



Battle Town Council



MINUTES of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY, 28th JULY 2020 via Zoom at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs G Favell (Chairman), V Cook, J Gyngell, M Kiloh and L Samms.

In Attendance: Cllrs A Brown, C Hartley and A Russell, six members of the public, C Harris (Town Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the meeting and reported that the meeting will be recorded to aid minutes taking.

Public Question Time – nothing raised

1. **Apologies for absence** – Cllr Would. Cllr Samms, Vice-Chairman represents ER&TD.
2. **Disclosure of interest** – Cllr Samms and Cllr Favell reported an interest in item 6.
3. **The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2020** were agreed and duly electronically signed by Cllr Favell.
4. **Clerk's report**
 - The office staff had returned to the Almonry on 6th July. This has proved a positive move although it remains closed to the public without prior appointment.
 - A new PC has been purchased and is fully functioning.
 - A request to erect a banner at Chequers corner to promote a new children's dance class, with free taster classes had been received. Although this area is not owned by the Council, there is a licence in place for the flower bed. There was concern at the potential for a prolific number of banners around the town but it was balanced with the support for businesses during this difficult Covid-19 situation. **Members agreed to this request for a 2 week period** and will consider any further requests on their own merits.
5. **Almonry Development Project**
 - Notes from the Almonry Development Working Group meetings on 3rd, 6th, 13th and 22nd July were received, as attached (appendices A, B, C and D).
Cllr Kiloh reported that the ADWG had been going through the tender specification to identify works that should be excluded and included for recommendation to Full Council, as agreed at the previous Full Council meeting.
Mr Gray, ADWG advisor member, presented options for disabled access that had been considered by the WG. These included: the costed option of **levelling the pathways from an entrance at Western Avenue**, through the rear garden and to the rear of the building to enter into the existing meeting room. This was felt to be the most extensive scheme and does not fully comply with the Equality Act as disabled people would enter through a separate door to ambulant people; a **ramped and step access using the existing vehicular access and a section of the front garden** which had been refused by Council; a **proprietary prefabricated steel ramp from the High Street pavement** to the entrance porch. Steps by the porch towards the Museum would be incorporated, but there would be no option of stepped access from the High Street and is therefore not fully compliant. It was also felt that this may not look attractive; a **proprietary platform lift into a new opening in the rear wall of the porch**. This would require levelling to the entrance step and would have minimal impact to the building, but would be approached via the existing vehicular access that may need to be made compliant. Following

Battle Town Council

full discussion of all options the ADWG recommended this final option at a potential cost of between £12k and £20k.

In relation to the accessible toilet facilities, the ADWG recommend that this should be incorporated inside the building where the existing store area in the kitchen is. It will require the removal of modern additional walls between the kitchen and current public gallery area. The removal of these had been designed, approved as part of the planning approval and included in the original tender. Sliding folding doors to the kitchen area would separate the two areas. Illustrative drawings are attached (appendix E).

It was highlighted that there is a wide choice of lifts and bridge ramps at varied costs. It was suggested that more accurate costs of both should be provided for Council to consider. The Clerk reported that the Quantity Surveyor had given two service levels with appropriate fees. The first was for a QS cost plan revision at £850. However, it was suggested that this was not necessary as a reduced scheme had already been agreed. The tender revision to provide for updated documents, submission to preferred two tenderers, up-date of tender returns comparison for report and recommendation of contractor at a cost of £1,480. She confirmed that a fee proposal from the Architect is awaited and that Mr Gray had kindly agreed to submit the planning and lifted building applications including completing the forms and preparing the Heritage and design and access statements free of charge. It was highlighted that further professional fees will be reduced in-line with the reduction in project costs

Members noted that the building is not designed for accessibility for all, but that the best compromise must be agreed.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gray for all his help and support.

