

STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2021 AT 6.00PM

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Gloria Johnson (Mayor)
Councillor Mrs Susan J Sandall - Chairman
Councillor Bob Sandall
Councillor Mrs Sheila Sismore
Councillor David Taylor
Councillor Andrew Croft
Councillor Mrs Marion Pitt
Councillor Mrs Angela Carter-Begbie substituting for Councillor John Dawson

ALSO PRESENT Town Clerk, Patricia Stuart-Mogg
Councillor D Dorson, Chairman of Amenities Committee
1 member of the public

Public Participation (Agenda Point 1):

Councillor D Dorson outlined the request for financial assistance towards the repair of several items of play equipment on the Recreation Ground. It was noted that there is a planned provision within the Amenities budget for repairs and maintenance of equipment. However, due to wear and tear, vandalism, and restoration across all elements of play equipment, the expenditure would be more than the planned provision provides. RoSPA has inspected the site and its report has identified those elements which require attention. To address these issues as a single assigned job, the budget will need to be supported by additional funds. The total cost of the repairs is estimated at £30K inclusive of VAT. It is anticipated that, with adjustments within the budget, the additional support anticipated would be in the region of £21K. It was noted that tenders were invited from a wide range of suppliers, but many had ceased undertaking repairs. However, one business had offered a quotation for carrying out all the repairs having done so for other Local Authorities.

Discussion ensued and it was recognised that not all repairs reflected a 'high risk', but all carried essentially a safety aspect. The question was asked whether readjusting some of the expenditure cost centres of the Amenities budget could meet the cost. This was thought may be possible but some projects in the pipeline are already contractually committed. Unfortunately, due to the Covid lockdown there have been delays in obtaining quotes to undertake the work. In the meantime, equipment has been routinely inspected visually and cordoned off. However, the Health & Safety barriers are routinely removed by vandals and expose the vulnerability of the equipment, hence the reason for the urgency.

There was a question raised as to whether grant funding support could be obtained from either of the Principal Authorities. It was noted that such grant funding does not cover maintenance and repairs.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs S J Sandall thanked Councillor Dorson for his presentation, which would be considered when examining the budget under item 6a of the agenda.

Formal meeting commenced at 6.20pm.

123. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Point 2)

Councillor John Dawson submitted their apologies. This was noted and agreed.

124. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Point 3)

None made.

125. MINUTES (Agenda Point 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 which had been ratified at the Town Council meeting of 22 June 2021 had been signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

126. UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS (Agenda Point 5)

- a. *Red Lion Square furniture refurbishment* – The Town Clerk confirmed that HMP Peterborough is progressing with the refurbishment of the seats in Red Lion Square. Arrangements are to be made for the collection and reinstallation of the benches in due course. The Town Clerk reported that an offer had been received from Team Stamford to deliver, collect and re-fix the benches back in situ when refurbished. It was noted that there would be obvious expenses incurred such as paint, petrol and fixing bolts and it was hoped that these would be covered by the Council. Following discussion, it was noted that the Committee had agreed to cover nominal expenses. **Action:** Town Clerk
- b. *Memorial for HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh* – It was reported by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall that several entries had been received from students to design a commemorative plaque reflecting the Duke of Edinburgh's armorial. The Committee reviewed the entries and recognised that they were of a very high standard with considerable thought having been given to the subject. It was the consensus that a small selection panel which is to include Councillor J Dawson should convene as soon as possible to select the best entry. The Town Clerk was asked to send a message to thank the college for their entries. **Action:** Town Clerk
- c. *Feedback on meeting with EM Lawshare* – The Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall reported on the recent meeting with EM Lawshare. It was noted that there was no annual fee and membership is free to access the services of this consortium of solicitors who handle many Local Council issues. The hourly rates of service range between £155.00 to £180.00 to engage a Consultant / Partner.

Proposal 1 – It was proposed by Councillor D Taylor, seconded by Councillor B Sandall and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council agrees to enrol as members of EM Lawshare and the Town Clerk ascertains a cost for seeking legal advice in regard to employment and property management.

