

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/07/16 – 05

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber, Claremont House, Lydney on Monday 16 July 2012 at 8.28 pm.

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

Cllr D Edwards
Three members of the public
Mrs J Smailes – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/RFO
Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer (EO)

1. **APOLOGIES**

None.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr W Osborne – Lydney War Memorial

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Finance and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 May 2012, subject to the correction of a spelling error (Item 8.....BACS payments until LGA s150(5) had been *repealed*.....” were confirmed as a true record. **Proposed by Cllr Matthews, seconded by Cllr Harris.** Unanimous.

4. **BUDGET**

Councillors were provided with a copy of the budget breakdown in order that they may view how the actual spend was performing against the budget, the estimated income and the amount of identified savings. It was **proposed by Cllr Biddle, seconded by Cllr Osborne**, that approval would be given to transfer £18,000 from the Council’s current account into its General Reserves to reflect the amount of identified savings. Councillors were delighted to note that the level of the Council’s General Reserves stood in excess of the recommended level of three months operating costs.

Members were informed that the Finance Assistant had identified the budgetary headings which would fall under the Amenities Committee’s remit and it was noted that it would be necessary to transfer the majority of the Highway Committee’s budgetary headings to the Amenities Committee Budget as the items now fell under said Committee’s control. Councillors were also provided with an opportunity to conduct a quarterly review of the Council’s budget.

Cllr Pearman reported that the Council would need to identify funding in order to cover the cost of circulating its newsletters and highlighted that as part of Quality Status the Council would be required to produce and issue quarterly newsletters. Members were informed that the Council was required to produce a newsletter in September and it was **proposed by Cllr Pearman, seconded by Cllr Thomas**, that £400.00 would be taken from the General Reserve account (if necessary) to cover the cost of producing/distributing the newsletter. Unanimous.

Action by – the CEO



LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/07/16 – 06

5. FINANCE

Cllr Pearman reported that earlier in the morning the Council had received the Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2012, which had been returned by the External Auditor, Moore Stephens. Councillors were delighted to note that the only comment made by the external auditor was "*the Council should minute the discussion of all internal audit reports, even if there is nothing to report*". Cllr Pearman commended the CEO and the Finance Assistant on their work and he felt that it was an excellent improvement when compared to previous years.

It was noted that payments made by the Town Council were approved at each meeting and that any payments made in advance were taken by Direct Debit arrangements for which authorisation was also required. Cllr Pearman reminded Members that the accounts were now audited on a bi-monthly basis.

Lydney War Memorial

Members recalled that Council had discussed the insurance valuation for the Memorial and had called for a current replacement valuation to be obtained. Cllr Berryman reported that should Damsells had recommended that it would cost £30,000 to replace the stonework for the Memorial, with an additional charge per letter to re-cut the names of the fallen soldiers. Whilst it was noted that a total cost for replacing the memorial had yet to be provided, it was **proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Matthews**, that the Council would increase its insurance provision, based on the total cost (when received).

Action by – the CEO

Polling Cards

Councillors were asked to confirm that they wished Polling Cards to be issued, if required, for the election in the North Ward, the cost of which may equate to £400.00. It was accepted that it would be necessary to consider this matter now, as the election may be called during the August Recess. **Cllr Matthews proposed** that the Council would cover the cost of Polling Cards, if required.

Cllr Osborne then informed Members of a discussion which had taken place at the District Council meeting during which the Leader of the Cabinet had agreed the need for more Councillors to be elected as opposed to co-opted. Discussion had also taken place regarding the new Register of Member's Interest Forms and the need to disclose interests of spouses. At this point **Cllr Harris agreed to second** Cllr Matthew's proposal. The motion was put to a vote which was carried with two abstentions.

Action by – CEO

During discussion it was suggested that if an election was not requested in respect of the second vacancy for the Lydney North Ward, then the candidates who had not been successfully elected may wish to put themselves forward for the vacancy. Accordingly, Councillors were asked if they wished the CEO to contact the unsuccessful candidates to invite them to stand for co-option for the Lydney North Ward for which Cllr Pearman did not see a problem, in principle.

