

STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 16 MARCH 2021 AT 6.00PM AT REMOTE LOCATIONS USING VIDEO AND AUDIO LINK (Occasional Interruptions may have occurred during this meeting)

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

ALSO PRESENT Town Clerk, Patricia Stuart-Mogg
Councillor Mrs Elaine Hooper
Councillor Steve Carroll
Councillor Mrs Julie Clarke (Part of meeting)
Representative – Art Pop-up

Public Participation:

A representative from Art Pop-up presented an application for grant assistance towards the cost of a planning application and the installation of an artwork depicting Stamford's stone heritage. It is proposed that this artwork is installed on the wall of F. Hinds, jewellers, at the entrance to Stamford Walk. The Committee was assured that permission had been obtained from F. Hinds for the installation. It was also advised that following discussion between Art Pop-up and the Planning Authority, there is a strong likelihood that planning permission for the artwork and its installation on a Listed building would be granted. It was noted that the grant application is for £468.00 (Planning application £300.00 + £90.00 for installation, plus VAT).

6.10pm – The Art Pop-up representative left the meeting

Formal meeting commenced at 6.10pm.

499. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Point 2)

None – All Committee members were present.

500. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Point 3)

No declarations made.

501. MINUTES (Agenda Point 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021 which had been ratified at the Town Council meeting of 23 February 2021 will be signed as a true record of the meeting by the Chairman.

502. UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS (Agenda Point 5)

- a. *Museum Accreditation Application* – This is in progress.
- b. *Red Lion Square furniture refurbishment & planter relocation* – This is in hand but is delayed due to Covid constraints. The recent announcement from LCC Highways that Red Lion Square highway is due to be completely redesigned and that work is anticipated to commence in 2022 was noted. It is hoped that this will not require the removal of the street furniture from that location.
- c. *War Memorial* – This is in hand but is delayed due to Covid constraints.
- d. *Speed Watch signs* – It was noted that the Speed Watch signs had been delivered and will be installed along West Street, Drift Road, Conduit Road, the Old North Road entrance by Bottle Lodge and, possibly, Uffington Road and Barnack Road. Councillor D Taylor offered his assistance to install the signs with the Town Clerk.

It was also noted that at the recent Planning Committee meeting a request had been received for speed measures to be introduced on the new development site off Empingham Road. However, the development of that site continues with the roads still to be fully completed. It was unclear whether LCC Highways had fully adopted the site.

- e. *Town Hall Solar Power Project* - This is in hand but is delayed due to Covid constraints. The Town Clerk advised the Committee that details had been received from Stamford's Sustainable Energy group in respect of various companies involved in renewable energy with the offer of assistance in respect of this project.

503. FINANCE (Agenda Point 6)

- a. *Internal Audit of 2020/21 Accounts* – The Town Clerk confirmed that the Internal Auditor had completed the first stage of the internal audit for 2020/2021. Some issues were raised relating to two Lloyds banking issues, viz:
 - i. A cheque for expenditure incurred by the Town Council on behalf of the Skells Trust had been returned by Lloyds Bank. It was noted that following to the death of one of the signatories, Lloyds Bank had suspended the Skells account.
 - ii. The automated Lloyds Bank cheque system had missed one cheque which had been accepted and receipted manually by the bank. Both these matters are being resolved.
- b. *Schedule for Payment No. 12a* – The schedule had been circulated to all members of the Committee for consideration. It was noted that invoices were still being received which will need to be included before submission to the Town Council. The Town Clerk advised that at the next meeting there would be two schedules: Schedule 12b covering all the invoices associated with the financial year 2020/2021 and Schedule No. 1 for invoices associated with financial year 2021/2022. This was noted.
- c. *Town Council Investment* – The Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall informed the Committee that there would be no merit in investing £300,000.00 short-term with Lloyds, as the interest rate is the same as the present level earned with the current Instant Access account. The Town Clerk was asked to investigate the various options available for the next meeting. The Town Clerk alerted the Committee to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme level which is £85,000.00 against any loss due to bank failure. Consequently, with that in mind it might be preferable to spread the risk. It was noted and the alternatives available would be considered at the next meeting. **Action:** Town Clerk