It was observed by the Chairman Councillor Mrs S J Sandall that there are many locations which have not been adopted by the Principal Authorities for one reason or another, but these locations are causing considerable concern for some residents of Stamford. It was suggested that each location is examined and considered for adoption by the Town Council. There was a particular problem of a dangerous tree on land abutting the Town Council's Queen Walk allotment site which requires a resolution.

Proposal 2 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall, seconded Councillor B Sandall and unanimously **RESOLVED** the Council agrees that the matter of the land abutting Queens Walk Allotment is investigated by the Town Clerk and legal assistance pursued to resolve the situation.

- d. *Feedback on Southbank Memorial Garden* – The Chairman Councillor S J Sandall informed the meeting that following consultation with the Head of Burghley's Land and Property Estate, there was question as to whether this is the most appropriate location for a Queen's Platinum Jubilee project. It was recognised that this location has issues and may not be the most fitting location. It was confirmed that the land is subject to a Covenant and must have Burghley's approval. Following discussion, it was noted that a similar project on an alternative site had been explored recently, which was also supported by the District Council, on SKDC land along Water Street. The consensus of the Committee members was that the Council would revisit this project at the July meeting.

Proposal 3 – It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Pitt and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council revisits the proposal of the South Bank Memorial Garden.

127. **FINANCE (Agenda Point 6)**

a. *Review Budget Year 2021/2022 and Qtr 1 Report:*

- i. **Repair of play equipment** – The members of the Finance Committee considered the issues presented by Councillor D Dorson earlier, together with the quote received for the repairs required. There were mixed views as to whether the items of equipment should remain out of action, as a consequence of the vandalism, or whether the repair elements could be examined to see whether other methods of repair could be considered. Following discussion, it was considered that the Amenities budget should be reviewed carefully for the next financial year and that current expenditure should be prioritised to meet this urgent disbursement. There was also a suggestion that when RoSPA inspections are carried out they should be accompanied.

Proposal 4 – It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor A Croft that the Amenities Committee should review its budget in association with the quote and the RoSPA report to establish how best to address this issue. There were three votes in Favour, four votes Against and one Abstention. The proposal fell.

Proposal 5 - It was proposed by Councillor G Johnson, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that £21K is earmarked from the General Fund towards the repair of the play equipment, and the Amenities Committee review its budget in association with the quote and the RoSPA report to establish the priorities of their expenditure. There were four votes in Favour, three votes Against and one Abstention.

- ii. **Restore Datashred** – The Town Clerk advised that the current agreement with Restore should be revised to reduce collection units from 3 to 2 (one cabinet and one 240l wheelie bin, with 6 collection visits). This was supported by the Committee.

Proposal 6 – It was proposed by Councillor D Taylor, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council agrees to revise the current agreement with Restore to reduce the collection units from three to two.

- iii. **Museum Accreditation Application** – The Town Clerk confirmed the Museum Accreditation Application had been submitted and is awaiting the result. To develop and improve the current access to Stamford Museum's collection, consideration is being considered to developing a 360° tour of the Town Hall - initial estimate

£1,000.00. In addition, Cemetery information held by Lincolnshire Archives could be obtained to enhance historical research. This information could be provided in a digital format at a cost of £731.50 plus postage or photocopies, where possible, at £276.00 plus postage. This was noted and would be progressed in due course.

- iv. **SAGE** – The Town Clerk reported that there is a need to register in order to process VAT submissions digitally. The Council’s SAGE accountancy package has this facility, and it was requested that sanction is granted for this registration to be progressed. A further feature of the package is to enable more efficient reconciliations to be achieved in a timely manner using ‘Bank Feed’. However, this will require authorisation for the SAGE system to access some of the Council’s banking information. It was also reported that free training next month is available on how to use the SAGE system more effectively and efficiently.

Proposal 7 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Pitt and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk progresses with both the registration for Tax Digital submission and Bank Feed reconciliation processing.