6. COMMUNITY ASSETTS

Cllr Pearman informed Members that he had attended an informal meeting at the Youth Café and expressed amazement at the scope of the building. Cllr Pearman reminded the Committee that under the General Power of Competence the Council now possessed the ability to purchase assets/run a business and Members recalled that District Councillor

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/07/16 – 07

Winship had previously questioned if the Council was considering purchasing the underpass at the railway station. Members were informed that the finances of the Youth Café were vulnerable and Cllr Pearman felt that the Council should consider offering its support, as youth facilities were seen to be a priority. It was noted that the building was situated in the heart of the town and that it possessed a number of tenants. Furthermore, that the building could be used as a base from which the Council could host Councillor Surgeries, etc. Cllr Pearman acknowledged that the lease for the building would shortly become available and he called on the Council to consider if it wished to get involved in saving the facility, which could, in time, provide an income stream for the Council.

During discussion concern was expressed that the Youth Café may not possess sufficient funding to enable it to continue at length. It was felt that it may be possible for the Youth Council to hold its meetings at the facility and apply for funding to enable the Cafe to continue in the future, with its first meeting taking place on Thursday 20 September 2012. Cllr Osborne felt that it may be possible for the building to be used as the Council office, however, this was not felt to be a viable option as it would cost a significant amount of money to convert the building for the Council's use. Members noted that the property also extended over the top of the butchers shop and it was suggested that if the Council wished to consider purchasing the Vibe Café building, it should also consider purchasing the adjacent butchers shop. Cllr Biddle reported that the lease for the Vibe Café expired in 2013 and that sufficient funding existed to allow the Café to continue until October/November. It was suggested that the Vibe Café may wish to apply to the Town Council for a grant to support its activities; that said grant application would need to be received prior to the Committee's next meeting on 17 September 2012; that the possible use of the building by the Council would be a totally separate issue; that if the Youth Council elected to hold its meetings at the Vibe Café it would need to be charged accordingly.

It was felt that if the Council wished to support the Vibe Café then, following agreement by the Trustees of the Café, the Council should elect two representatives to sit as Trustees of the facility, with said Trustees then playing an active part in the completion of external grant funding applications. At this point Mr Mike Green (Trustee of the Vibe Café who had attended the meeting as a member of the public) was invited to address the Committee. Mr Green spoke on the main problem facing the Vibe Café, which was fundraising and it was felt that a salaried role may be offered to the right candidate. Cllr Edwards was asked if he would be willing to get involved in obtaining funding/acting as a Trustee of the Vibe Café. Whilst Cllr Edwards stated that he was willing to put his name forward for the role, he believed that the opportunity should also be afforded to the existing Trustees to also put their names forward. Mr Green reported that the owner of the building was considering if they wished to sell the building. Members were advised that if the Council wished to consider purchasing the building then it should also consider purchasing the adjacent butchers shop, however, it was stressed that the Council would need to formally view all the premises which it wished to consider. **Cllr Pearman proposed** that Mr Green continue to monitor the situation with the owner of the building and report any developments to the Council. However, the proposal was not seconded. Furthermore, that the Trustees of the Vibe Café would need to consider if they wished to elect two Councillors to the Trustee Board of the Vibe Café.



LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/07/16 – 08

Councillors were reminded that the Council would need to formally appoint two Councillors as Trustees of the Vibe Café (subject to agreement of Vibe Café Trustees) and that if the Council wished to formally consider purchasing the building it would need to obtain a number of consents prior to agreeing to such a purchase (e.g. Secretary of State, Public Works Loan Board, etc) which would take time to obtain.

7. TRAINING

Working With Your Council (WWYC)

Cllr Pearman reported that he, together with the Finance Assistant, were currently undertaking WWYC and were attending mentoring sessions conducted by the CEO. Cllr Pearman encouraged other Councillors to undertake WWYC in order that they may broaden their knowledge base. Cllr Harris expressed an interest in undertaking WWYC.

