

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
FINANCE, POLICY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 18 JUNE 2020
IN THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES, LEDBURY**

PRESENT: Councillors: Eakin, Bannister, Harvey (Chair), Howells,

IN

ATTENDANCE: The Town Clerk – Angela Price

F175 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Manns and it was noted that standing apologies were received from Councillor Whattler.

F176 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received

F177 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None received

**F178 TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY AND
GENREAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY
2020**

Councillor Howells noted that minute number F168 read that the Gloucester Cannel Trust would be invited to the next Full Council Committee. However, due Covid-19 it had been pushed back and asked whether Council had any thoughts regarding the Clerk contacting the trust to arrange another date via zoom.

The Town Clerk reminded members that she had sent an Electronic copy of the Cannel Trust newsletter and that the meeting had been put on hold for the time being.

Councillor Harvey felt that it would be of significant relevance for the NDP to contact the Cannel Trust to better understand the plans for reinstatement of the Cannel though Ledbury Parish.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the minutes of a meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee held on 23 January 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the**

following amendments:

i. Minute No. F167 (1)(a) – that “Earn Marked” be amended to read “Earmarked”.

2. **That the Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Party consider contacting the Gloucester Cannel Trust to discuss the future plans in respect of the Canal.**

F179 TO APPROVE INVOICES FOR PAYMENT

Members were requested to approve the invoices for payment in the sum of £17,491.

The Town Clerk advised members that the invoices for payment had were for receiving and noting as officers had been paying them under delegated powers following lockdown.

RESOLVED:

That officer’s actions be approved in respect of the invoices for payment in the sum of £17,491.

F180 TO RECEIVE THE RECORDS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

Members were asked to receive and note the receipts and payments for February & March 2020.

RESOLVED:

That the record of Receipts and Payments for payments for February & March 2020 be received and noted.

F181 TO RECEIVE THE BALANCE SHEET AND TRIAL BALANCE

Members were provided with a detailed balance sheet and trial balance as at 29 February & 31 March 2020

Councillor Harvey advised that account code 320 on the first page shows the earmarked reserves.

Councillors queried the following:

I. 4010 - £20,723 Grounds Officer.

The Town Clerk advised that the balance of £20,723 was the total expenditure over a year for the ground’s maintenance at Ledbury Cemetery.

II. 4221 - £ 12,767,50 War Memorial Refurbishment

Whilst Councillor Harvey noted the upfront payment for materials for The War Memorial, she asked how this would be shown in terms of the end of year balance as there will be a credit due to the generous donation from Mr Heaton.

The Town Clerk advised that account code 1290 shows the donation that the Council had received from Mr Heaton.

RESOLVED:

That the Balance Sheet and Trial Balance as at 29 February & March noted and received.

F182

TO CONSIDER HOW TO VERIFY BANK STATEMENTS AND BANK RECONCILIATIONS DURING COVID-19

Members were asked to give consideration and approve a method of verification of the Council's bank statements and reconciliations during Covid-19

The Town Clerk advised members that she had been in contact with other Councils and that Officers consider a way forward to manage the approval of the bank statements and reconciliations is for copies of these to be emailed to the Chair of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee prior to the meeting, who will check these electronically and respond via email to confirm that they be approved.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes be given delegated powers, in consultation with the Clerk, to receive electronic copies of the bank statements and reconciliations prior to meetings of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee during Covid-19.

F183

TO RECEIVE YEAR END REPORTS TO 31 MARCH 2020, TO INCLUDE THE ANNUAL RETURN

Councillor Harvey wanted to thank the staff at Ledbury Town Council, especially the Deputy Clerk for her work on the Annual Return and accounts. The Town Clerk advised members that at a recent meeting with RBS it was noted the efforts and work that the Deputy Clerk had put into the accounts.

Councillor Harvey advised that the Council would receive extra supporting documents and reports from the Internal Auditor in due course and that in the meantime if members had questions could

they direct these to the Town Clerk, who will provide answers or forward them onto the Internal Auditor accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That members receive and note the year end reports to 31 March 2020, noting that these will be resubmitted with the Annual Return once the internal audit is complete.

