

## LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2023

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**PRESENT:** Councillors Hughes, l'Anson, and Sinclair

**ALSO PRESENT:** Angela Price – Town Clerk  
Julia Lawrence – Deputy Town Clerk  
2 Members of Public

#### **F99. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bradford, Eakin, Harvey, Howells, and Newsham.

#### **F100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hughes declared a personal interest in agenda item 13 in relation to the grant applications from Ledbury Places and Ledbury Carnival.

#### **F101. NOLAN PRINCIPLES**

##### **RESOLVED:**

**That the Nolan Principles be received and noted.**

#### **F102. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Colwell was present to speak in support of the two grant applications submitted by Ledbury Primary School PTA. He referred to the minutes of the Budget Monitoring/Grants meeting held on 4 December and noted the decision to decline these applications.

The Chair advised that at this stage this was a recommendation from that Working Party and that it was now for the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee to discuss the applications further, with a further recommendation being made to Full Council on 7 December 2023. He advised that the reason for declining the applications was that the applications had stated that this had been styled to fund two curriculum trips that the Parish Council cannot provide grants to support this, as this is paid for by the tax payer through general taxation and if this Council was to support curricula matters this then becomes double taxation (general and local taxation).

Councillor Sinclair advised that he had had a discussion with Mr Colwell prior to the meeting and that he felt that Ledbury Primary School PTA may not have represented properly what this grant was for. He considered this to be a hardship fund to help parents pay for what is a curricula activity, but they are

required to pay for. He felt that it was wrong for Ledbury Town Council to not support this grant.

Councillor l'Anson pointed out that parents are asked to help fund the trips, noting that this was not something that was being imposed on parents.

Mr Colwell was given the opportunity to speak further. He advised that there were different pots of funding that comes from the County Council, one of which was for curriculum trips. One of the reasons the school asks parents to help toward the costs of these trips is that the costs have spiralled over past years, and they are no longer sustainable with the funds provided by the LEA, hence the PTA trying to raise money for these trips. He advised that this was the first year that the PTA had approached local business for financial support towards the costs of school trips. He stated that if they do not get enough money these trips will have to be called off, and he noted that a lot of parents had been helping the PTA raise funds, but there is a limit on how much spare money families have and they still need more help.

Councillor l'Anson asked whether it would be possible to give a grant to the PTA, but that she had been advised that it was not in the remit of this Council due to the issue of double taxation.

Councillor Hughes suggested the Council could support such a request via a hardship fund, but that when considering the application at the meeting on 4 December the wording "curriculum" had been the reason for the recommendation from that committee. However, he advised that this matter would be debated later in the meeting, and he thanked Mr Colwell for attending the meeting.

Mr Colwell asked for clarification on the process going forward, the chair advised that the applications would be debated further at this meeting, with a recommendation to be made to Council who would make the final decision on the grants. Mr Colwell asked where the funds for the grants originate from, to which the Chair explained that they are monies set aside from the Council's annual precept to support activities in the community that benefit the community.

Councillors reassured Mr Colwell that they would debate the PTA applications at the relevant point in the meeting.

**F103. TO APPROVE AND SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE, POLICY & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 16 November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:**

**Minute no. F92(2)(iv) – that the minute be amended to read “.... Committee to appoint Company no. 7 to undertake the repairs to the inclusive roundabout.....”.**

**F104. TO REVIEW THE ACTION SHEET**

Councillor Sinclair asked if there had been any progress in respect of the stairlift, minute F92.2(a) refers.

The Deputy Clerk advised that she was still waiting for a response from Caroe in respect of their costs to take this forward and confirmed that she was hoping to be able to bring those costs back to the Environment & Leisure Committee in January.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the action sheet be received and noted.**

**F105. TO APPROVE INVOICES FOR PAYMENT DECEMBER (Interim)**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the invoices for payment be approved for payment in the sum of £6,766.00 plus VAT.**

**F106. TO RECEIVE THE RECORD OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR OCTOBER 2023**

Councillor Hughes noted the cost of storing the Christmas Lights that the Council rent from Blachere Illuminations, and it was recognised that there are lessons to be learnt from the current Christmas Lights contract for future years.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the receipts and payments for October 2023 be received and noted.**

**F107. TO RECEIVE THE BALANCE SHEET AND TRIAL BALANCE FOR MONTH 7**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the balance sheet and trial balance for month 7 be received and noted.**

**F108. BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS 1 APRIL – 31 OCTOBER 2023**

The Chair noted that the budget should be at approximately 58% of its income and expenditure at the current time and he advised that the Budget Monitoring Working Party held on 4 December 2023 had considered the reports and noted a number of budget lines that exceed the 58%. He had asked the Clerk to

provide the explanations for those overspends as had been provided at that meeting on 4 December, and which were included in the notes of that meeting which had been provided to Members at agenda item 13.

