



## **MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **Meeting Details:**

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Time: 10.00 am

Location: Meeting held as a hybrid meeting both at Carnegie House and remotely via Microsoft Teams for Business under the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021

Staff: D Jones (Deputy Town Clerk/RFO), Leanne Edwards (Town Clerk) H Jenkins (Finance Officer)

### **In attendance:**

Cllr D Unwin – Chair of Finance Committee (in person)

Cllr A Wathan – Vice Chair of Finance Committee (in person)

Cllr Clair Webster – (in person)

Cllr Ann Lloyd – (in person)

Cllr Michelle Blundell Humphreys (Remotely)

### **Apologies:**

#### **1. To receive apologies for absence**

Apologies received from Cllr T Wood (Mayor).

#### **2. To receive Declarations of Interests (if any) of Members in respect of the business transacted.**

Cllr A Wathan declared an interest as a BCBC Councillor.

#### **3. To receive and sign Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2022 were approved as an accurate recording of discussion and duly signed by the Chair of Finance Committee.**

#### **4. To consider matters arising from the Finance Committee Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

Page 2 – Item 7 - The Chair of Finance requested an update on the progress of the Job Centre noticeboard. The Deputy Clerk informed Committee that the Facilities Team would be writing to

the Job Centre to seek written confirmation for Bridgend Town Council to use the noticeboards as located at the side of their building. A further update would be provided at a future meeting.

## **5. To receive Evergreen Hall Charity update and discuss Escrow Account Funds**

Mr Geoff Cheetham the new Chair of the Evergreen Hall Charity attended the meeting at 11:15 am. The Town Clerk gave a brief update to Committee that as part of the relinquishing of the lease a sum of £39,000 had been allocated to the Evergreen Hall Charity which had been held in an Escrow Account and as the Evergreen Hall Charity had undergone changes to staffing, Bridgend Town Council had sought assurances from the Charity that the funds would be safe and secure before their release.

Mr Geoff Cheetham informed Committee that the Charity have strong Committee members along with other representatives purely to manage funds on behalf of the current three groups but as a registered Charity the hope is to expand to more older groups to benefit the Community.

The internal control of financial issues is currently secured with four officers as banking signatories with at least two impartial members to sign off cheques.

Cllr A Wathan as a former Chair of Evergreen Hall requested assurances that the original groups are safeguarded and would continue to receive funding. Mr Geoff Cheetham confirmed that this would be the case and with further publication it was hoped for more people to attend the groups.

**RESOLVED: Committee approved the release of funds from the Escrow Account to the Evergreen Hall Charity and requested a copy of the financial regulations to be submitted to Bridgend Town Council for record.**

The Chair of Finance asked for information on the process to release funds and the Deputy Clerk noted that as soon as the Evergreen Hall Charity submit the financial documentation, confirmation of bank details would be required, also liaison with the Solicitors would be required for them to give a timeframe for the release of funds and any possible legal fees payable.

## **6. Budgets**

### **a) Budget Review 03 as of 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

The Deputy Clerk provided a paper to Committee up to the end of February 2023 and gave an explanation for negative balances against Utilities, Cleaning supplies, additional van costs, street furniture and election costs.

The Deputy Clerk noted that financial guidelines require the end of year budgets to have no negative balances and as such requested delegated authority from Committee to vire from other budgets for the end of year figures 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023.

**RESOLVED: Committee approved delegated authority to the Deputy Clerk RFO to vire from other budget areas to present a positive end of year balance with consultation with the Chair of Finance.**

Cllr A Wathan raised the issue of the budget for Regeneration projects, and the Deputy Clerk noted that some of the budget had gone back into general reserves and some of the budget being brought forward to the next financial year. She advised that a clearer indication of the earmarked budget would be made at the May 2023 meeting.

## **7. Allotments**

### **a) To receive 2022/23 Allotment Budget Review**

The Chair of Finance informed Committee that legally as part of National Allotment law for any rental increase incurred to tenants, they require at least a year's notice.

A paper was provided to Committee and noted that 2022/23 expenditure was under £4,000.

### **b) To review and approve Allotment Rent for 2024/25**

**RESOLVED: Committee approved the allotment rental increase of 50 pence per 25meters squared for the year 2024/2025.**

## **8. Ruhamah Burial Ground**

### **a) To receive plans for the formal transfer of Ruhamah Burial Ground from BCBC to BTC**

Members received and noted the plans from provided by BCBC for the formal transfer of Ruhamah Burial Ground from BCBC to BTC.

### **b) To review costs for the formal transfer of Ruhamah Burial Ground from BCBC to BTC**

Committee were provided with costs for the formal transfer of the Ruhamah Burial ground to Bridgend Town Council with purchasing costs of £500 and the venders legal fees costs of £500; the Clerk advised that BCBC would waive the surveyors' fees.

