

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 JULY 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Bradford, Howells, Hughes, and Sinclair

ALSO PRESENT: Angela Price – Town Clerk
Charlotte Barltrop – Minute Taker
Three members of the public

F467. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Eakin and Harvey.

F468. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None received.

F469. NOLAN PRINCIPLES

RESOLVED:

That the Nolan Principles be received and noted.

F470. Public Participation

The Chair recognised that members of the public were present to speak on Agenda Item 11 and suggested that they be given the opportunity to speak when the item is discussed.

RESOLVED:

That of the public be invited to speak during Agenda Item 11, Ross-Newent-Ledbury Bus Proposal.

F471. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 26 MAY 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee held on 26 May 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Minute F439 – The resolution be amended to say “elected” rather than “nominated”.

Minute F443 - The resolution be amended to say “elected” rather than “nominated”.

Minute F452 – Line 4 (2) be amended to read as follows:

“2. In 2020/21 meetings were held via Zoom and therefore there was less overtime being paid for minute takers and also the Clerk as less hours were worked in the evenings.”

Minute F452 – Line 9 – be amended to read as follows:

“..... to be included in the final papers due to be sent to the auditor.”

F472. MOTION TO MOVE AGENDA ITEM 11

Councillor Sinclair proposed moving Agenda Item 11 forward to allow members of the public to be heard and so be able to leave following the item, if they wish.

RESOLVED:

That Agenda Item 11 be brought forward.

F473. ROSS-NEWENT-LEDBURY BUS PROPOSAL

Members were requested to give consideration to a proposal from Buses4Us following the withdrawal of bus route 132 Newent to Ledbury.

Claire Stone, Chair of Buses4Us advised that she had moved to Newent 11 years ago because it was a small town with good public transport links.

Due to environmental and economic issues these buses were reduced and then withdrawn. The Government introduced a National Bus Improvement Plan, however neither Herefordshire nor Gloucestershire received any funding from this plan.

She provided an outline of the Buses4Us proposal (which Members had received with their agenda packs) and advised that Newent Town Council had approved funding from their 2023/24 budget and that Ross on Wye Town Council Finance Committee had referred the matter to Full Council for further consideration.

Clare advised that Buses4Us are asking for a contribution of £24,000 from Ledbury Town Council for the first year but explained that they did not know what the cost of the future years may be until the service is up and running.

Clare advised that Busses4US would also like to invite a councillor from each council that supports the project, to sit on the steering group.

Jill Moseley introduced herself as a Gloucestershire County Councillor and advised that she has been working with Claire from the beginning of the project.

Tim Rosser introduced himself, as a retired senior Government Officer. Whilst he has no need of the service he has a deep interest in the community, sustainability issues and he stated that it is essential that buses are at the forefront of our transport service.

Councillor Bradford stated that whilst the buses are important he could not support £24,000 per annum but would like to explore alternatives such as using the existing Community Transport system as a basis and building upon that.

Councillor Howells gave a brief synopsis of the basic figures from the report. "From the data given us in the report I looked at a worst case, best case and an average/mid-range case of the implications for contributions from Ledbury Town Council.

Worst case:
 Maximum expected annual cost: £325,000
 Minimum income expected:
 Gloucestershire CC contribution: £ 70,000
 Herefordshire CC contribution: £ 70,000
 Ticket sales: £ 60,000
 Total minimum income: £200,000
 Gap between income and expenditure to be funded by parish Councils: £125,000

Best case:
 Minimum expected annual cost: £250,000
 Maximum income expected:
 Gloucestershire CC contribution: £100,000
 Herefordshire CC contribution: £100,000
 Ticket sales: £ 80,000
 Total minimum income: £280,000
 Gap between income and expenditure to be funded by parish Councils: £0

Average/mid-point case:
 Annual cost (approx.): £290,000
 Income expected:
 Gloucestershire CC contribution: £ 85,000
 Herefordshire CC contribution: £ 85,000
 Ticket sales: £ 70,000
 Total minimum income: £240,000
 Gap between income and expenditure to be funded by parish Councils: £50,000

Assuming this means Ledbury, Newent, and Ross councils = approx. £17,000 pa for 3 years each
On a population basis (Ledbury and Ross approx. £10,000 each, Newent approx. £5,000)
Proportionate contributions:
Ledbury and Ross = £20,000 pa for 3 years each
Newent = £10,000 pa for 3 years
Which is in line with the £24,000 pa contribution pledge requested from Ledbury

Key issues to consider:

- Main reasons for travel by bus (not work)
- Main destination/route (Newent to Gloucester)
- Concessions/income impact (approx. 50% of passengers on no-pay concessions)
- Absolute number of passengers (quite low, biased towards the elderly)
- How numbers could be increased in the 3 years by promoting tourism/visitors to use buses more.”