- **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council that an accessible toilet is installed in the current utility area near to the kitchen.**
- It was highlighted that the existing outside toilet is no longer adequate for use for those visiting the garden or Museum. **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council that the outside toilet is given a face-lift to provide two basic WC cubicles.**
- **Members agreed to recommend to Full Council that a proprietary platform lift into a new opening in the rear wall of the porch be included for disabled access.**
- **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council that the removal of artex should not be included in the work.**
- **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council that the floor level in the WC under the stairs is raised to make an ambulant disabled toilet.**
- **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council that the kitchen should be fitted out with new units.**
- The current heating system is old and inefficient with one of the boilers not working for some time as beyond repair. It was suggested that electric heating using renewable sourced energy should be provided. This requires no plumbing and there would be no need to remove the existing pipework. Wiring could be placed behind panelling or ducted without causing damage. **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council that electric heating using renewable sourced energy should be provided.**
- **Members agreed unanimously to recommend to Full Council professional fees of up to £5,000 to obtain revised costs, updated listed building and planning applications.**

5. Grants

One application had been received and circulated prior to the meeting. In accordance with Council Policy this was discussed.

Battle Town Council

Battle for Tennis: £500 as a contribution to a tennis practice wall, to be sited on the existing tennis courts on the recreation ground. This item is on the Environment Committee Action Plan and the total cost is approximately £8,000. £2,500 has been raised. **Members agreed unanimously to grant £500 in principle for payment when the full amount has been raised.**

Following Council agreement to provide for a **Post Covid-19 Recovery Grant**, two applications had been received and were discussed.

Cllr Samms repeated her interest in this item.

- **This is Our Battle** £500 to provide prints for shop windows and wall spaces, together with leaflets and guides. **Members agreed to grant £500.**

Cllr Favell repeated her interest in this item.

- **Ad Astra Coaching Mentoring Training:** £500 to provide confidence training and mental health support for five 8-18 year olds for four weeks. A total of 40 free places would be available if the grant application was successful. **Members agreed unanimously to grant £500.**

7. Annual Return and year-end figures for 2019-20

The part completed Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/20 had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. **Members agreed to recommend to Full Council the document for completion and signing.**

8. Report from Internal Auditor

The Report had been circulated to Members and the Clerk confirmed that the Auditor had signed the AGAR to confirm that the Council's procedures and controls are fully satisfactory. Three suggestions had been made to increase risk mitigations:

- at budget setting, the movement from and to reserves are budgeted;
- to add existing procedures to the Operational and Finance Risk Register eg play equip and vehicle checks;
- that at least one other balance sheet is presented to Council in addition to the year-end. This will require a minor amendment to the Financial Regulations.

These were agreed unanimously.

The Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer was thanked for the maintenance and presentation of the accounts.

9. Reserves Policy

It was agreed to postpone discussion of the document to the Annual Meeting.

10. Insurance cover

The current insurance schedule had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. It was noted that the 3year policy agreement is due for renewal in October and the Clerk is currently seeking quotes. It was highlighted that the vehicle insurance terms and conditions require amendment to include the new member of staff who is under 21years old.

11. Beautiful Battle

The minutes of the **meeting held on 22 July 2020** were not available.

12. Committee and sub Committee membership

It was agreed unanimously to **recommend to Full Council that the existing membership be carried forward** as attached (appendix F). It was noted that representatives on other bodies will be

Battle Town Council

considered at the Annual Meeting.

13. Action Plan

The Action Plans were noted, as attached (appendix G and H).

14. Financial matters

- The budget reports to 31st March and 31st May 2020 were noted, as attached (appendices I and J respectively).
- The budget position for Council at 31st May 2020 was noted, as attached (appendix K).
- The Bank reconciliation to 30th June 2020 was agreed unanimously, as attached (appendix L) and duly electronically signed by the Chairman.

15. Matters for information and future agenda items

- Review of policies outstanding from 2019/20 review cycle

16. Date of next meeting: 22nd September 2020

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

**CLLR G FAVELL
CHAIRMAN**