The Clerk provided additional information in respect of the following:

CC 108, NC 4228 – Dog Hill Wood General Tree Works the Clerk advised that funds need to be drawn down from the Earmarked Reserves in respect of this budget line.

CC 401, NC 4415 – Full Council Office support & Equipment – the overspend was encountered following full DSE checks for all office staff, and the need to purchase new chairs and other equipment.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the budget monitoring reports for the period 1 April to 31 October 2023 be received and noted.**

**F109. DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25**

Members noted that the Budget Monitoring Working Party had met on 4 December 2023 and had reviewed the draft budget page by page, following which some amendments had been made, as detailed in the notes of the meeting held on 4 December 2023 and reflected in the draft budget papers provided as part of the agenda.

Members considered the draft budget page by page during which the following observations/amendments were made:

- i. That the sum of £1,000 for the electricity to the Community Hall be moved to the budget line for Hereford CCTV, in light of the potential new CCTV system planned for the recreation ground, which will be provided by Herefordshire CCTV suite.
- ii. It was noted that during the periods of close down of the Painted Room, administration staff take visitors to view the Painted Room, subject to staff availability.
- iii. The Clerk advised that the cost for the wedding licence fee had increased from £500 to £1,500 and therefore would have an effect on the outturn of the Jacobean Room costs in the 2023/24 budget. She advised that she was trying to arrange a meeting with the Registrars Department. Councillor Sinclair suggested that a breakdown of costs be requested from Herefordshire Council.
- iv. A concern was raised in respect of the £7,000 that had been placed in the budget for Smart Water and after some discussion it was agreed that this should be removed.

- v. Concerns were raised in respect of the cost of Christmas Lights and following considerable discussion it was proposed that a sum of £25,000 be put in the 2024/25 draft budget for Christmas Lights.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That the Environment & Leisure Committee be asked to review the CCTV contract between Hereford and Ledbury Town Council.
2. That thanks be extended to administrative staff for their efforts with the Painted Room during periods when it is officially closed, whereby resources permitting they take visitors to view the Painted Room.
3. That the Clerk make a formal representation to Herefordshire Council as to why such a large increase in fees, and also that a breakdown of costs be requested from Herefordshire Council in respect of the costs of the Wedding Licence.
4. That the £7,000 in the new budget line in respect of Smart Water be removed.
5. That the budget amount for Christmas Lights be reduced to £25,000, noting that the Council will be considering a new contract for the Christmas Lights in 2024/25 and that the Environment & Leisure Committee be asked to work with Christmas Light providers to provide Christmas Lights within this budget.
6. That the Draft Budget 2024/25 be recommended to the extraordinary meeting of Council, scheduled for 7 December 2023 for approval, noting that the Precept request for Ledbury Town Council in 2024/25 is £693,900 which is a percentage increase per Band D equivalent property of 6.56%, which equates to an increase of £11.81 per year (£0.98 per Band D equivalent property per month).
7. That once the 2024/25 budget has been agreed and approved the Clerk be instructed to issue a press release providing information on the percentage increase of the 2024/25 precept request, in particular the percentage increase relevant to the £16,000 for the provision of the Daffodil Line and why.

**F110. TO RECEIVE NOTIFICATION OF CCTV REVENUE FUNDING 2024/26**

**RESOLVED:**

That the notification of cost of CCTV revenue funding in the sum of £10,274.20 for 2024/25 be received and noted, noting that the Environment & Leisure Committee will be asked to review this contract at their meeting in January 2024.

## **F111. ANNUAL GRANTS APPLICATIONS**

Members were requested to give consideration to the notes from the Budget Monitoring/Grants Working Party which had taken place on 4 December 2023.

There was considerable discussion in respect of the two grants from Ledbury Primary School PTA and it was proposed that the Clerk should write to them and ask them to clarify what percentage of the cost of the trips they are asking for funding towards. It was also suggested that in principle the Council would welcome a response from the PTA advising that they establish a "Hardship Fund" for families and children who cannot afford additional access to the school experience.

