

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/05/21 – 01

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
held in the Council Chamber, Claremont House, Lydney on Monday 21 May 2012 at 6.58 pm.

PRESENT: Cllrs B Pearman (Chairman), B Berryman, D Biddle, D Cooksley,
C Matthews, W J Osborne and B Thomas

Mrs J Smailes – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/RFO
Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer (EO)

Cllr Pearman informed those present of the arrangements for evacuating the building in the event of an emergency, and also that no practice fire evacuation had been scheduled for the evening.

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Pearman invited nominations for the position of Chairman. **Cllr Biddle proposed** that the Chairman would “Stand On”. **Seconded by Cllr Osborne.**

There being no other nominations the appointment was put to a vote. Unanimous. Cllr Pearman was duly re-appointed to the role of Chairman and thanked his fellow Councillors for their vote of confidence.

2. **ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**

Cllr Pearman invited nominations for the position of Deputy Chairman. Cllr Biddle nominated Cllr Berryman for the role, however, Cllr Berryman declined the nomination.

Cllr Matthews nominated Cllr Osborne for the role. **Seconded by Cllr Biddle.** There being no other nominations the appointment was put to a vote. Unanimous.

3. **NOMINATIONS OF MEMBER TO PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE**

Cllr Pearman proposed that that existing arrangements “Stand On”. **Seconded by Cllr Matthews.** Unanimous.

In view of the above Cllr Osborne’s appointment was re-confirmed.

4. **APOLOGIES**

None.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr D Biddle – Lydney Festival

6. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Finance and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 February 2012 were confirmed as a true record. **Proposed by Cllr Berryman, seconded by Cllr Biddle.** Unanimous.

7. **BUDGET 2012/13**

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the current budget, which illustrated a potential saving. The CEO explained that the potential saving may be achieved through a combination of factors, which included the fact that the total sum

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/05/21 – 02

payable to Moore Stephens was not as high as originally indicated, together with a reduction in the expected probable income figure in order to ensure that Council was not reliant upon income streams that were possibly unattainable. During discussion on the budget Cllr Biddle expressed concern over the potential savings and Cllr Cooksley suggested that the Council may wish to investigate the possibility of the Council obtaining free telephone calls through an alternative telephone line provider.

Consideration then turned towards the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the town. It was noted that the Government was setting funding, for which towns would be required to submit a formal funding application. During discussion it was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Thomas**, that the Council would allocate up to £15,000 from its identified potential savings towards the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan. This sum would also be used in part to cover the associated NDP administration costs. Unanimous.

8. FINANCE

Cllr Pearman explained that the Council would not further consider the ability for internet banking /BACS payments until LGA s150(5) had been repealed and the Council had considered any potential “risk” which may then exist to the “public purse”.

Prior to the meeting Councillors were also provide with a copy of the NALC advisory notes regarding VAT and Audit. The contents of both documents were noted by Councillors.

9. TRAINING

Committed Expenditure

Attention was drawn to the committed expenditure relating to training. Members were reminded that the Council had previously agreed that the CEO would undertake a Certificate in Higher Education in Community and Local Governance, the cost of which would be spread over two financial years. It was however noted that Council had already signed up to the CEOs/University’s Learning Agreement which provided for Continuous Professional Development (CPD), thereby providing for the CEO to continue with her studies in order to attain a degree in Community Engagement and Governance .

SLCC Summer Synopsis

Members were asked to consider the CEO’s request to attend the SLCC Summer Synopsis which related to front runner Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). Cllr Pearman advised that the cost of attending the Synopsis amounted to £250.00 and he felt the CEOs attendance to be crucial for the towns NDP. Accordingly, it was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Thomas**, that the CEO would attend the event. The matter was put to a vote which was carried, however, Cllr Cooksley felt that the Council could obtain information from other avenues at no costs.

