



Battle Town Council



MINUTES of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY, 23rd MARCH 2021 via Zoom at 7.30pm

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

In Attendance: Cllrs A Russell, D Wheeler, one member of the public, C Harris (Town Clerk)

Public Question Time –None.

1. Apologies for absence – None.

2. Disclosure of interest – None.

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2021 were agreed and duly electronically signed by Cllr Favell.

4. Clerk's report

The Grounds staff and Clerk successfully completed the **Signage, Lighting & Guarding training** last week to fulfil one criterion to allow for the **urban grass cutting** on behalf of East Sussex County Council. As also required, draft Risk Assessment and Method Statement had been circulated to Members. Any comments were requested by Thursday to allow for submission with the contract. These will be attached to these minutes.

5. Correspondence and communications received post agenda publication

A request from **Battle for Tennis** that, following successful fund raising, the Council place the order for the ServeAce Practice Wall at a cost of £8,007.66 including installation. The cost to the Council is, as previously agreed, a grant of £500. This was agreed unanimously.

6. Almonry Project

- Cllr Kiloh presented the minutes of the **pre-contract meeting** between the Almonry Development Working Group, Architect, Quantity Surveyor and preferred Contractor, as attached. Progress of action for compliance to conditions of planning permissions had also been circulated, as attached. As a result of this meeting and confirmation of grant funding, amendments had been made to the Strategic Plan, as attached.
- Four quotes had been received for the **removal and storage** of office furniture for a period of 20 weeks between £4,048.32 and £7,205.55. As a site visit had been made to ascertain the task, Members agreed the recommendation that Simply Business Moves be offered the contract at a cost of £4,048.32. The Clerk confirmed that the safe would be disposed of separately. She was asked to investigate a suitable replacement.
- Members agreed the **temporary relocation of Officers and Rother District Council Officer** to The Old Court House at a cost of £200 per desk per month to include broadband. This to be paid by standing order. Three desks have been provisionally reserved and this may need to be increased when RDC return to office working. Discussion is ongoing with RDC. Some home working may be appropriate during the period of works.

7. Committee business plans

It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting to allow Committees to present plans following the Annual Meeting.

Battle Town Council

8. Sussex Association of Local Council

Members noted that SSALC has been reorganised and is now ESALC with the CEO, Trevor Leggo, working only 2 days a week instead of four and a part-time administrator/finance officer replacing two full time administrators. Advice and training has been received from SSALC and the PWLB loan application had been submitted through SSALC, as reported previously. Future training will be mostly undertaken by Mulberry, with no requirement to be a member of ESALC, with some specific training available from ESALC directly. The Town Clerk is able to seek Clerk advice from the Society of Local Council Clerks. Council had agreed membership renewal prior to the announcement of the reorganisation and £1750 included in the budget.

Concern was raised at the lack of commensurate fee with service provided. Members agreed ESALC be advised that membership will be renewed for one year with close monitoring of the service provided. The Clerk was asked to investigate the options for next year.

9. Almonry Garden

Beautiful Battle volunteers plan to return to gardening on Thursday 8th April. Any work to the rear garden and removal of tools from the shed will be completed before 26th April. Work to the front garden will continue if considered safe to do so. The Clerk confirmed that contractors had indicated a safe passage will be provided to the front garden and museum, as far as possible, at all times.

10. Council Policies from 2019/2020 review schedule

Policies were presented by Councillors and agreed, as attached:

- Adverse Weather Policy – Cllr Sharman
- Almonry Meeting Room Hire – Cllr Kiloh
- Bee Keeping Policy – Cllr Favell
- Confidential Reporting Policy – Cllr Gyngell
- Grant Awarding Policy – Cllr Sharman
- Internet Usage and Email Policy – Cllr Kiloh
- Members' Allowance Policy – Cllr Favell
- Health & Safety Policy Statement- Cllr Gyngell

The Document Retention Scheme will be presented by Cllr Cook to the next meeting.

Cllr Wheeler left the meeting

11. Almonry Maintenance & Management Plan

Members agreed to include action for adverse weather. The revised Plan is attached.

Cllr Russell left the meeting

12. Action Plans

- It was noted that the **land and property register** requires updating in relation to equipment at the recreation ground and an addition of one computer. The Asset Register will be presented to the Annual Meeting.
- It was noted that due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Council is supporting businesses rather than **seeking additional sources of funding from businesses** for projects and routine activities
- An additional section for **home working** was agreed for the **Operational and Finance Risks Document**, as attached. The Clerk was asked to confirm that home broadband use is sufficiently covered by firewall on Council computers.
- Following review and quotation process, **insurance cover is now provided by Zurich**.
- The **mid-year review of the Town Clerk** is in progress.

Battle Town Council

13. Financial matters

- The **budget report for F&GP to 31st January 2021** was noted, as attached.
The Clerk highlighted:
 - unexpected income:
 - 1800 Community Infrastructure Levy / Rotary Club of Battle donation to town £1100
 - 1900 Community Infrastructure Levy / Rother District Council contribution to broadband £300 / Maintenance to Market Road contribution £150 / compensation for damage to toilet £75
 - 4055 An agreed transfer from External Relations & Town Development for the production of Covid-19 advice leaflets will remove the overspend
 - 4065 Reduction of spend following insurance renewal with Zurich
- The Clerk reported that the year has proved challenging for all. Home working has resulted in a reduction in delegation of tasks and a subsequent substantial increase in her workload. Significant training of the Deputy Town Clerk / Town Development Officer had not been possible. This will be remedied upon return to office working, planned for 12th April. Extra training and projects being progressed has also been time consuming. This has resulted in a requirement to **work an additional 66 hours over the year**. The Clerk confirmed that there is an Additional Staff hours Ear Marked Reserve (385) available, although the existing staff budget 4000 would also cover this. **Members agreed unanimously that the Clerk receive 66 hours additional pay in the March salary process.**
The Committee noted that, with its responsibility for staff matters, all Members should be reminded of the difficult circumstances of home working that result in tasks taking considerably longer to complete.
- Members agreed **transfers to Ear Marked Reserves**:
 - 4075 £1000 to 495 for asset replacement of computer or software items
 - 4085 £1488 a new Audit EMR as fees had not yet been paid due to objection raised
- **Members agreed to recommend to Full Council the movement of Ear Marked Reserves**:
 - 325 Almonry repair: £21,000 to a new Almonry PWLB repayment EMR. Additionally, the unused project budget 4800 for this year to be added to this new EMR.
 - 410 junior football pitch to 440 Recreation Ground facilities as the pitch has been levelled;
 - 453 Members' travel to general reserves as there is no travelling currently required;
 - 455 Members' allowances to general reserves as any new Councillors will be co-opted and not elected, so not entitled to the allowance;
 - 400 Twin Town/Tapestry to general reserves as this has not been progressed.The Clerk confirmed that EMRs with a zero balance will be removed during the year end process.
- There had been no applications for **Post Covid-19 Recovery Grant** received.

14. Matters for information and future agenda items

- To review Committee business plans

15. Date of next meeting: 25th May 2021

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.45pm.

CLLR G FAVELL
CHAIRMAN