Councillor Hughes stated that Tim Barnes of Community Action Ledbury had been invited to the Traffic Management Working Party meeting which took place on Monday 25 July 2022 to provide an opinion on this proposal and he had raised the following points:

1. He advised it is difficult to get the numbers for potential users for a service such as this. The villages only have 1 or 2 people who might use the service. If there are only 6 service users, then £75,000 is a lot of money per head.
2. There are three types of licence to run this kind of service:
 - a. Free service
 - b. Fares at cost (the report appears to be based on this option)
 - c. For profit, the Council is not permitted to run a service for profit.
3. Running this type of service is challenging. Who will be responsible for the running of the service? Who will maintain the fleet etc?
4. Recruitment of sufficient licenced drivers. Due to changes to the national licencing policy in 1997, it is difficult to recruit drivers who have the D1 category on their driving licence and therefore it is likely that drivers who are recruited will need to take a PSV test in order to drive any size of bus, including a minibus.

Councillor Bradford reiterated that he would be unwilling to support £24,000 from the Council's precept be used to subsidise the Buses4Us proposal and suggested that Ledbury Town Council should meet with Community Action Ledbury to discuss how drivers and insurance could be funded.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the Buses4Us proposal be referred to Full Council for further consideration with no recommendation to make any financial pledge to Buses4Us at this time.**
- 2. That discussions be held with Community Action Ledbury to explore opportunities for the expansion of bus provision to local towns.**

F474. TO REVIEW THE ACTION SHEET

- 1. F452(4) – To note that the next Budget Monitoring Working Party meeting is scheduled for 16 August 2022 at 3.00 pm.**
- 2. F462 - BBI Clock – Councillor Sinclair noted that he had not been at the previous meeting but asked why this item had been referred to Full Council for further discussion. Following a discussion, Members agreed that as Ledbury Places now has the Poetry Festival as tenants in the BBI Building, Ledbury Town Council should no longer continue to pay for the electricity for the BBI clock and that this should be recommended to Full Council.**

RESOLVED:

That the Budget Monitoring Working Party be held in the Committee Room.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Ledbury Town Council no longer pay for the electricity for the running of the BBI clock, due to the Poetry Festival now being tenants of the BBI Building.

F475. TO APPROVE INVOICES FOR PAYMENT FOR JULY 2022

RESOLVED:

That the invoices for payment in July 2022, in the sum of £18,349.25 be approved.

F476. TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR MAY AND JUNE 2022

RESOLVED:

That the receipts and payments for May and June 2022 be received and noted.

F477. TO RECEIVE THE BALANCE SHEET AND TRIAL BALANCE FOR MONTHS 2 AND 3

RESOLVED:

That the balance sheet and trial balance for months 2 and 3 be received and noted.

F478. 2022/23 BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

The Committee considered budget lines that were in excess of 16% of the annual total and were satisfied with the explanations provided by the Clerk in respect of each line discussed.

RESOLVED:

That the 2022/23 budget update report be received and noted.

F479. TO CONFIRM VERIFICATION OF BANK STATEMENTS AND RECONCILIATIONS FOR AND JUNE 2022

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that the Bank Statements and Reconciliations had been signed by the Chairman of the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee in accordance with Financial Regulations.

F480. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL AUDIT (STANDING ITEM)

Nothing to report at this time, other than the outcome of the 2021/22 external audit is awaited.

F481. SHOP FRONT IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

Councillor Sinclair advised Members that 10 Chestnut Close is a residential property and not a commercial property and therefore should not be considered for grant funding.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Members approved the list of Shop Front Grant applications, as provided within the agenda pack, with the exception of 10 Chestnut Close, as this is not a commercial property, including the five not completed in round one.**
- 2. That Members approve transferring Butler & Sweatman application to round two.**

3. **That Members note the overspend of £278.34 noting that there are likely to be underspends from activities within the Great Places to Visit funding and that consideration be given to transferring £278.34 from one of the underspends to be discussed in agenda item 13.**

F482. GREAT PLACES TO VISIT

The Clerk provided Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee with an update on the current status of the Great Places to Visit Fund.

Councillor Hughes stated that the Members should look at the list of other projects for any underspends. He noted that the timeframes have extended on this grant, from 30 September 2022 to 15 December 2022, and that this allowed time to give the under/overspends proper consideration.

It was felt that a third round of Shop Front Grants should be made available to the shop owners who had yet to apply. In order to facilitate this, the Clerk would compile a list of shops who have not yet applied and issue this to Members who would personally visit the businesses to encourage their applications.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the Clerk compile a list of businesses who are yet to benefit from the Shop Front Grants scheme in order that Members may encourage their applications.**
2. **That a small flyer advising of the shop front grant be provided to Members to deliver to the shops and businesses who have not yet applied for grant funding.**
3. **That the Grants Committee compile a list of underspends so that consideration can be given as to how best allocate these funds.**

F483. PUBLIC SECTOR DEPOSIT FUND – (CCLA) FACT SHEET
(For Information only)

RESOLVED:

That the Public Sector Deposit Fund (CCLA) Fact Sheet be received and noted.