- d. *Annual Report 2020/2021* – The Committee members were circulated with the draft Annual Report 2020/2021 for consideration. It was noted that this would be attached to the Annual Town Meeting Agenda and circulated. It was noted that the virtual Annual Town Meeting is scheduled on Monday 22 March at 7pm.
- e. *Tender for LCC Highways verge cutting 2021/2022* – It was noted that the tender invitations had been circulated and the closing date for all submissions is 12noon on Wednesday 31 March 2021. It was confirmed that tenders had been requested to be submitted in a sealed envelope, addressed to the Town Clerk, and clearly marked ‘Private & Confidential – LCC Ground Maintenance 2021-2022’. The tenders will be opened on Tuesday 06 April 2021 in the presence of the Chairman of Finance and the Town Clerk. The outcome of the tenders will be reported to the Finance Committee at their meeting of 20 April 2021.
- f. *Floral Planting in Red Lion Square* – The Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall informed the Committee that the planters in Red Lion Square appeared underwhelming with the current selection of shrubs. She suggested that Stamford in Bloom is invited to incorporate these planters within their planting arrangements. The Town Council would support the group towards the funding of the plants. There was discussion and it was agreed that flowers are both very inviting and attractive. It was the consensus that Stamford in Bloom should be approached and the plants in the Red Lion Square planters are refreshed.
The Town Clerk informed the Committee that application for the 2021 East Midland In-Bloom competition is due to be submitted and asked whether the Committee is prepared to support the cost of the entry fee which is in the region of £50.

Proposal 1 – It was proposed by Councillor D Taylor, seconded by Councillor B Sandall and unanimously **RESOLVED** that Stamford Town Council supports the submission of the East Midland In Bloom competition form and pays the entry fee.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that quotes are being obtained for the planting of the floral troughs and baskets on the Town Bridge and at the Town Hall. It is anticipated that these should be in place by the end of April. This was noted.

504. ASSETS (Agenda Point 7)

- a. *Re-opening of the Town Hall* – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that remote Council meetings cannot lawfully take place after 7th May 2021. This means that the Council must return to face-to-face meetings as of 8th May. Discussions have been held with all staff for a gradual return to the Town Hall as from 6th April 2021. It was noted that a review of the Covid risk assessment will be undertaken and Council meetings will need to be held in the Court Room to enable social distancing to be applied. Consideration should be given to the operation of hybrid meetings whereby the meetings are streamed live. It was understood that the capabilities are potentially available for streaming meetings, however additional hardware may be required.
- b. *Confirm booking form for Town Hall Meeting Rooms & Civil Ceremonies:*
The latest schedule of requests for Marriages and Civil Partnerships to be held at the Town Hall was circulated for consideration. Following discussion, it was requested that all applicants submitting requests for 2022 dates should be made aware that the current fees will be reviewed in April 2022 and are subject to change. It was confirmed that the health and safety measures and risk assessment are in line with

Government guidance. The Registrar is working closely with the Town Hall to ensure that numbers and procedures are all acceptable in the run-up to each ceremony.

Proposal 2 – It was proposed by Councillor J Dawson, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the following bookings are accepted and confirmed by the Town Council:

2021 - 23 April at 1pm; 24 April at 1pm; 05 June at 11am and 23 December at 10am;

2022 - 23 April at 12noon and 16 June at 11am

- c. *Temporary use of Town Hall for Library Services* – The Town Clerk confirmed that a meeting had been conducted with the Library Manager. The Town Council offer of the Malcolm Sargent Room for the temporary operation of Library services (whilst structural work is undertaken on the library building) was welcomed. It was appreciated that the procedure would be for a ‘click and collect’ service over a six-month period, operating Monday to Friday between 9am to 4pm each day. Acceptance of the proposal is awaited from LCC Library Services. Discussion ensued and it was debated whether a charge should be levied. The majority view was that no charge should be applied considering the difficulties being experienced during the current Covid restrictions.

Proposal 3 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that the Council agrees that no charge would be levied for the provision of a temporary location in the Town Hall for Library Services whilst structural work is undertaken on the library building. There was one Abstention.

- d. *Future usage of the Town Hall* – The Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall informed the Committee that an enquiry had been received from Citizens Advice exploring the feasibility of having drop-in offices at various locations in Stamford, one being the Town Hall. The requirements were considered, and the Committee considered that with the Town Hall preparing for opening it was difficult to offer a permanent base for Citizens Advice at the Town Hall. A number of suggestions were considered as possibilities and support to identify a more establish centre could be offered.

Proposal 4 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall, seconded by Councillor A Croft and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council regrets that no accommodation is available at the Town Hall but supports the offer to assist in identifying an established centre in Stamford.

6.45pm – Councillor Mrs J Clarke left the meeting.

The Town Clerk alerted the Committee that there is a requirement to ensure the Council is prepared and ready for any short notice urgent use of the Town Hall by SKDC. This was noted and it was agreed that such a request would be accommodated. The Town Clerk was requested to keep the Committee fully informed in the event of any such requirement.

