

STAMFORD TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2022 AT 6.00PM**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Gloria Johnson (Mayor)
Councillor John Dawson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Sheila Sismore
Councillor David Taylor
Councillor Andrew Croft
Councillor Mrs Marion Pitt
Councillor Mrs Elaine Hooper substituted for Councillor Bob Sandall

ALSO PRESENT Town Clerk, Patricia Stuart-Mogg
Councillor Mrs Susan J Sandall - Chair (on-line attendance)
Councillor Bob Sandall (on-line attendance)
Councillor Mrs Angela Carter-Begbie (on-line attendance)
Members of public - None

671. Public Participation (Agenda Point 1): None

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm.

672. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Point 2) –

Councillor Mrs Susan J Sandall and Councillor Bob Sandall had submitted their apologies for being unable to attend in person, and these were noted.

Proposal 1 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Gloria Johnson, seconded by Councillor Sheila Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the reasons for absence are accepted.

673. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Agenda Point 3)

Councillor Elaine Hooper declared a Personal Interest in any discussions relating to the Stamford Visitor Centre as she is a volunteer for the organisation.

674. MINUTES (Agenda Point 4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 which had been ratified at the Town Council meeting of 29 March 2022 had been signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

675. UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS (Agenda Point 5)

- a. Community Speed Watch* – It was reported that the order for a solar powered speed indicator unit is in hand. Cllr Richard Cleaver is exploring the possibility of establishing a group of volunteers from across the Town to act as a Speed Watch Community Group. In order to progress there is a requirement for the Town Council to provide the following equipment, all prices subject to VAT:
- Speed watch handheld velocity device* - £255.00 + carriage £10
 - Hi-Vis jackets; long sleeve jackets with front and rear logos either Velcro or zip fastening - £9.85 or £15.55 each, + carriage £5.00
 - Community Speed Watch Advisory signs - £63.29 or £72.57 with carry case, + carriage £12.50

Following discussion, it was noted that Councillor Cleaver is trying to recruit volunteers across all Wards, to enable at least three individuals to operate on each occasion. There is a requirement to attend a training course which is offered by LCC free of charge and all named volunteers registered on this scheme will need to attend. The Town Council will also need to include these volunteers on its Public Liability insurance.

Councillors were concerned over the liability and the commitment of the volunteers to this initiative during inclement weather. It was important that more information is gathered before such expenses are invested. The consensus was that the Highways and Police authorities are abrogating their duty and devolving more expenses upon town and parish councils.

Proposal 1 – It was proposed by Councillor A Croft, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Pitt and unanimously **RESOLVED** that more information is required before any procurement of any equipment is initiated.

- b. *Memorial for HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh* – Councillor John Dawson confirmed that the memorial plaque is due to be completed within the next fortnight.
Action: Cllr Dawson/Town Clerk
- c. *Allotment Encroachment* – This matter is in hand and is being progressed. Several residents have encroached on Council allotment land have established access points from their rear gardens. This matter will be taken up with the Council's legal team.
Action: Town Clerk
- d. *Platinum Jubilee Celebrations* – All the arrangements are in place, and it was recognised that this was a Town Council event on the Recreation Ground. The tree which is to be planted to mark the Queen's Tree Canopy is being ordered. It will be a semi-mature oak tree planted at the start of the Jubilee event celebration programme on Thursday 02 June 2022. It was noted that the Deputy Lord Lieutenant will plant the tree. It was recognised that as part of the Platinum Jubilee Celebration there is a Thanksgiving Service scheduled on Friday 03 June 2022. Clarification was required regarding the arrangements in view of phasing the surfacing work in Red Lion Square, which will result in St. John Street, Red Lion Street and Crown Street being closed. Councillor D Taylor advised that the Civic Officer is arranging a meeting to discuss this event. **Action: Town Clerk/DT/Civic Officer**
- e. *Stamford Visitors' Centre (SVC)* – It was noted that this facility is proving very welcome with some 100 visitors being assisted. It was thought that additional signage may be needed to direct visitors to the location on arrival at the Bus or Train Station. During discussion it was considered that this may be an issue to discuss with the District Council's Cultural Services. It was considered that the SVC logo should be included on the external swing sign. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was being progressed. There was disappointment expressed that the Town Council was unable to access the Welcome Back fund to support costs to welcome back visitors to Stamford following the relaxation of the Covid restrictions. It was noted that Stamford Art Centre is being advertised as the Tourist Information Centre, however there are only leaflets available with no personal assistance. In respect of financial support for the SVC the Town Council has expressed commitment to this facility but it is understood that sponsorship and donations are also being invited. Councillor J Dawson suggested that the electronic advertising devices in the High Street and Red Lion Square could be used to highlight the Stamford Visitors' Centre. The Committee considered that the Town Clerk should contact SKDC Cultural Services to explore whether there was any funding available for visitor signage. **Action: Town Clerk**