F484. REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR DELIVERY OF BUS & TRAIN TIMETABLE

Members were requested to give consideration to a request received from Rail and Bus Herefordshire for funding towards the Ledbury Bus and Train Timetable booklet they have produced.

Councillor Bradford enquired as to why Ledbury Town Council were being asked to fund this timetable when it is something that is freely available via the internet and at bus stops around the county.

Councillor Howells stated that the booklets had been provided free of charge to Ledbury Town Council offices, amongst other outlets in Ledbury, and had proven to be extremely popular with older members of the community.

Councillor Hughes stated that a grant application was expected from Rail and Bus Herefordshire for them to fund this project and that this matter should be considered once the application was received.

Councillor Bradford raised the point that if the group are not a charity they will not be entitled to a grant.

RESOLVED:

That the request for funding in support of the preparation of a Bus and Train timetable be deferred until such time the grant application has been received, which should then be presented to the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee to be considered as part of the annual grants giving process.

F485. MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE RENEWAL

Members were requested to give consideration to three quotes received in respect of the insurance for the council van.

RESOLVED:

That quotation number three be approved for the council van insurance for the next 12-months.

F486. Worcestershire Pension Fund – Employer Forum – Outlook for the 2022 valuation
(Electronic copy provided separate to agenda)

RESOLVED:

That the Worcestershire Pension Fund – Employer Forum information be received and noted.

F487. STAFF TRAINING

The Clerk advised Members that she was seeking approval for expenditure on a number of training courses, which would be beneficial to members of staff and Councillors, including but not limited to, Manual Handling, Fire Marshall, Emergency First Aid and COSHH. She advised that some of the courses exceeded the £500 limit that she could approve in consultation with the Chairman and therefore required the approval of the committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk be authorised to book the relevant training courses to ensure that all staff are trained to carry out their roles correctly and safely.

F488. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

Environment & Leisure – 7 July 2022

i. Cleaning Contract

Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee were advised that since a decision taken to engage a new cleaning contractor, their hourly rates had increased

Members agreed to accept the increase and that a formal review period should be included in the new contract, which should be for a period of three years with the option for an additional two years. Members also agreed that there should be an annual review of the service provided by the cleaning company.

RESOLVED:

1. That members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee accepted the revised costs put forward by the cleaning company of £18.50 and authorise their appointment for an initial three year contract with an option for a further two years, on successful completion of annual reviews.

2. That an annual review be held of the service provided by the cleaning company.

ii. Skate Park Costs

Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee were provided with a recommendation from the Environment & Leisure Committee in respect of further costs in respect of the refurbishment of the skatepark.

RESOLVED:

That Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee approve the recommendations from the Environment & Leisure Committee to postpone the payment of £26,181.80 (plus VAT) for up to 6 months with no additional cost once payment of £34,221.00 had been paid within 30 days of installation.

F489. TREASURY & INVESTMENT POLICY

RESOLVED:

That the Treasury & Investment Policy be approved subject to the one spelling correction.

F490. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATIONS (GDPR)

That the Clerk had nothing to report on this item.

F491. TO REVIEW RISK REGISTER PART 1 – FINANCIAL

The Clerk advised that at the previous meeting of the committee it had been agreed that she would incorporate the outcomes recorded in the Internal Auditors report into the Risk Register and therefore Member were being asked to consider the whole document, as the outcomes covered various sections of the register.

P2630 – Judicial review Costs - Councillor Sinclair asked what “Cost Reclamation” was; Councillor Howells stated that he believed that this is something which is no longer relevant and therefore should no longer be included in the Risk Register.

P2631 – Asbestos – The Chair noted that he believed the residual total should be green to show negligible risk.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the addition of the outcomes from the Internal Auditors report be noted.**
- 2. That the Clerk review “Judicial Review Costs” and consider whether this should remain on the Risk Register.**

F492. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

To note that the next meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee is scheduled for Thursday, 22 September 2022 at 7.00pm.

F493. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public are excluded from the remainder of the meeting

F494. CCTV COSTS

Members of the Committee discussed what options were available to move forward with this item. The options most suitable were to find a different location for the CCTV and/or a better agreement in place for the costs incurred.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk write to the Community Hall Trustees to invite them to meet with the Chair of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee and the Clerk to discuss the invoices received with a view to finding a resolution.

F495. FORMER POST HOLDER 57

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk write to the former post holder to request they contact the Clerk within 14 days, to resolve the matter, and that the letter advise of the Council's intentions should the former post holder not make contact.

Signed Dated
(Chair)