F184

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL AUDIT

The Town Clerk updated members on the progress of the Internal Audit and advised that due to covid-19 The Council had been given longer to prepare the necessary paperwork if needed. She advised that a hardcopy should be ready for the Internal auditor by the end of the week.

The Clerk advised that it had been difficult to find an auditor for the special audit due to Covid-19 and that she has not made any further progress to date.

Councillor Harvey asked whether the internal auditor could provide interim reports earlier in the financial year. The Clerk advised that members had discussed this in a previous meeting and that it was agreed that she would approach the Internal auditor.

RESOLVED:

1. **That members receive and note the update from The Town Clerk regarding quotes for the special audit.**
2. **That the Town Clerk contact the Internal Auditor to discuss an interim audit for each financial year going forward.**

F185

SUBSCRIPTIONS

None received

F186

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE VIADUCT INQUIRY

The Town Clerk provided members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee with an update on the costs associated with the Viaduct Inquiry, to date.

The Town Clerk advised that she had received correspondence from Nick Bradshaw, a witness for the inquiry, and that he had some concerns with the budget due to there being more work than anticipated, including the proof of evidence, Statement of Case and Statement of Common Grounds.

Councillor Harvey referred committee members to the detailed report received from the Town Clerk. She reminded members that it was agreed at a meeting of Council on 5 March 2020, that the Council set a budget of £30,000 as an indicative budget for the defence of the appeal with the possibility of another £10,000k on professional services that may be associated with the Traffic Study. She explained that the Council together with overall expenditure and forecasting it has been anticipated that the Council would be around £24,450 over budget.

Councillor Harvey felt that it would be beneficial for the Council to ask the witnesses and experts what the council need to consider as their approach to the inquiry due to it being carried out online over 5 days.

Members agreed that a letter be sent to Mr Wiggin MP, thanking him for his assistance and support in the appeal.

There was a lengthy discussion between members regarding the additional work in relation to the inquiry. Councillors discussed the forecast costs in detail, and It was proposed by Councillor Bannister that the Council allow for an additional £50,000 towards preparatory works in relation to the inquiry to allow for a budget of £90,000 in total.

It was agreed that Ledbury Town Council would investigate whether they should apply to the Planning Inspector to seek recovery of costs, should then win the Inquiry.

RESOLVED:

1. **That a letter be sent to Mr Wiggin MP, thanking him for his assistance and support in in relation to the Inquiry.**
2. **That a RECOMMENDATION be forwarded to the next meeting of Council the threshold for the costs in respect of the Inquiry be increased from the previously agreed £40,000 to £90,000, to take into account the additional work being undertaken by the expert witnesses.**
3. **That Ledbury Town Council investigate whether they should apply to the Planning Inspector to seek recovery of costs .**

F187

REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS INCURRED BY STAFF WORKING FROM HOME

Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee were asked to consider reimbursing staff towards the costs involved with working from home during Covid-19.

The Town Clerk advised that the government had considered that given the Coronavirus outbreak, many employees who would normally attend a place of work will now be working from home and therefore will be incurring additional costs on their household bills such as gas or electricity. To assist with this HMRC have confirmed that employers who require their employees to work from home as a result of the temporary closure of their business premises due to the Coronavirus will be able to provide a tax-free payment to workers, in addition to their salary, as a means of offsetting reasonable additional household expenses. HMRC say payments of £6 per week or £26 per month (£4 per week before 6 April 2020) can be made by the employer without keeping any records.

Councillor Howells proposed that the Council make a payment of £26 per month to Council staff working from home during the Coronavirus outbreak.

RESOLVED:

That the Council make a payment of £26 per month to Council staff working from home during the Coronavirus outbreak, with effect from 25 March 2020.