Proposal 2 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by councillor Mrs E Hooper and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk contracts SKDC Cultural Services in respect of the availability of funding from the Community Fund to support advertising Stamford Visitors' Centre.

- f. *Portable First Aid Kit & AED Responder Kit Bag* – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that under her Health and Safety delegated powers she would be obtaining portable first aid kits for the Amenity Operative and Amenity Officer together with an AED responder kit bag to attach to the AED device in the Town Hall. This was noted.
Action: Town Clerk
- g. *Procurement of Ukrainian and Polish flags* – It was noted that both the Ukrainian and Polish flags had been procured. There was discussion as to whether the Ukrainian flag could be flown over the Town Hall on a permanent basis. The Town Clerk advised that this is a Town Council decision.
- h. *Welcome Back Fund* – An update was provided to the Committee, and it was noted that unfortunately the Town Council was not made aware of this funding source until too late and therefore unable to access the fund in time.
- i. *Offer on Bastion & Red Lion Square Public Conveniences* – The Town Council is awaiting a response to its offer.

676. FINANCE (Agenda Point 6)

- a. *Quarter 4 Report and Review of Earmarked Reserves*: The report had been circulated to all members of the Committee for consideration and comment. It was noted that the Earmarked Reserves will be reviewed by Councillor Mrs S J Sandall and presented to the Council for approval.
- b. *Internal Audit Report and External Audit* – It was noted that the Internal Audit for the Year End March 2022 had been completed, with the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) having been prepared for Town Council approval. This document will need to be submitted to the External Auditor by 01 July 2022. Councillor J Dawson informed the Committee that this is a very important legal document which confirms that the Town Council operates under good governance. It is therefore essential it is understood and supported by all members of the Council. This document carries serious implications on the Council's accountability and must be appreciated by all Councillors. It has been approved by the Finance Committee, Town Clerk, and an independent Internal Auditor.
- c. *Community Cleaner Grant 2022/ 2023* – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the Community Cleaner Grant was offered to the Town Council by the District Council. However, as the Town Council now only operates with one Amenities Operative it will be unable to cover the duties of Community Cleaning. It is therefore being suggested that this funding is declined. It was noted that in view of the reduced hours of the Amenities Operative between Monday to Friday, the Amenities Committee had tendered for the emptying of bins over weekends on the Meadows and Recreation Ground. It was noted that SKDC has now been appointed to carry out this task.

Proposal 3 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs G Johnson, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Community Cleaner Grant is declined for 2022 – 2023.

