

STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL FINANCE, PERSONNEL AND ASSETS MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 6.00PM AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS

PRESENT Councillor Bill Turner (Town Mayor)
Councillor Mrs Susan J Sandall (Chairman)
Councillor Bob Sandall (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor John Dawson
Councillor Mrs Sheila Sismore
Councillor Mrs Gloria Johnson
Councillor David Taylor
Councillor Andrew Croft

ALSO PRESENT Town Clerk, Patricia Stuart-Mogg
Councillor Angela Carter-Begbie
Councillor Elaine Hooper
Mr Owen O'Neill - Welland Valley Rail Partnership
Mrs Gill Clarke – Stamford & District Lions Club

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION –

- **‘Beeching Reverse’ Project** - Mr O'Neill was invited to outline the ‘Beeching Reverse’ Project bringing together the rail links between Kettering, Corby, Stamford and Peterborough. This sustainable transport project would provide two trains per hour connecting these points. This project is being supported and sponsored by the neighbouring Members of Parliament and it is hoped to have all MPs along the route endorsing the scheme. Contact has been attempted with the Stamford MP – Gareth Davies several times but as yet no response has been received. Consultation is on-going with the Peter Risebrow (Peterborough MP) who is involved in developing the Wisbech, Kings Lynn and Hunstanton rail projects. The importance of local train services is noted and the desire to increase the frequency of the Stamford service. Currently the existing service is accessible to 400K of the population and, with the additional link accessibility, this would increase to 750K. The concept has been viewed by the Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris. Tom Pursglove (Corby) is the lead sponsoring MP. There are now only 31 working days before the submission deadline and urgent action is being taken to garner political and financial support to part fund 25% of the cost of the feasibility study with the Department of Transport possibly providing the other 75%. What is being asked is for Stamford Town Council to canvass Gareth Davies’ support and consider making a £2,000 grant towards the feasibility study should the group be successful in the submission. It was thought that a direct connection from Stamford via Peterborough to London is being considered by the railway authorities, and whether this had been given any consideration. There was concern expressed that Stamford station is not manned all the time and that current access for the disabled is very poor. It would be worth addressing this as part of the submission.
- **Christmas Tree Festival** - Mrs Clarke outlined the request to use the Town Hall for the display of the Christmas Tree Festival during this year. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for this Festival to be accommodated at St. John’s Church due to the COVID restrictions and they are investigating a new venue. It would involve the display of possibly 30 trees. The trees are sponsored by various organisations who purchase the trees and decorate them. The trees are then put on display for two weeks coinciding with the Christmas Festival. The request is whether the Town Hall would be a possible venue to display the trees from the 26 November until 11 December 2020. It was recognised that this would only operate during the working week and not at weekends. The Lions Club would provide the resources to support the delivery of the event in line with the operation of the Town Hall. Following discussion, it was recognised

that there is an imminent announcement in respect of a tightening of COVID restrictions and it would not be prudent to make any decision prior to the Government statement.

The Chairman Councillor Mrs Susan Sandall thanked both the representatives for their presentation and the Committee will take into consideration the points made in respect of each subject.

Formal meeting commenced at 6.30pm.

188. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Point 1)

None.

189. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Point 2)

None.

190. MINUTES (Agenda Point 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 August 2020 were confirmed and signed as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman.

191. UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS (Agenda Point 4)

- a. *Museum Accreditation Application* – The Town Clerk is progressing with the application which will be presented at the next meeting.
- b. *Historical Town Plaques* – A comprehensive list is being compiled by the Civic Society with a specific cleaning schedule for the individual plaques.
- c. *Stamford in Bloom* – Planters to be located at Cattle market have received permission by SKDC and are in the process of being manufactured.
- d. *LCC Verge Cutting* – It is anticipated that the next cut will be scheduled towards the end of October 2020.
- e. *Town Hall Administration* – It was confirmed that all office station layouts had been revised to enable all staff to return to work at the Town Hall as per the agreed schedule, subject to the Government guidelines.
- f. *Red Lion Square furniture refurbishment & planter relocation* – A mutually convenient date with the contractor to move the street furniture is being arranged.
- g. *Transfer of the Community Assets* – This matter is being pursued with SKDC
- h. *War Memorial Repair* – A mutually convenient date is being arranged with the potential contractor to consider the repairs.
- i. *Rewilding Scheme* – The cost for the trial rewilding zone is being examined by Councillor Amanda Wheeler. It was noted that the current estimated cost is £5K.
- j. *Solar Panels* – Another contractor had visited the Town Hall to prepare a quote and once all three quotes were available a report would be submitted to the Committee.
- k. *Franking Machine* – This matter is in hand and a progress report will be presented at the next meeting.

192. FINANCE (Agenda Point 5)

- a. *Schedule for Payment No. 6* – The schedule had been circulated to all members of the Committee for consideration. The Town Clerk drew attention to the payment no. 14116 for computer hardware for £5,215.00 +VAT. It was also reported that two purchases had been made through Amazon using the Debit Card payment (i) £84.95 had been

expended for 5 computer bag protectors and (ii) Debit Card payment for £68.93 had been expended for mobile covers. In addition agreements have been entered into with B T and Vodaphone for the purchase of 7 mobiles (5 x Officers and 2 x Amenities Operators) as follows: 5 x Samsung Galaxy A71 units at £25 each per month on 24 month contract through BT telephones and 2 x Alcatel 1 units at £14.17 each per month on a 23 month contract through Vodaphone. The schedule of payments was noted. The Town Clerk stated that there were other expected invoices due which would be added to the schedule for presentation to the Town Council.

b. *Budget 2020/2021* – The status of the budget was noted.

i. *Notice Boards* - The Town Clerk presented the report which had been circulated to all Committee members in respect of the repairs to the back boards of the three Town Council notice boards located in the High Street, Recreation Ground and the Meadows. The report was examined and considered. Following discussion, it was considered important that the backing must be robust and weatherproof even if the quote was not the cheapest.