505. ELECTRONIC EDITION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

The Committee were shown the next edition of the Council's Newsletter which is the first on-line edition. This would be circulated to the Council and highlighted at the Town Meeting. Distribution would be via the Council's website and social networks.

506. FEEDBACK FROM CLIMATE ACTION WORKING GROUP (Agenda Point 8)

The Town Clerk reported that Lincolnshire Highways is happy for a 'cut and collect' regime to be applied when cutting the LCC Highway verges. However, in respect of the proposed wildflower planting sites along North Street, a Licence to plant on the Highway is required. The Licence is free but would involve a Highway Officer to assess the sites for any issues in respect of the impact on visibility at junctions. It was noted that LCC work closely with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust and that grants are offered towards such projects. During discussion there was concern expressed over the planting of bulbs which had been carried out by Stamford in Bloom and were in flower. The Town Clerk advised that Councillor Mrs A Wheeler who is leading the wildflower project is in dialogue with Stamford in Bloom, so both organisations work symbiotically taking note of any existing undertakings. Councillor Mrs A Wheeler is aware of the requirement for a Licence.

Proposal 5 – It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor Mrs G Johnson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council agrees the application for a Licence to plant wildflowers along highway verges.

507. GRANT SCHEME APPLICATIONS (Agenda Point 9)

a. Art Pop-up – A grant application for £468.00 + VAT had been received from Art Pop-Up, a not-for-profit organisation, to support of the installation of a piece of public art in the Town centre. It was considered by the Committee following the presentation by the Art Pop-up representative and there was a consensus that the application should be supported as it would add a new feature in a central location off the High Street. However, there was concern expressed that if planning consent was not given, an element of the grant award would be lost without having achieved any benefit for Stamford.

Proposal 6 - It was proposed by Councillor J Dawson, seconded by Councillor B Sandall and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council agrees to a grant award of £468.00 (*under LGA 1972 S.145*) to Art Pop-up towards the cost of the planning application and installation of the artwork depicting Stamford's stone heritage.

b. Stamford in Bloom – A grant application for £2,000.00 had been received from Stamford in Bloom towards the landscaping and planting of Brownslow Terrace. During discussion it was considered that the site being landscaped was presently an eyesore and the project should be supported. However, it was recognised that significant levels of funding had already been allocated towards this organisation during this financial year.

Proposal 7 - It was proposed by Councillor A Croft, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that that the Council agrees to a grant award of £1,000.00 (*under Highways Act 1980, S.96*) to Stamford in Bloom towards the cost of landscaping and planting Brownslow Terrace.

508. PERSONNEL MATTERS (Agenda Point 11)

- a. *Reserve Force Commitment* – The Committee was circulated with the recent correspondence from the RAF in respect of the number of days a Volunteer Reservist is required to commit to as a member of the Reserve Force. During discussion it was recognised that as part of the Armed Forces Covenant, it was important to demonstrate that the Council as an employer supports a Reserve Forces staff member to fulfil their contract of Reserve Support Days. It was noted that the commitment is for a minimum of 27 days. It was recognised that this commitment would create a pressure on the small administration team, however as a Stakeholder of the Armed Forces Covenant the Volunteer Reservist should be supported but as in previous occasions this absence is taken as unpaid time off, or as part of the allocated paid holiday.

Proposal 8 – It was proposed by Councillor J Dawson, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council supports the commitment to a limit of 27 days taken as unpaid time off or as part of allocated paid holiday.

509. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE NEXT MEETING (Agenda Point 12)

- i. *Cemetery Chapel* – Councillor Mrs G Johnson advised that recently a structural survey had to be conducted on the Chapel due to internal damage which has been identified. A report is awaited and will be brought to the Finance Committee as the Chapel is a Town Council asset.
- ii. *St. Mary's Church Floodlighting* – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that there had been concerns expressed by residents over the new recently renewed floodlighting at St. Mary's Church. Images of the issues were circulated, together with a possible solution. The Town Clerk was instructed to direct this matter towards the Civic Society to address.
- iii. *Council Training Session* – It was suggested that prior to a future Council meeting a LALC training session should be provided at which all Councillors would be required to attend. This will be investigated by the Town Clerk.
- iv. *By-Election in St. George Ward* – It was noted that a By-Election had been called as a result of the demise of Councillor Bill Turner. It was very likely that this would be held on the 6th May 2021.
- v. *Inner-Wheel Planter* – It was reported that the planter at the Bottle Lodge entrance to Stamford had been seriously damaged and will be removed. The Committee was dismayed by this situation, especially as considerable effort is taken to nurture this attractive feature at the entrance to the Town.

510. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: (Agenda Point 13) – Tuesday 20 April 2021

Chairman
(The meeting closed at 7.45pm)