft 2021/22 budget prior to submission to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm.

Chairman

Date