Proposal 1 – It was proposed by Councillor G Johnson, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that Barker Signs was the preferred supplier at the cost of £348.00 with one lock. There was one Abstention.

ii. *Utility suppliers* – The Town Clerk presented the spreadsheet outlining the research results regarding the Town Council energy costs. Five energy suppliers had been contacted and all quotes were based on the same consumption information. It was observed that the Town Council wished to ensure that it utilized renewal energy suppliers. Bulb is a green energy supplier that provides 100% renewable electricity and 100% carbon neutral gas. A few Councillors were aware of this supplier, who had a very high rating. Following discussion, it was considered that any future agreement should be for an initial year.

Proposal 2 – It was proposed by Councillor A Croft, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and **RESOLVED** that the energy contracts should be switched to Bulb when the current contracts with the existing suppliers expire.

The Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall encouraged all members of the Committee to examine the budget and to consider the expenditure for 2021/2022. Each member of the Council is responsible, and everyone's input is valued in respect of the management of the budget. It is projected that there should be a nil increase in the Precept, but this will be examined at the next meeting.

193. **ASSETS (Agenda Point 5)**

a. *Town Hall Hire:*

i. **Civil Ceremony Bookings** - The requested dates for the future weddings was circulated. Councillors who had listened to the Prime Minister's report in Parliament stated that weddings could proceed but would be limited to 15 persons attending. It was noted that this restriction would come into force from Monday 28 September 2020. It was noted that there was a Civil Ceremony at the Town Hall this coming weekend (26 September) and staff were confirmed in place to manage the event. No

decision would be taken on any future events at the Town Hall which would be subject to Government guidance.

- ii. **Christmas Tree Festival** - Following discussion the Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall considered that at the current time it is very difficult situation. The consensus view was that unfortunately this year would have to be declined this year due to the Covid constraints.

Proposal 3 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that although the Christmas Tree Festival at the Town Hall is supported, the Town Hall could not be used as a venue this year. There was one Abstention.

- b. *Cemetery Lodge Management* – The Town Clerk outlined the report regarding the future management of the Cemetery Lodge. The Cemetery Lodge was first used as a private house in 2000. The letting of was initially managed by Goodwin's Property Services but from then was managed in-house from April 2011. Leaders Estate Agents currently hold one month's rental deposit £527.20 for the Council. Landlord's responsibilities are now more stringent, and it may be preferable for an experienced letting agent to manage the tenancy on behalf of the Council. This would ensure that the Council has a more realistic view as to the level of rental to charge and ensure all tenancy issues are managed appropriately. Initial discussions have been undertaken with Leaders and their Terms and Conditions were examined. Following discussion, there was value in outsourcing the tenancy management and there is an argument for increasing the rent by a reasonable sum but not at the same level as private market value. The consensus that further investigations should be carried out and that management may be retained inhouse.

Proposal 4 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk investigate the management further using other Letting Agencies and retaining the management inhouse. This matter is to be considered again at the next Finance meeting.

194. TO CONSIDER GRANT APPLICATIONS (Agenda Point 7)

- i. *Virtual Dog Show* – A grant application had been received from the Methodist Church to support the fundraising which will be accrued by the event. It was noted that the fundraising will go towards supporting two local charities. Following discussion, it was considered that the expenses would probably be minimal this year.

Proposal 5 - It was proposed by Councillor B Turner, seconded by Councillor A Croft and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that an award of £100 is award (*under LGA 1972 145*) to support the entertainment programme. There was one Abstention.

- ii. *Albert Bridge Brass Plaque* – An application had been received from the Civic Society Urban Group for grant assistance towards the refurbishment of the historic plaque on the Albert Bridge. It was noted that the plaque had been installed in 1871 and was in need for the specialist refurbishment.

Proposal 6 - It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor B Turner and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that a £900.00 grant is award (*under LGA 1972 s13*) to support the refurbishment of the plaque on Albert Bridge. There were one Abstention.

- iii. *'Beeching Reverse' Project* – The Chairman summarised the request from the earlier presenter for financial assistance of £2,000 towards the cost of a feasibility study. Following discussion there was mixed views as to whether this should be supported. However, the opportunity to obtain resources from LCC grant funding towards this feasibility study should first be explored. It is essential that the poor disability facility must be addressed as part of the project. It was considered that both issues must not be combined and a contribution from the Town Council's grant fund should be considered only after the LCC funding opportunity has been explored.

Proposal 7 – It was proposed by Councillor J Dawson, seconded by Councillor B Sandall and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that the Town Clerk investigates the potential funding opportunity through LCC to support the feasibility study. There was one Abstention.

195. PERSONNEL MATTERS (Agenda Point 8)

- *NJC Pay Agreement 2020-21* – It was noted that agreement has been reached between the National Employers and the NJC Trade Union Side on rates of pay applicable from 1 April 2020. The annual leave will also increase from 21 to 22 days for employees with less than five years of service. This implementation was noted.
- *Disciplinary Hearing* - It was noted that a Disciplinary Hearing was held, and a final warning letter is to be sent to the employee concerned. This was noted.

196. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE NEXT MEETING (Agenda Point 9)

- a. Councillor B Turner – would like to discuss the grant funding issues during 2019/20 at the next meeting.
- b. The Town Clerk requested the Precept for 2021/22 should be considered at the next meeting.

197. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: (Agenda Point 10) – Tuesday 20 October 2020

Chairman
(The meeting closed at 7.35pm)