Emma Jackson was given the opportunity to speak on the Ledbury Poetry application. She advised that if the Council required further information in respect of this application then she would be happy to revisit this and provide more detailed information in support of the application.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. That a recommendation be submitted to the extraordinary meeting of Council that the following grants be awarded from the 2024/25 budget in respect of grant applications received:**
  - i. Age UK Herefordshire & Worcestershire – To purchase indoor games for the Walk and Talk project - £210.48 –Local Government Act 1972 – S137 Financial Assistance**
  - ii. Ledbury Places – Improvements to glass viewing area above the water watercourse in the Heritage Centre - £1,900 (50% of overall project costs) – Local Government Act 1974 - S144 Power to Encourage Tourism**
  - iii. Age UK Hereford & Localities – To support pop-up sessions for the over 50's – £1,000 - Local Government Act 1972 – S137 Financial Assistance.**
  - iv. Ledbury Food Group – Ledbury Celebration Day - £1,500 - Local Government Act 1974 - S144 Power to Encourage Tourism**
  - v. Buses 4Us CIC – Supporting in operating the Daffodil Line £16,000 in 2024/25 and £8,000 in 2025/26 – Local Government and Rating Act 1997 S27 (Stand-alone grant – not to be taken from unspecified grants).**

**Total Unspecified grants - £4,610.48 (of which £1,210.40 is to be allocated to S137).**

- 2. Busy Bees, Ledbury – To purchase a Discovery Water Run for the garden, to enhance learning opportunities - £399.99 – that the Clerk be instructed to write to Busy Bees to advise that Ledbury Town Council's 2023/24 grants are overspent, but that the Council would be minded to support this application as a request for funding in 2024/25, which would be paid in April 2024 from the 2024/25 grants budget.**
- 3. Ledbury Primary School PTA – To help with costs for a Year 3 Curriculum School trip to the Cotswold Wildlife Park - £1,064 – that an in-principle decision be taken by Council to support this application subject to the Clerk contacting Ledbury Primary School PTA to advise that Council would be willing to receive an application from monies towards a Bursary Fund run by the PTA for the benefit of children where families cannot afford to access fully the activities of the school.**
- 4. Ledbury Primary School PTA – To help with costs for a Year 2 Curriculum School trip to Blist Hill - £1,247 - that an in-principle decision be taken by Council to support this application subject to the Clerk contacting Ledbury Primary School PTA to advise that Council would be willing to receive an application from monies towards a Bursary Fund run by the PTA for the benefit of children where families cannot afford to access fully the activities of the school.**
- 5. Ledbury Poetry – Crucial Creators – To provide Holiday Activity Fun - £5,000 – that this application be deferred to allow Ledbury Poetry to provide clarity on why this amount of money is requested, exactly what it would provide, and in what ways the money would be used to benefit the residents of the town and information on how this project overlaps with other holiday provision already in place within Ledbury, such as the project at the Rugby Club.**
- 6. That the following grant applications be declined:**
  - i. Ledbury 1<sup>st</sup> Rainbows – To provide rent of hall where they meet - £500 – on the grounds that it is a retrospective application and the Council's grants criteria not permitting the payment of retrospective grants.**
  - ii. Red Earth Arts CIC – To provide a series of four free half-day drop-in art workshops primarily tailored for people who may be lonely and lack companionship - £2,200 – but that it be suggested that Red Earth contact Herefordshire Talk Communities to establish whether there are any grant opportunities available to them through this.**

- iii. **Ledbury Carnival Association – Support for the annual carnival – £1,000 - That this application be declined on the grounds that the Carnival Association are currently in receipt of a three-year annual grant in the sum of £4,000 for 2024/25 and 25/26**
- 7. **That the Ledbury Places application for Provision of Heritage Centre Information Leaflet in the sum of £1,050 be referred to the Planning, Economy & Tourism for consideration as part of the Working Party looking at a strategy for Tourism in Ledbury for ways in which Ledbury Town Council, the Heritage Centre and other Tourist Groups in Ledbury can work together and pool funds with the aim of producing more cohesive advertising for the town.**
- 8. **That when awarding multi-year grants, recipients be asked to consider offering support to other town events such as Carnival and Community Day, by way of volunteers etc.**

**F112. REQUEST FROM TALK COMMUNITY IN RESPECT OF WINTER OF WELLBEING EVENTS**

The Clerk advised that the Community Development Officer had met with Aimee Williams to discuss the wellbeing events and provided an update on that meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Town Council agree in principal to working in partnership with Pot & Page Community Hub.**

**F113. RISK REGISTER**

The Chairman advised Members that he and the Clerk had met to review part one of the register (Finance) which was being presented to Members at the meeting. He advised that they would be arranging a further meeting to review further sections of the Risk Register which would be reported back to the committee in due course.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Part 1 of the Risk Register be received and noted.**

**F114. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

**To note that the next meeting of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee is scheduled for 18 January 2024.**



**F115. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

**That 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.**

**F116. OUTCOME OF WARRANT OF CONTROL APPLICATION**

Members were provided with details of the outcome of the recent Warrant of Control application.

**RESOLVED:**

**That no further action be taken in respect of this matter.**

The meeting closed at 21:23.

Signed ..... Date .....