F188

ADDITIONAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH REFURBISHMENT OF WAR MEMORIAL

The Town Clerk explained that she had received an email from the Stone Workshop advising that following the initial cleaning of the memorial there was some additional work required that first realised. They advised that the spire and particularly the finial were not structurally sound and needed replacing. The Clerk requested a quote for the additional works required and upon receipt forwarded it to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment & Leisure Committee, along with the Chair of the Finance Committee for consideration. She advised that the extra costs totalled £7,250. All three Councillors recognised that the works needed to be carried out as part of the refurbishment and agreed the additional expenditure accordingly, with the contractor being advised that the deposit would be paid to enable works on the spire and finial to continue.

Councillors agreed to make provisions for the extra works on the War Memorial from the Reserves, but that this be reviewed in the 3rd quarter review of the budget to establish if it is possible to identify monies from an underspend within the budget.

RESOLVED:

1. That Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee receive and note the actions of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Leisure Committee and the Chair of Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee, in consultation with the Clerk, in respect of the additional repairs and expenditure in relation to the war memorial
2. That the Council make provision for the additional works to the War Memorial from the Council's reserves in the sum of £7,250, but that this be reviewed in the 3rd quarter budget review to establish whether it is possible to identify monies from an underspend within the 2020/21 budget.

F189

RISK MANAGEMENT: SECTION 2 – EMPLOYERS

Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes were asked to receive and note the Risk Management.

Councillors considered a number of amendments and additions to the risk Assessment in relation to the Employers section:

RESOLVED:

That the Risk Assessment be received and noted with the below amendments:

1. Employers liabilities .pg2 – that “Protection of office-based staff from visitors” be amended to read “To provide safe and secure workplace for staff”.
2. That the Councils Policies and procedures are added to the mitigation under the heading “Council Fails to comply with employment Law”
3. That the Council fully support the Deputy Clerk in her studies to become CiLCA qualified under the heading “Long term unavailability of the Clerk or loss of the Clerk without a period of notice.”
4. That the Town Clerk investigate whether the Health and safety policy considers home working for staff.

F190

TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF ICT MANAGED SYSTEM PROJECT

The Town Clerk advised that she had received confirmation from the new website provider and that they will be able to make the new website accessible, in line with new legislation

due in September. She advised that she needs to prepare the accessibility statement prior to the September date.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the ICT managed system project be received and noted.

F191

GDPR

None received

F192

CONSULTATION – PUBLIC WORKS LOAN BOARD FUTURE LENDING TERMS

Members of the Finance, Policy and General purposes committee were provided with a consultation of “Public Works Loan Board” to receive and note

Councillor Harvey advised that the consultation will not affect borrowing terms for Town and Parish Councils but to limit large authorities borrowing money over long terms to make income generating investments and whilst she considered it appropriate for Members to have been made aware of the consultation.

However, Councillor Howells felt that the Council should respond to question 11, item 1.30, advising that the Council agree with the statement that:

“The government does not propose any change to the PWLB lending arrangements for smaller LAs (parishes, town and community councils, and drainage board) as there is no have evidence that they are engaging in debt-for-yield activity.” **(page 15, question 11, item 1.30).**

RESOLVED:

- 1 That the Town Clerk respond to the consultation in respect of question 11, item 1.30 and confirm that Ledbury Town Council agree with the statement “The government does not propose any change to the PWLB lending arrangements for smaller LAs (parishes, town and community councils, and drainage board) as there is no have evidence that they are engaging in debt-for-yield activity.” (page 15, question 11, item 1.30).**

F193

COUNCIL POLICIES

Members of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee were provided with a draft Equal Opportunities Policy.

Councillor Harvey felt it was worth noting that the County Council are currently in the process of updating their Equality Policy which could be useful to refer to.

Councillors agreed that they would like to be proactive and continue to be mindful when advertising and recruiting staff and to make sure that the Council are catering to all needs and disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION

That a recommendation be submitted to a meeting of Full Council Committee that the Council adopt the Equal Opportunities Policy as provided by the Clerk.

F194

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

To note that the next meeting of Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee is scheduled for 23 July 2020.

Meeting closed at 9.21 pm.

Signed..... Dated