Due to the CEOs attendance at the event Councillors were then informed that the Town Council’s office would be closed on 4 July 2012 as the Finance Assistant would be attending a LGPS event and the Executive Officer would be on holiday. Noted

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/05/21 – 03

Registrar Training

Cllr Osborne spoke at length on the lack of facilities which were provided by the Registration Service to Forest residents. Cllr Osborne emphasised the lack of appointments provided locally (the Registration Office in Cinderford was supposed to be operated five days a week, however, sometimes it is only operated for one day a week) and explained that discussion had taken place between the Forest Mayors over the possibility of each of the Clerks undertaking training in order that they may be able to provide an opportunity for residents to register deaths locally. Cllr Matthews highlighted the requirement for a member of staff to collect and return the Register from Cheltenham on a daily basis and she felt that Cllr Osborne's suggestion may provide an income for the Council. Whilst he agreed that the town may benefit from Cllr Osborne's suggestion, Cllr Cooksley stated that the Registration Service was currently looking to train a further three Registrars for the Forest and volunteered to provide information on this.

Members were advised that further investigation would need to take place over Cllr Osborne's suggestion (e.g. the logistics of obtaining the Register from Cheltenham, additional insurance premium for employees cars, etc). Whilst he accepted that there may be difficulties to be overcome, Cllr Osborne felt that the Council should further investigate the matter.

Action: Cllr Cooksley to provide relevant information

10. FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN

During discussion Cllr Pearman suggested that the Council may wish to look at separating the Financial Business Plan from the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Cllr Pearman felt that the NDP would consider a wide range of topics, the information from which could be reviewed by the working party set up to consider the Business Plan and he also asked for consideration to be given to appointing a different Chairman for each working party/steering group. Members were informed that they would be required to take their own minutes for the meetings.

Cllr Biddle proposed that the Council needed to concentrate on producing its NDP; consideration would then be given to producing a five year business plan following the conclusion of the NDP. **Seconded by Cllr Pearman.** Unanimous.

Cllr Biddle called for all Councillors to be invited to attend NDP meetings and he stressed that input would be welcomed from all. Cllr Pearman noted that the NDP Steering Group may also need to consider varying the time of their meetings.

11. GRANTS

a) Grant Application/Monitoring Form

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the draft documentation. Members noted that the proposed forms would afford the Council with greater information on how each organisation proposed to spend any funding allocated and would also enable any grants awarded to be reported in the Council's newsletter.

Adoption was **proposed by Cllr Matthews, seconded by Cllr Cooksley.**

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/05/21 – 04

b) Lydney Festival

Having declared an interest in this matter, Cllr Biddle excused himself from the Chamber whilst this matter was discussed.

Prior to the meeting members were provided with a copy of the grant request letter which had been received from Lydney Festival Committee in which they sought a grant of £1,500 for this year's festival. **Proposed By Cllr Matthews, Seconded By Cllr Berryman.** Unanimous.

Resolved: That a grant for £1,500 would be provided to Lydney Festival.

Action by – the CEO

c) Grant Applications from Artspace/Cross Roads Care

It was agreed that both organisations would be provided with copies of the approved grant application forms in order that they may be completed and returned.

Discussion then took place on the level of grants which would be provided to organisations and it was proposed by Cllr Pearman, seconded by Cllr Cooksley that the amount of grant provided to successful organisations would be discretionary. Furthermore, **Cllr Biddle proposed** that if an organisation wished to obtain a grant exceeding £500 they would be required to provide a copy of their most recent accounts, with a maximum grant level set at £1,500. It was also noted that whilst grant would not be limited to organisations based in the town, successful organisations must provide a benefit to residents.

12. STAFFING

Councillors noted that interviews would take place on Thursday 24 May 2012 for an Administrative Assistant, initially employed via the government's Apprenticeship Scheme, and that the interview panel would consist of the Chief Executive Officer, Executive Officer and a member of the Personnel Sub-Committee.

Councillors were then informed of the flexitime which had been accrued by the Chief Executive Officer, Executive Officer and the Finance Assistant as a result of undertaking their duties. During discussion Councillors considered how the accrued flexitime could be addressed (e.g. by shutting the Council's office for three days), however, this was felt to be impractical. **Cllr Pearman proposed** that the CEO would be permitted to approve the payment of up to three days flexitime for the CEO, EO and Finance Assistant, the payment of which would not become a regular arrangement. **Seconded by Cllr Matthews.** Unanimous.

Cllr Cooksley mooted his views on the content of the previous meeting minutes in which it was highlighted, based upon a previous Full Council meeting, that Town Council employees had since decided to join a Trade Union.

The meeting closed at 8.22 pm.

Chairman 

Date 16/7/12