- d. *CCLA Investment Report*: The latest report had been circulated to the Committee outlining the interest of £100.32 which had been earned since the last report. This was noted.
- e. *HMRC Making Tax Digital & SAGE Bank Feed* – The Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Council has registered with the HMRC both in respect of Making Tax Digital and for SAGE Bank Feed to make reconciliation easier. This was noted.
- f. *To consider Schedule for Payments* - Schedule No 1 is being prepared for presentation to the Town Council. This was noted.
- g. *Business Rates* – The Committee were circulated with the details of the business rates applicable to the Town Hall (£18,338.25) and the Cemetery premises (£3,293.40). This was noted.
- h. *LCC Grass Verge 2022-2023 Renewal Agreement* – The Committee was circulated with the details of the offer by LCC, should the Town Council wish to renew the agreement to cut the highway grass verges. It was noted that the contribution rate from LCC for 2022-2023 is £6,100.68. The Committee recognised that this was for a standard three cuts per annum, which complies to LCC Highways code of practice for grass verge cutting. However, the Town Council, due to public request, enhanced the specification to cut and trim the entire areas of highway verge and increase the number of cuts per year.

Proposal 4 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council renews its agreement with LCC, and the Town Clerk goes out to tender for the cutting of LCC grass verges.

- i. *Data Shred Restore* – It was noted that there will be an increase of 6% on the Data Shred Restore contract because of fuel increases. It was noted that this service is required to manage all confidential waste. The consensus was that this increase was understandable, but investigations should be conducted to ascertain whether this was the best value contractor. **Action: Town Clerk**

Proposal 5 – It was proposed by councillor Mrs Sismore, seconded by Councillor A Croft and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the 6% increase is accepted by the Town Council.

677. ASSETS (Agenda Point 7)

- a. *Bandstand and garden refreshment* – It was reported that work on the Bandstand has been completed. The garden surrounding the bandstand had been cleared of overgrowth and is scheduled for completion of planting by 25 April 2022. The Town Clerk reported that Homebase has offered a contribution towards plants. It was noted that Team Stamford with the support of a local employer will be providing a workforce for this garden project on a voluntary basis with the Council paying for the raw materials and plants. It was noted that the shale would be left in position with a weed suppressant membrane on top. Once planting is completed the area will be covered with bark chipping. It was noted that Burghley's Head Forester has been approached in respect of providing the wood chippings towards the project.
- b. *Renewal of Fixed Business Plan with Eon Next* – The Committee was circulated with details of the offer proposed by Eon Next. It was noted that if the Council did not wish to renew its current Fixed 3-year Business Plan. It could opt for a Flexible Business Plan enabling the flexibility to switch at any time, but that may cost more than a Fixed Business Plan.

Proposal 6 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs M Pitt, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council approves renewing its current 3-year Business Plan with Eon Next.

c. *Cemetery Lodge Repairs:* The Town Clerk reported that this matter is being progressed. The Conservation Officer has viewed the situation and has agreed that it would be acceptable to use the Welsh Slate on the East elevations which are not visible, but will require Collyweston slate to be used on the West elevations. Following discussion, it was noted that these repairs have taken well over a year to now to complete, but the reasons have been complex and the contractor is aware of the pressing situation for the Council.

d. *Cemetery Workshop* – The Town Clerk reported that the Amateur Dramatic Society had used the Workshop as a temporarily storage facility for which they were most appreciative, and they have given a £200 donation in recognition of this gesture.

The Committee was made aware that the installation of scaffolding for the Lodge roof repairs has compromised the security of the Compound. The cemetery workshop has now been offered to the Ground Maintenance Contractor for use. This was noted and supported.

e. *Town Hall internal remedial work and Rear Garden landscaping* – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the roof leak in the passageway leading down from St. Mary's Place inside the Town Hall needs immediate attention. This is a historic issue which now requires a permanent solution. A professional has examined the problem and a quote obtained and circulated to the Committee. Details of the most sensible and safe approach is as follows:

- Access the existing roof structure through the internal hatch.
- Clear & dispose of debris from existing roof.
- Dismantle & dispose of existing roof covering & structure.
- Internally: Erect approx 5mtr high scaffold internally to achieve a working height approx 1.5m below the new proposed joist level (NB: this will prevent access through the stair passage whilst works are carried out)
- Externally: Obtain Highways Permit - Erect 4mtr high scaffolding on existing footpath, to LCC regulations including, hi-vis uprights, protection to lowest boarded lift, debris netting. Scaffold tied to masonry. Safety handrails.
- Form new 200mm x 50mm flat roof structure at high level. Apply firing strips falling to direct water discharge from St. Mary's Place elevation towards rear of Town Hall. Apply TG4 boarding externally inclusive of upstands. 200mm Quilt insulation (TBC). 12mm hardwood ply ceiling. Note: the structure will require fixing & flashing into neighbouring property and therefore a "party wall agreement" may be required.
- Install GRP trims as required. Apply CURE-IT GRP 600kg matting. Sand back & install "Graphite Grey" topcoat. Chase out straight line into stonework each side, install Code 4ib lead flashing with 150mm down-stand. Clear site. Issue CURE-IT 20yr Guarantee
- Include provisional sum of £250.00 to block existing rainwater outlet internally and adapt guttering to rear elevation flat roof to accommodate new roof outlet.

The initial estimate cost is approximately £7,695.50 + VAT. There would be a requirement to engage an architect to draft a Party Wall agreement with the neighbouring property and apply for planning permission to enable the work to proceed.

Proposal 7 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and seconded by Councillor Mrs G Johnson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Clerk progresses this urgent work to avoid further deterioration to the internal wall of the Town Hall. **Action: Town Clerk**

The Committee were circulated with the designs of the rear garden landscaping project. It was noted that the contractor, who is a professional gardener and is engaged to irrigate the Town Hall floral arrangements, has been approached to assist with labour for the landscaping. A quote is awaited and should be available by the Town Council meeting. This was noted and it was the consensus that a formal decision is taken at the Town Council meeting. **Action: Town Clerk**

f. *Special Expense Areas / Community Asset Transfer* – It was noted that a meeting is scheduled to walk the Empingham and Uffington Play areas which are to be inspected by Councillor Bob Sandall and the Town Clerk together with the SKDC Assistant Director of Finance to ensure all the details of the transfer are clarified and noted. This had been approved by the Town Council and is scheduled to take place on Thursday 5th May 2022.

g. *Open Spaces offer by Vistry Homes* – The Committee were circulated with the offer by Vistry Homes for the Town Council to adopt some open spaces of land between Arran Road and Cedar Road. It was noted that SKDC has adopted some locations but not all areas. Following discussion it was recognised that it is important to avoid a repeat of the situation which arose with Jelson locations. It is best that the Town Council has these areas transferred so it can maintain them in perpetuity.

Proposal 8 – It was proposed by Councillor D Taylor, seconded by Councillor Mrs E Hooper and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Town Council agrees to have these areas transferred in perpetuity and proceeds with the necessary arrangements with Vistry Homes. **Action Town Clerk.**

h. *Booking at Town Hall and Civil Ceremonies:*

Civil Ceremonies: There was one additional Civil Ceremonies booking scheduled. The booking was for Saturday 10 June 2023 in the Court Room at 2pm. This was noted.

Proposal 9 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs G Johnson, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Civil Ceremony on Saturday 10 June 2023 in the Court Room is approved.

Town Hall:

- *Court Room – Thursday 09 June 2022 Civic Society* - The Committee was informed that this event was organised by the Civic Society and offered its members an informal demonstration and exhibition of the NADFAST volunteers restoration work undertaken at the Town Hall. It was noted at this event is scheduled in the evening between 5pm and 9pm. Following debate, it was noted that this event could not be offered free of charge as it was not on a day of a routine meeting when staff are available. It was considered that as the NADFAST undertake such valuable work at the Town Hall a concessional fee of £100.00 should be applied subject to any additional staffing costs incurred for the date proposed. However, if the proposed date could be altered to a Tuesday when a regular meeting is scheduled, a further reduction in the cost may be considered. There was a view that the regular standard hire fee should be charged as the Council needs to cover the staffing overtime costs on days outside routine meeting days. It was understood that a charge is being applied to attend. The consensus of the Committee is that any organisation cannot expect that any requests are automatically approved and all require approval.