- b. *Review Town Hall Solar Power Project* – The Town Clerk reported that two quotes had already been obtained with hopefully a third in pipeline. It is anticipated that all three quotes will be able to be assessed at the August FPA meeting. As a precautionary step the Town Hall roof should be assessed for strength. It was noted that planning permission would need to be obtained. A full report would be prepared for the next meeting.
- c. *Update on LCC Verge and Open Spaces cutting* – Councillor Mrs S J Sandall reported that the second cut commenced on Friday 16 July on Casterton Road. Signage was displayed to advise the public of activity. Environment SK recommend that the third cut is scheduled to be carried out in August or September with a review again in October for the end of the season. This was acknowledged.
- d. *Town Hall floral displays and watering management* – The Town Clerk reported that Waterside Garden had sponsored the planting of the displays adorning the Town Hall and Town Bridge at no cost to the Council. Glorious Garden, who usually manage the watering of these displays together with the planters in RLS and Castle Dyke, has held the price at the 2019 rate of £35.00 per visit (3 visits per week July-October) cost £1,785.00 (3x 17wksx £35.00) + VAT. It was also noted that there was an offer from a local business to sponsoring winter displays on the Bridge and Town Hall. Following discussion, the winter displays were welcomed, and it was suggested to investigate whether watering could be included.

Proposal 8 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Councillor Mrs A Carter-Begbie and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council agrees for the summer watering of floral displays on the Town Bridge, Town Hall and the planters in Red Lion Square and Castle Dyke, by Glorious Gardens at the cost of £35.00 per visit (3 visits per week July-October) cost £1,785.00 (3x 17wksx £35.00) + VAT.

- e. *Next Newsletter issue* – This is in progress with a draft issue to be presented at the July Town Council meeting.
- f. *Schedule for Payment* – Schedule No 4 had been circulated to the Committee for examination. It was agreed that the schedule is presented to the Town Council for approval.

- g. *Review of Policies relating to Committees Terms of Reference* – It was reported that a meeting had been scheduled on Thursday 29 July 2021 with the Policy Review Working Group to review the following Policies:
- i. Staff Handbook
 - ii. Financial Documents – Internal Controls; Risk Management Policy; Risk Assessment; Investment Strategy and Asset Register.
- h. *Mayor's Charity Account* – It was noted that this currently stood at £520.00. The Mayor Councillor Mrs G Johnson informed the Committee that there are several Civic events in the pipeline of which details will be circulated to members of the Council.

128. ASSETS (Agenda Point 7)

- a. *Re-opening of Town Hall* – It was recognised that with the relaxing of the Covid restrictions the Town Council needed to prepare for the full opening of the Town Hall. During discussion it was appreciated that there remains a strong concern that the transmission of the virus remains very high, and some precautions should be encouraged such as the wearing of face coverings while moving around the Town Hall. It was the express wish of Committee members that the next Town Council meeting is held in the Council Chamber, with no social distancing and the wearing of face coverings encouraged but not mandatory.

It was also noted that a review of the Risk Assessment is due and has been scheduled with Torney Ltd for the Town Hall, the Shack on the Recreation Ground and Cemetery at an inclusive cost of £550.00 + VAT.

It was the consensus of the Committee that arrangements should progress towards opening the Town Hall fully at the end of August. In the meantime, the Town Hall should be deep cleaned in preparation.

Proposal 9 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Mrs G Johnson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council accepts the quote by Torney Ltd for the Risk Assessment of the Town Hall, the Shack on the Recreation Ground and Cemetery at an inclusive cost of £550.00 + VAT.

Proposal 10 – It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall seconded by Councillor Mrs M Pitt and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council agree the Town Hall is prepared for full opening on 31 August 2021.

- b. *Broadcasting Council meetings* – It was noted that the current quote received is being investigated and examined to identify how best to deliver the broadcasting of Council meetings in a more cost-effective way using existing equipment.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the Council Chamber will be set out to utilise the current equipment to best effect.

- c. *Town Hall remedial work:*

- i. Town Hall entrance porch and internal door closures -The Committee examined the quotes presented for revarnishing the Town Hall entrance doors and fixing the internal door closures. Both quotes were analysed, and it was recognised that both contractors had undertaken work for the Town Council before but one of the contractors did frequently have to be recalled for rectification work.

Proposal 11 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Councillor B Sandall and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council accepts quote No 1 with CJS for £885.96 + VAT for the internal joinery in the Town Hall and £220.00 + VAT for the renovating the entrance hall doors.

