



# *Battle Town Council*



**MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
held on TUESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 2019 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

**Present:** Cllrs G Favell (Chairman), J Gyngell, H Sharman and C Would.

**In Attendance:** Cllr B Brown, 2 members of the public, C Harris (Town Clerk)

## **Public Question Time**

Concern was raised by a local resident that the Almonry Project is ongoing without a Business Plan in place and no further consultation with residents.

In response to a complement on the suitability of the building and a query, it was confirmed that one wedding has taken place in the garden this year.

- 1. Apologies for absence** – Cllrs M Kiloh and V Cook.
- 2. Disclosure of interest** – Cllr J Gyngell declared a personal interest in item 14 as a member of the Battle Festival Committee.
- 3. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019** were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Favell.

## **4. Clerk's Report**

There has been a good response for the recruitment of a Marketing and Town Development Officer. The Clerk was asked to publish a reminder on the website and social media that the closing date for this position is 4 October.

## **5. Correspondence and communications received post agenda**

The renewal of the advertisement for the Battle Guide is now due. Members agreed the same information as last year, shared with the Museum at an approximate cost of £470 each.

## **6. Wedding Venue Working Group**

Due to availability of current Members of the group, no meeting had been held. Cllr Gyngell was the appointed responsible person, with Cllr Davies assisting, at the recent wedding. It was agreed that both Cllrs Gyngell and Davies be added to the membership of the Working Group.

## **7. Review any Business Plans pertaining to the Environment, ER&TD and Planning & Transport Committees**

This item was postponed as no reports had been submitted.

## **8. Outline Plan for the Development of the Almonry**

Cllr Brown emphasised his concerns at: decisions made to progress the project without a strategic plan in place; the lack of formal consultation on use of the developed building; and possible cost escalation. He recommended that the Council stop the project until data regarding need, real costs and impact on Memorial Hall and Emmanuel Centre have been confirmed. Members discussed the importance of providing a fully accessible, flexible public building that the Council has a duty of care to ensure is maintained to a high standard as befitting its heritage. It was reiterated that, as agreed at the previous meeting and Full Council, that the project should move forward while gathering essential information to enable reviews as timetabled in previous minutes.

# Battle Town Council

The format of the draft Strategic Plan was agreed, as attached. This will continue to be added to and reviewed.

## **9. Implications following meeting with Architects on 23 September 2019**

Notes from the meeting with the Architect to report back on the comments agreed by the Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> September had been circulated, as attached. It was highlighted that a Geo-technical and Archaeological surveys had been additionally required at a cost of approximately £3,500 and £750 respectively. It was agreed that these should be contracted and paid for from the Almonry project budget (4800).

*One member of the public left at this point*

## **10. Maintenance & Management Plan for the Almonry**

The draft document had been circulated. Additional items were suggested: regular fire safety checks and fire drills; reference to COSHH regulations; emphasis that all maintenance must be to listed building status.

The Asst to Town Clerk was thanked for this document.

## **11. External Auditor's Report for 2018-19**

The conclusion of Audit has been signed with no comments made. This is displayed on the website and notice board, as required for transparency.

## **12. Internal Auditor**

It is considered best practice to change internal auditor after a 3 year period. Mulberry & Co have been contracted since 2015. Research on alternative audit arrangements carried out by other local councils has been undertaken and quotes and references are awaited. The Clerk was delegated authority to obtain an alternative, competent auditor for the forthcoming period.

## **13. Previous Mayor badges**

It had been suggested that previous Mayors, as at Rother District Council, may like to purchase a badge recognising their time as Chairman/Mayor of Battle Town Council. There would be a cost to the Council to set up the design in the region of £1,000. Badge cost of approx. £250-£700. The Clerk was asked to ascertain the interest from previous Mayors for the next meeting.

## **14. Grant applications**

*Cllr Gyngell repeated her personal interest in the following item.*

- **Battle Festival - £600 wildflower project** Members noted that the financial information had now been received. In view of previous support, including the sponsoring of the Big Blue event, **Members agreed to award a grant of £300 for this project.** Council thanked the Festival for the wonderful Big Blue event that had raised the profile of the town in an on-trend subject.
- **Battle Marketing Group - £500 production of 2019/20 Social Media Campaign** Members noted that this was a new application and should not therefore be considered until the January meeting. The Clerk was asked to remind the Battle Marketing Group that applications must be in accordance with the Council's Grant Awarding Policy.

## **15. Action Plan**

It was recorded that the policies will now be reviewed in November. The document was noted, as attached.

# *Battle Town Council*

## **16. Almonry Garden**

It was noted that the South & South East in Bloom judges had awarded a Silver Gilt in this year's competition. A letter of thanks will be issued to all those that contributed.

A report from Beautiful Battle had confirmed that the thyme line and Elizabethan bed require a little more work before the herb/Apothecary bed is attended to. They asked that one of the benches in the lower garden be moved to enable the herb bed to be viewed. It was agreed that a Working Group to include Cllrs Favell and Sharman and the Chairman of BB should discuss the plants required for the Apothecary bed and other suggestions from the judges.

## **17. Financial matters**

- The budget report at 31 August 2019 was noted, as attached. The Clerk clarified several items that appear to be under or over spent. Members agreed two recommendations:
  - EMR 460 Wildflower signs (now complete) £185 be transferred to the Amenity Field (4395) for purchase of wildflower seed;
  - That EMR 395 Electricity debt be retained to cover any other electricity supply deficit.
- The bank reconciliation to 31 August 2019 was approved and duly signed by the Chairman.

## **18. Matters for information / future agenda items**

- Review all policies, as agreed at Full Council 20 August 2019
- To consider new NALC financial regulations

Suggest additional meeting for:

- Review projects and general reserves prior to budget setting
- Review all budget lines as recommended by Town Clerk
- Review staffing against business requirements
- Agree Committee's budget requirements for 2020-21

## **19. Date of next meeting: additional meeting prior to Full Council on 19 November 26 November 2019**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.08pm.

**CLLR G FAVELL  
CHAIRMAN**