Councillors were asked to consider approving the cost for the Council's Administrative Assistant, Cllr Harris and Cllr Edwards to undertake WWYC (approximately £50 each). **Proposed by Cllr Biddle. Unanimous.**

Action by – the CEO

Courses relating to Health & Safety

Members were informed that it would be necessary for staff to undertake a number of health and safety related courses (e.g. manual handling, ladder safety, emergency first aid at work and fire marshal) and that Lydney Town Hall Management Committee had been approached to ascertain if they wished their staff to also undertake a number of the courses, the cost for which would be re-charged to the Trust.

The CEO advised that she had negotiated a discounted rate with a local training provider to provide manual handling, ladder safety and emergency first aid at work courses, but this would necessitate the courses taking place at the Council offices on Friday afternoons. Cllr Matthews stated that she wished to join the Emergency First Aid at Work Course, for which she would pay for her attendance. Members were then asked if they wished to consider approving all or part of the required training. Cllr Pearman felt that the Council did not have any other option but to undertake the specified training and it was noted that the CEO would have to undertake further negotiations in order to ensure that the aforementioned courses, plus the fire marshal course, fell within a maximum budget of £750.00. **Proposed by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Matthews. Unanimous.**

Action by – the CEO

Members attention was also drawn to the fact that the Head Gardener would also need to undertake First Aid at Work Refresher training, at an anticipated cost of £200.00 plus VAT.

Cemetery Management Training

Councillors were then informed of a training course on Cemetery Management which would be organised by the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils. Members noted that the EO had previously attended said course which she had found to be excellent and that members of the Amenities Committee had suggested that the Council may wish to consider attendance by another member of staff.

During a short discussion it was noted that the CEO, Finance Assistant and Administrative Assistant were already undertaking job specific training and Cllr Matthews felt that

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/07/16 – 09

consideration of this matter should be deferred. Cllr Matthews also felt that the Council may wish to consider recruiting another member of staff to assist with the workload. Whilst he agreed that the matter could be deferred, Cllr Osborne believed that the Council had originally suggested that it may look to recruit three apprentices. However, Cllr Edwards felt that a further apprentice may increase, not reduce, the Council's workload. It was agreed that further discussion on the matter of apprentices would take place under agenda item 9.

At this point Members were reminded about the Localism training course which had been arranged for Tuesday 24 July 2012 from 6.30 pm to 9.00 pm and it was suggested by Cllr Pearman that the Council may wish to invite those members of the public currently standing for election to attend, together with neighbourhood development plan co-optees. No objection to the suggestion was received.

Action by – the CEO

8. GRANTS

a) Cross Roads Care

Prior to the meeting Councillors were provided with a copy of the completed grant application form which had been received from Cross Roads Care. It was **proposed by Cllr Matthews** that the request for a donation would be declined, as it was felt the organisations reserves to be too high. Unanimous.

b) Forest Sensory Services

Having received a copy of the organisations completed grant application form prior to the meeting, it was **proposed by Cllr Berryman, seconded by Cllr Matthews**, that a grant of £100 would be awarded. The proposal was put to a vote which was carried with two abstentions.

Action by – the CEO

c) County Air Ambulance

Members were informed that a completed grant form had been received in the post earlier in the morning and they were asked if they wished to consider approving a grant to the County Air Ambulance.

Cllr Matthews proposed that a grant of £100 should be awarded. However, Cllr Osborne moved an amendment to the original proposal that the Council should also retain the request from the County Air Ambulance on file in order that it may be considered again at the end of the financial year. Cllr Matthews agreed to include the amendment in her proposal, which was then **seconded by Cllr Harris**. Unanimous.

Action by – the CEO

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC & PRESS

Page 11 - 12 (Inclusive) - CLOSED SESSION

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2012/07/16 – 10

Standing orders suspended in order that the Council may continue in “closed session” under the provisions of The Public (Admission to Meetings Act 1960) as the business to be discussed is considered to be of a confidential nature

9. **STAFFING**

- Cllrs Pearman and Berryman to attend the Stronger in Partnership training course at Cinderford Town Council on 18 September 2012 .

Meeting closed at 10.15 pm

Chairman 

Date 