- d. *Cemetery Lodge remedial work* – The emergency temporary roof repairs have been carried out by Orchard Building Contractors. Smithers Purslow has assessed the roof and that major work is anticipated to address its condition. A full report is awaited. It was noted that the Council’s insurers had been notified.
- e. *Cemetery Chapel and Workshop remedial work* – The structural roof repairs are in-hand and progressing. Further update will be available at the next meeting. It was noted that the repairs to the Chapel would be completed first to enable that building to be returned to service.
- f. *Shack remedial work* - The Committee examined the quotes presented for the remedial works required to the Shack. Both quotes were analysed.

Proposal 12 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Councillor B Sandall and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council accepts quote No 1 with CJS for £968 + VAT for the internal joinery to the Shack.

- g. *To consider services and bookings of Town Hall Meeting Rooms & Civil Ceremonies* – It was noted that with the relaxation of Covid restrictions bookings for Town Hall and services may resume. Following discussion, it was considered that advertising the reopening of the building should be pursued, especially for Civil Ceremonies. It was reported that Pride Magazine have a special offer for either a ½ or ¼ page advert at a cost of £1863.00 + VAT in three consecutive editions. There was discussion, with mixed opinions as to the value of printed advertising as opposed to social media. It was considered by the majority that both had equal value and appealed to different audiences.

Proposal 13 – It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Pitt and agreed by majority vote that a one-off advertisement in Stamford Pride is investigated and whether a digital advert could be prepared for the Council’s website. There was one vote Against.

It was noted that the Senior Citizens Concert had been rescheduled for Friday 30 July 2021 at the Town Hall. All arrangements were in place and the event will be advertised locally as it was for Stamford parish residents only.

129. GRANT/DONATION REQUEST TO BE CONSIDERED (Agenda Point 8)

- a. *Rutland and Stamford Sound* – A grant application for £1,987.00 had been received from Rutland and Stamford Sound towards the funding of a broadcasting mixer to facilitate the improved scheduling of the radio station’s programmes seven days a week 24hours a day. The application had been circulated for consideration.

Proposal 14 - It was proposed by Councillor B Sandall, seconded by Councillor Mrs A Carter-Begbie and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Council agrees to a grant award of £1,000.00 (under LGA 1972 S.145) to Rutland and Stamford Sound towards the cost of a broadcasting mixer.

- b. *Team Stamford* – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Team Stamford had been involved in coordinating the movements of the tubs for the floral displays at the Town Hall and on the Town Bridge, in addition they have offered to manage the movement of the benches in Red Lion Square. Would the Committee consider a donation towards their efforts? Following discussion, it was considered that this should be kept in mind, in the event of further assistance and a potential request of grant assistance.

130. PERSONNEL MATTERS (Agenda Point 9)

The Chairman of Finance Councillor Mrs S J Sandall observed that with the relaxing of the Covid regulations and Town Council services returning fully at the end of August, it provides a good opportunity to consult with the staff as to future operations at the Town Hall. It was suggested that the Chairman of Finance and the Mayor attend the next regular weekly staff meeting.

It was noted that staff Appraisals should be scheduled in the coming months and that it was important that this should be a two-way dialogue. It was also considered that the rest of the Council should be consulted in advance for feedback to enable this process to be a 360° process.

Following discussion, it was the consensus to the Committee that a working group meeting should be convened to examine the entire Administration structure.

131. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE NEXT MEETING (Agenda Point 10)

- a. *Subject Access Request* – It was noted that a Subject Access Request had been received which is being processed.
- b. *Stamford Station Adopters* – The Town Clerk reported that a group of volunteers are working with Network Rail to enhance the environment around the station.

132. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: (Agenda Point 12) – Tuesday 17 August 2021 at 6pm

Councillor Mrs S J Sandall informed the Committee that both she and Councillor B Sandall would be away for the September meeting. It was the consensus to amend the date of the September meeting to earlier in the month and schedule it on Wednesday 8th September 2021 at 6pm.

The Chairman
closed the meeting at 8.20pm