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# MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF COUNCIL MATTERS COMMITTEE

# MONDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2022 AT 6.30PM IN THE GUILDHALL

**Present:** Councillors B Piper (Chair), M Adams, J Hannam, J Hodgson, P Paine and E Price.

**Apologies:** None.

**In Attendance:** Member of the public, C Marlton (Town Clerk) and C Bewley (Finance, HR and Lettings Manager).

# 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair read a statement about how the meeting would be conducted and recorded. There were no apologies.

*The Committee will adjourn for the following items:*

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A member of the public asked about the budget and precept, and use of Paige Adams Trust grants to offset the costs to local council tax payers; the condition of the river walk which is very muddy; and community grant funding in April to the Park Run which hasn’t yet been held. The Clerk explained that the proposed rate abatement in the budget line is funding from the Paige Adams Trust which helps to reduce the costs requested through the precept. Cllrs said that the river walk always suffered this time of year with rain and high tides, and that all grant funding recipients will be asked for an update on their project’s progress.

*The Committee will reconvene to consider the following items:*

**2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**To approve the minutes of 10th October 2022 and update on any matters arising.**

The minutes were **AGREED** as an accurate record of the proceedings.

# 4. BUDGET MONITOR

**To consider the Budget Monitor.**

The Clerk explained that she had removed £100K for the Elmhirst Project and £50K for traffic calming measures as these projects are unlikely to progress in the current financial year – the traffic calming allocation is in the draft 2023/24 budget. There have been increased costs for: community outreach - an additional £1K for the Christmas lights (purchase of new white LED safety bulbs and stick flood lights for the Christmas market evenings); and arts - cost of the Civic Hall pillar project increase from £1K to £5K for materials, an overspend of £4K in this budget area. It was **AGREED** to accept the budget monitor and the additional spend on the Christmas lights and allocate a further £4K to the arts budget with the condition that the Arts Working Group is to scrutinise the spend of these funds on materials.

**5. DRAFT 2023/24 BUDGET**

**To consider** **a draft budget for financial year 2023/24.**

The Clerk explained the draft budget, the advice received to triple utility costs based on current prices, budgeting for IT expenditure for new councillors, various assumptions, and how the budget and options affects the reserve holdings (minimum holdings are £250K). The budget cannot be set until the tax base figures have been received from South Hams District Council (expected mid-December) and therefore the budget will be considered at Full Council in January. It was **AGREED** that officers would profile and calculate the precept at 5, 10, 15 and 20 percent based on the Band D council tax, with a budget line under the reserve line for emergency expenditure which could cover eventualities such as interest payments on the Elmhirst Project or heritage building repair.

# 6. PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD

# To consider a loan pay off proposal to the Public Works Loan Board.

The Clerk explained that this is the repayment of the loan for the Guildhall Flat and paying off the loan would see a saving of the interest due of around £2K. To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that it repays the Public Works Loan of approximately £36K.

# 7. CIVIC HALL

**To consider the installation of a lift onto the stage at the Civic Hall and review the Civic Hall Buildings budget.**

It was **RESOLVED** to:

1. Defer any investment in installing a lift onto the stage in the current financial year but to continue to look for grant funding opportunities to facilitate this longer-term goal; and
2. Approve the projects for expenditure (decorating, old kitchen renovation, fire exit from the bar, fire partition and additional door at the rear of the hall, professional reports and testing).

# 8. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS 2023

# To consider arrangements for the Town Council taking on responsibility for the Christmas lights in the town from 2023.

This item is to be deferred until a future meeting as no request for funding has been received from the Chamber of Commerce.

# 9. CEMETERY MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

**To consider** **the cemetery grounds maintenance specification for the contract tender process due for renewal in April 2023/24.**

To **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that the grounds maintenance specification is adopted for the re-tender next year. It was **AGREED** that at the next Council Assets and Public Realm Working Group they discuss further areas to put to meadow/wild flowers in the cemetery.

It was **AGREED** to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

# 3. WAYFINDING

**To:**

**a. Consider a list of locations for signage as part of phase 2 of the Wayfinding project.**

**b. Note any update on Phase 1.**

It was **AGREED** that given the time constraints this item would be taken to Full Council.

# 10. COUNCIL ASSETS AND PUBLIC REALM WORKING GROUP

# To consider the recommendations (items 10, 11 and 12) from the Council Assets and Public Realm Working Group held on 18th October 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Item 10 - that dogs on leads are permitted in Castle Meadow, to be run as a pilot for one year. And that local children are asked to design new signs to go up in the area asking dog owners to pick up after their dogs.

Item 12 - that £2,000 is allocated from the Public Realm budget as a grant to the Tennis Club for the sensory garden accessible to the public. And to contact SHDC to enquire whether they will assist with funding to repair the path to a safe standard.

# 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**To note the date of the next meeting of the Council Matters Committee – Monday 16th January 2023 at 6.30pm in the Guildhall.**

Noted.

*The Committee will be asked to* ***RESOLVE*** *to exclude the press and public “by reason of the confidential nature of the business” to be discussed and in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960. (CONFIDENTIAL by virtue of relating to legal and/or commercial matters, staffing and/or the financial or business affairs of a person or persons other than the Council)*

# 12. BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS (Standing Item)

**To consider the bank statements and reconciliations for October.**

These were reviewed and unanimously **AGREED**.

# 13. COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER/CO-ORDINATOR

**To consider a proposal for the Community Fundraiser post (staffing).**

It was **AGREED** in principle to recruit for a Community Fundraiser for 15 hours a week. The Clerk will approach nearby Councils regarding the possibility of a shared role. It was noted that coordination hours for community groups and particularly the Cost of Living Partnership have been allocated internally to one of the Administrators.

# 14. STAFFING UPDATE

**For any general or urgent updates that required confidential sharing with Councillors**

A verbal update was given by the Town Clerk. A tweak to the existing structure was **AGREED** in terms of Administrator hours and line management responsibilities. These changes would be deliverable within the existing staffing budget.

# 15. LEGAL ISSUE

**To note the resolution of a legal issue (legal).**

Noted.

Catherine Marlton

Town Clerk

November 2022