

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Action

Minutes of the **FINANCE Committee** meeting held on **Monday 28th October 2019** at **6.30pm** in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr J Skinner (in the Chair until item 4),
Cllrs I Pilcher (in the chair from item 5), J Anscombe, B Holmes, G Edwards, S Bell

Town Clerk: R Bishop
Deputy Town Clerk C Smith

In attendance Cllr L Beech
Public 0

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1. None received.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1. There were no declarations of interest.

3. Nominations for Chairman for 2019/20

3.1. Proposed by Cllr Anscombe, seconded by Cllr Edwards – Cllr I Pilcher was unanimously elected as chairman.

Cllr I Pilcher was unanimously elected as Chairman.

4. Nominations for Vice Chair for 2019/20

4.1. Proposed by Cllr Bell and seconded by Cllr Anscombe – Cllr G Edwards was unanimously elected as vice chairman.

Cllr G Edwards was unanimously elected as Vice Chairman.

5. Finance related issues form Non-Member Cllrs

5.1. None received.

6. Late Items at the Chairman's Discretion

6.1. List of Assets – At the request of the chairman the list of assets was circulated with a view to Cllrs identifying where there might be revenue opportunities. The Town Clerk clarified that the asset list was a working document required by auditors, and to inform the Council's insurers. Assets were recorded with a purchase price, rather than current valuation, as stipulated by the auditor. Cllrs discussed the Cemetery Chapel and recommended this be considered by the Estates committee as a possible opportunity for revenue. It was identified that the swimming pool land needed to be included on the register.

RB

6.2. Buttercross Event Cover Proposal – It was reported that the need to shield the Buttercross at events had been identified at previous Market Committee meetings. The issue had been investigated by office staff and three options put forward. Cllrs agreed that option 1, wrapping the columns was preferred, however staff were asked to try and find a more local contractor and a budget of £713 was agreed for the order, if a local supplier could meet the timing restrictions. The fixings for the cover needed to be secure top and bottom, and the panels reasonably wind resistant.

It was agreed to go ahead with option one but to look for a more local supplier. A budget of up to £713 was agreed. If a local supplier could not meet the timings for the event the supplier identified in the proposal could be instructed.

CS

7. Minutes of the previous Meeting

- 7.1. The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 29th April 2019 were signed as an accurate record by the Chairman.

8. Finance Report

- 8.1. Accounts to 31st August 2019 for Income & expenditure analysis 2019/20.

Accounts to the end of August were tabled in the new format showing the income and expenditure ascribed to each committee. Some coding had changed as expenditure, such as salary, would now be shown as a single overhead and not split between different cost centres. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was a work in progress that should simplify the presentation of accounts. Following scrutiny and satisfactory explanation regarding some items of expenditure the accounts were accepted by the committee.

It was agreed to accept the accounts to the 31st August 2019

- 8.2. Notice of Conclusion of External Audit

The Town Clerk reported that the annual external audit had been signed off by PFK Littlejohn LLP on 29th September 2019. Two administrative matters were noted around the proper provision of the exercise of public rights. It was confirmed that all notices had now been posted and were in accordance with audit requirements. The Town Clerk reported that these auditors were difficult to work with and he had questioned their approach last year.

Concern was raised by the chairman that the audit showed a picture of declining assets and escalating costs. It was reported that the greater costs for the year reflected expenditure of major projects and so capital reserves were depleted. The balances carried forward also declined as the section 106 money had not been handed over.

Cllrs noted the increase in staff costs, these were explained by the appointment of a new member of staff, national pay award increases, contracted incremental pay award increases and a revaluation by the actuary on the pension fund contributions.

- 8.3. Section 106 funds

The Town Clerk reported that he had received an email from T Sweeney at Milngate stating that they were still waiting for a decision from Tesco before the monies could be released. Cllrs felt that this was not good enough and that the money held by Breckland, should be paid over without delay. It was acknowledged that Breckland Cllr D Wickerson had been trying to help but little progress had been made.

It was noted that the deadline for projects funded by this s106 fund was 31st December, £53k remained unspent and had been earmarked for the town centre toilet refurbishment. It was recommended by the Town Clerk that an extension of the deadline to June 2020 be sought to minimise the risk of the funds becoming unavailable. The committee acknowledged that the Town Clerk was trying to resolve these matters and agreed that in these extraordinary circumstances, an extension of the deadline could be sought.