Proposal 10 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs M Pitt, seconded by Councillor G Johnson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that a concessionary rate of £100 is applied subject to any additional staffing cost if the suggested date of 9th June 2022.

SHACK: It was understood the organiser of the Stamford Veterans Association had requested to hire of the Shack six days a week 9.30am to 3pm. It was noted that this would be an extension of the Veterans Breakfast Club. Following debate, it was deemed a good initiative, but more details were required as there was serious question as to how this would be supported in the future. It was suggested that the organiser approach SAFFA the Armed Forces charity for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association for support.

Proposal 11 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs G Johnson, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that this request is declined until more information is forthcoming.

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

- i. *2071 Stamford RAF Cadets* - It was noted that an application for Grant Assistance had been received from the 2071 RAF Cadets for £1,020.00, towards their Challenge Coin initiative. This project recognises young individuals who have taken on community work dedication and development. The Committee considered that this was a valuable scheme which encourages and develops confidence and should be supported.

Proposal 12 – It was proposed by councillor Mrs M Pitt, seconded by Councillor D Taylor and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the full grant of £1,020.00 is awarded.

- ii. *Blackstones Bowls Club* – It was noted that an application for Grant Assistance had been received from Blackstone’s Bowls Club for £1,170.00 towards the procurement of a defibrillator for the Club. The Committee considered that this was an important facility to have at the Club and the Grant Award supported.

Proposal 13 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs S Sismore, seconded by Councillor Mrs M Pitt and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the grant award of £1,170.00 is awarded.

- iii. *Local Friends of St. Martins* – It was noted that an application had been received from the Local Friends of St. Martin’s for grant assistance towards their Jubilee Street Party celebration. During discussion, it was considered that the Town Council was providing a Town celebration on Thursday 02 June 2022 on the Recreation Ground to which all residents were invited. However, it was unable to fund individual Street Parties.

Proposal 14 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Sismore, seconded by Councillor Mrs G Johnson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the application for grant assistance towards a Jubilee Street Party is declined.

- iv. *Stamford Kiwanis & Lions* – It was noted that an application had been received from Stamford Kiwanis and Lions for grant assistance towards the provision of additional toilet facilities on the Recreation Ground during the Stamford Parade and Fun Day in 2022. It was recognised that assistance has already been provided towards this event in respect of traffic management for the Kiwanis and grant assistance allocated towards Lions entertainment. However, it was understood that the grant request from the Lions had been withdrawn as the ‘Clip Clop Pony’ entertainment element would now not be

available. The Committee considered that as this was an important community event and as the grant fund for the Lions had not been taken up this request should be supported.

Proposal 15 – It was proposed by Councillor Mrs G Johnson, seconded by Councillor Mrs S Sismore and **RESOLVED** by majority vote that a grant award of £880.00 is supported.

679. PERSONNEL MATTERS (Agenda Point 9)

It was considered that due to the sensitive and confidential elements of the items to be discussed it should be carried out in Closed Session.

Proposal 16 – It was proposed by Councillor David Taylor, seconded by Councillor Sheila Sismore and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the item relating to personnel should be conducted in Closed Session.

19.45pm – The Chairman confirmed that in pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 it was resolved that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed, a side meeting would continue in closed session during consideration of the next item, which relates to personnel matters.

20.00pm - The meeting resumed in Open Session

During discussion in Closed Session, it was confirmed that the staff salary review schedule was agreed and would be back dated to 01st April 2021 as agreed and proposed by NALC. All back-pay is approved for payment together with the settlement payment to the former Amenities Operative.

680. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: (Agenda Point 10) – TBC

The Chairman
closed the meeting at 20.00pm