**RESOLVED: Committee considered the costs and approved the formal transfer of Ruhamah Burial Ground from BCBC to Bridgend Town Council and requested the Town Clerk to appoint**

**Whittingham Solicitors to act on behalf of Bridgend Town Council in the formal transfer and noted that additional legal costs would be incurred.**

**c) To receive Tree Survey progress**

The Deputy Clerk read an email she had received from the contractor advising it best that the inspection of trees at Ruhamah is undertaken when they are in leaf within the summer season.

**RESOLVED: Committee approved the deferral of the tree survey until the summer following advice from the contractor.**

**9. To receive update on Damp Issue Works at Carnegie House**

The Deputy Clerk advised Committee that work had started on the damp issue at Carnegie House with scaffolding being erected and the mortar slowly being removed. It was advised that the works would take ten to fifteen days to complete however this is very much dependent on satisfactory weather conditions and. It was noted that as work had commenced it was hoped that this would allow for the release of grant funding from Cadw.

**10. To receive update and quotes for installation of War Memorial name plaque.**

The Democratic Officer was invited to the Finance Committee to give an update and a paper was provided to Committee for their consideration.

**RESOLVED: Committee considered the report and approved the name plaque proof and use of a stone plinth if required, at a cost of £1084.50 to be placed at the back of the monument; Committee requested the Democratic Officer to contact the BCBC Conservation officer to confirm before placing the order of the brass plaque and stone.**

**11. To consider purchase of plants for Bridgend Town Council planting scheme**

Committee were provided with a planting scheme report and quote from B Leaf based at Bryngarw Park and asked to consider the quote for the purchase of plants for the Bridgend Town Council summer planting scheme 2023.

**RESOLVED: Committee approved B Leaf to provide planting for the Bridgend Town Council summer planting scheme for 2023.**

**12. To consider 'Veggie Table Planters' project for schools - Coronation Year**

The Chair of Finance informed Committee that veggie table planters had been provided to three Primary Schools and Heronsbridge as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee ten years ago as an educational tool and asked Committee to consider the possible purchase of veggie planters for this year's King's Coronation at a cost of £467 for each planter.

**RESOLVED: Committee approved the purchase of four planters at a cost of £467 each and requested that schools be contacted to ask if they would like to take part in this project prior to placing an order for the planters.**

### **13. National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)**

#### **a) To receive update on NNDR paid to date - Ty'r Ardd**

The Deputy Clerk updated Committee that a total of £20,813.25 had been paid to BCBC for the NNDR for the Town Hall for the year ending 31 March 2023. It was noted that the Town Hall is currently listed as Offices and Premises with car parking spaces and a change of usage would be sought as of that of Carnegie House as a Community Centre and Premises.

#### **b) To receive update on claim for empty property - Ty'r Ardd**

The Deputy Clerk informed Committee that the Facilities Manager had contacted BCBC to claim relief on the empty property and BCBC had recently confirmed a rebate of £5,993.81. The Deputy Clerk advised Committee that the form of payment would be checked as either a refund or offset against next year's NNDR costs.

It was noted that BCBC would be contacted again to claim for empty property status due to the delay in handing over the building for occupancy and an update would be provided at the next Finance Committee meeting.

#### **c) To receive update on the Retail, Leisure, and Hospitality Rates Relief Scheme 2022/23 – Carnegie House.**

The Deputy Clerk informed Committee that a letter had been submitted on rate relief for this financial year for Carnegie House and an online form would be completed with an update provided at a future committee meeting.

### **14. To discuss potential energy savings – Carnegie House.**

Committee were asked to consider a review of energy saving and carbon neutrality. It was noted by the Deputy Clerk that this issue would be raised at the Facilities Committee to budget for the possibility of a contractor to assess the property for motion sensors as a project depending on what the future use of Carnegie House would be.

**15. To discuss postal cost savings.**

The Chair of Committee raised the issue of the increase in postage in April 2023 and suggested the use of smaller envelopes as an alternative to reduce costs if this was possible bearing in mind the size of documentation to be posted.

**16. To consider Grant Aid Application from:**

**a) Wildmill Community Life Centre**

**RESOLVED: Committee considered the application from the Wildmill Community Life Centre and requested the deferral of the decision until further financial information was submitted.**

**b) Great Western Railways Sports and Social Club – Defibrillator request for funding**

**RESOLVED: Committee approved in principle a contribution of £1,000 from Bridgend Town Council towards the installation of a defibrillator depending on confirmation that further funding can be obtained by them to complete the total project costs to include a heated lockable cabinet.**

**17. Correspondence**

**a) Email: PWLB lending facility repayment notice March 2023**

The Deputy Clerk referred Members to the Loan Repayment Due Notice Members and informed Committee that a direct debit payment would be made in March 2023 for the PWLB repayment.

**RESOLVED: Committee noted the PWLB Repayment Notice for March 2023.**

**The Meeting Closed: 11.35 am**

Signed..... (Chair of Finance Committee)

Date.....