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It was agreed that the Town Clerk could ask for an extension of the s106 delivery deadline to June 2020.

- 8.4. Outstanding Legal issues

The Town Clerk reported on a number of issues which were being pursued with solicitors Ward Gethin Archer acting for the Council.

The Shambles – Cllrs discussed the Shambles and concern was expressed that ownership of this area may not be to the benefit of the Council. It was agreed by 5 votes to 1 that this should be referred back to the Town Council for discussion to reaffirm whether or not ownership should be pursued.

RB

It was agreed to refer the decision to seek ownership of the Shambles to Full Council.

The Buttercross – Ward Gethin Archer had reported that all matters were complete regarding registering the Buttercross. The conveyance for the land surrounding the Buttercross was complete but the Buttercross itself was still not registered.

Town Pound – It was reported that this simple conveyance had not progressed.

Church Wall and Trees bordering the cemetery– A request to work up draft agreements with residents to manage the boundary issues had not been progressed.

RB

It was agreed that Ward Gethin Archer be given a month to complete the issues regarding the Buttercross, Town Pound, Church Wall and Cemetery trees. A report should then be brought back to the next meeting.

Swimming Pool Land – The Town Clerk reported that WF Smith and Co completed the conveyance for two acres of land. A request to see all items of correspondence, documents and notes related to this conveyance, and any reference to access to the highway had been made to Ward Gethin Archer. (WGA had succeeded WF Smith). The Town Clerk would continue to pursue this information.

8.5. Update on possible digitalisation of Town Clock

Cllrs discussed the project and it was thought that the Church council may support the idea and discuss this item at one of their meetings. The Town Clerk would inform the vicar that if this were to be supported and be included in next year's budget he would need to know by 2nd December.

RB

It was agreed that the Town Clerk would inform the vicar of the budget timetable so that if the project were supported by the Church Council it could be included in next year's budget.

8.6. VAT obligation on rental properties.

The chairman enquired whether or not VAT needed to be paid on all rents and other items by the Council. It had come to his attention that VAT need not be charged on all premises and particularly where a charity was paying rent. The Town Clerk confirmed that SLCC had a VAT specialist Mr S Parkinson and that for a fee a VAT review could be undertaken to check the Town Council position. It was unanimously agreed to ask Mr Parkinson to review and advise regarding the Town Councils VAT obligations.

RB

It was agreed to ask S Parkinson to review the Councils VAT obligations.

9. Cash flow report regarding 2019/20 and forthcoming budgetary issues 2020/21:

The layout of the accounts had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The Town Clerk recommended that the Cllrs hold a budget workshop to identify any issues to be raised and information that they might need. It was agreed that more than one workshop, one daytime and one evening, would be required so that all councillors could attend and have an input. The Town Clerk would circulate Cllrs and arrange for the most convenient dates. Ideas, suggestions and proposals would need to be with the Town Clerk by 13th November so that the draft budget could be prepared and

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All
Cllr

circulated by Friday 22nd November for consideration at the 2nd December budget meeting.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk would circulate dates for two budget meetings.

- 10. **Admission to Meetings Act (Public Bodies) 1960:**
Confidential Business following the exclusion of the public and press

- 11. **Green Britain Centre**
The Town Clerk reported that a great deal of preparatory work would need to be done including considering the practicalities of running the building and site, relocation costs and benefits as well as options for the Town Hall site and public consultation. It was suggested that Drakes were contacted to report on the heating and lighting, as they have experience of these systems in the building.

Cllrs discussed the project and felt that these items could not be addressed until more information was available, including the Leisure report and options considered by Breckland for the building. The Town Clerk reported that the extraordinary meeting on 6th November with Breckland officer Zoe Footer would provide an opportunity for some of these questions to be put forward. The Town Clerk had been representing the Town Council at meetings with Breckland and information would be shared as soon as possible. Any questions Cllrs would like raised should be forwarded to the Town Clerk so that the Breckland officer could be well informed for the meeting.

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- 12. **Date of the next Full Council Finance meeting - Monday 2nd December 2019 at 6.30pm.**

Meeting closed 8.37pm

Chairman.....

Initials.....