

LYDNEY TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2021/06/21 – 01

Minutes of the Meeting held in the Council Chambers, Claremont House, High Street Lydney on Monday 21st June 2021 at 7.15 pm

PRESENT: Councillors R Holmes (Chair), A Harley, C Harris, S Holmes and S Thomas Brown (one vacancy)

Mr S Holley – Town Clerk

1. **APOLOGIES**

Received from Cllr C Vaughan.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor S Holmes declared an interest in the proposed grant to Lydney Community Centre, in that she was a member of its managing committee.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Following a Proposal from the Chair, the Committee RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16th November 2020 be confirmed as a true record. Record of Voting: For – 2, Against – 0, Abstentions 3, Absent/Apologies – 1, Vacancy – 1.

4. **OPEN FORUM**

No members of the public were present.

5. **GRANTS**

The Committee was requested to consider five requests for a grant, which had all been circulated along with a copy of the Council's Grants Policy Guidance Sheet:

(i) Acorns Children's Hospice Trust - £500 towards funding the Family Team psychosocial support of one of the trust's Lydney based families. DECLINED because the Committee felt the Trust (based in Worcester) did not have sufficiently close a link to Lydney or service provision in Lydney.

(ii) Cruse Bereavement Care – £500 towards providing telephone and online bereavement support. DECLINED because the Committee felt that the applicant had not provided evidence of service provision in Lydney.

(iii) Lydney Resident (anonymised) – Request for assistance with flood prevention measures. WITHDRAWN. The Committee noted that the Clerk had referred this request on to the District Council because the Town Council's grants scheme did not cover such applications.

(iv) Lydney Town Hall Committee – Request for assistance in preserving the Town hall for future community use. No figure requested. The Committee felt this should be DEFERRED in order for Committee members R and S Holmes to engage with the Town Hall Committee and find out more.

(v) Lydney Community Centre - £2,000 towards replacement boiler. The sum requested exceeded the £500 limit for the Committee so Cllr Harris Proposed that this application be referred up to the Council, with the Committee's recommendation of approval; the funds to come from the Grants budget. Seconded by Cllr Harley and APPROVED with the following Record of Voting: For – 4, Against – 0, Abstentions – 1, Absent/Apologies – 1, Vacancy – 1

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6. REVIEW OF KEY POLICIES

The Chair advised the Committee of his wish to commence a review of the Council's policies, with particular focus on financial policies. Members were requested to advise the Clerk of the policies they wished to start on, in order for the existing versions to be circulated for discussion and amendments scheduled for discussion at the next meeting. The Committee suggested: the Asset Register; the list of Bank Signatories; the list of Standing Orders and Direct Debits; the list of Subscriptions for the Council and its staff; the Council's insurance policies (including Key Person Insurance Cover); and the Scheme of Delegation.

Action by the Town Clerk

7. REVIEW OF COUNCIL CONTRACTS

The Chair requested that members of the Committee be supplied with a list of contracts in order to identify which should be reviewed first. The Chair felt the contract with the Council's IT provider should be one of the first.

Action by the Town Clerk

8. CONTROL MEASURES FOR ELECTRONIC PAYMENT

The Committee noted that the Covid Pandemic had compelled the Council to move from payments being made almost entirely by cheques, which had to be signed by the Clerk/RFO and two Councillors, to electronic payment. The Town Clerk/RFO explained that electronic payment had become the norm across the town and parish council sector and the Council had agreed some months before to make it a permanent arrangement. However, the need for an urgent change of payment method had not been accompanied by a change in the arrangements for adequate control measures. The Clerk suggested that Officers prepare payments for issuing the day after approval by each Council meeting in the normal way and that one of the two members attending to sign the vouchers be the person to press the 'sign' button on the Lloyds payment keypad and then annotate and sign the payment schedule to confirm such had been done. It was unanimously AGREED to recommend this procedure to the Council when it met in July.

Action by the Town Clerk

9. FINANCIAL REPORTING

The Committee was requested to consider the new financial reports provided to the Council at each monthly meeting. The Clerk explained that the new Rialtas Accounting software allowed a far higher standard of reporting than the previous system based on Excel spreadsheets, which were more prone to error. Since June 2020 the Council now received a pack containing: the payments presented for approval (including urgent payments already made, for ratification); the balance sheet; the trial balance; detailed income and expenditure by Budget Heading; the bank reconciliation; a statement on the earmarked reserves and copy bank statements. Collectively, the reporting provided the Council with far more information on its finances than formerly, but the Clerk wanted to know if the Committee responsible for overseeing the Council's finances wished to see any improvements. It was AGREED that the new system appeared to be satisfactory, but Officers were requested to look into providing a covering summary sheet.

Action by the Town Clerk

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10. **COUNCILLORS REPORTS**

None.

11. **FUTURE BUSINESS**

The Town Clerk / RFO invited members to contact him and the Chair with suggestions for future business: (i) it was suggested that members start thinking about possible recipients of long-term grants subject to Service Level Agreements; (ii) it was also suggested that the Council could be asked to consider making better use of the iPad tablets bought a few years previously for use by Councillors at meetings; (iii) the next meeting should include the election of a Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Action by the Town Clerk

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Chair

Date