



MINUTES OF THE BRIDGEND TOWN COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 4th May 2021, 10 am held remotely via video conference under the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020

Present: Cllr. David Unwin (Chair), Cllr. Lyn Walters (Deputy Chair), Cllr. Steven Bletsoe, Cllr. Alan Wathan and Cllr. Ian Williams

In attendance: Mrs L Edwards (Town Clerk) & Helen Jenkins (Finance Officer)

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllr M Voisey and Cllr T Wood.

2. To receive Declarations of Interest

A personal declaration of interest was received from Cllr I Williams on agenda item 16.

3. To receive minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2021

The minutes were approved by Committee as a true and accurate recording of discussion and duly signed.

4. To consider matters arising from the meeting held on 9th March 2021

No matters arising from the minutes held on the 9th March 2021

5. To receive minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2021

The minutes were approved by Committee as a true and accurate recording of discussion and duly signed.

6. To consider matters arising from the meeting held on 15th March 2021

No matters arising from the minutes held on the 15th March 2021

7. To receive update for the year ended 31st March 2021 and 2020/21 audit

The Clerk informed Committee that the Deputy Clerk (RFO) was currently working on the reports for year end and audit. It was noted that the Auditor General had extended the deadline for submission.

8. To note purchase of laptop for staff home working

The Clerk informed Committee that a member of staff had requested a laptop to be used for work purposes as her own personal laptop is beyond repair. The Clerk is currently waiting on stock availability of a reasonable priced laptop and when the item becomes available, a purchase at a cost of no more than £500 would be made.

Committee agreed to the purchase of a laptop and suggested that another staff member could check on stock availability to free up the Clerk's time.

Resolved: Committee agreed to the purchase of a laptop for staff home working.

9. To review and approve payment of NNDR for Council properties

Two NNDR invoices for both Carnegie House and the Town Hall recently submitted by BCBC were brought to Committee for review and discussion. Committee felt the costs were extremely high and requested an update from the Clerk on the section 44a application sent to BCBC requesting a rate reduction due to partial closure of the Town Hall.

The Clerk informed Committee that she had received an email response from BCBC stating unfortunately there are no reductions available for council buildings that have closed due to Covid restrictions. Bridgend County Borough Council and Town Council's are not eligible for government relief and are therefore not entitled to any rate relief such as small business relief, high street relief or lockdown grants etc. It was noted that BCBC had advised that the BTC section 44a application had been received however a section 44a relief application requires a visit and as staff have been prevented from undertaking visits due to the pandemic it has caused a delay in dealing with the application. It was noted that if the section 44a relief is awarded the maximum period that can be awarded is for 3 months from the date of application.

The Clerk advised that the first instalment of NNDR had been paid for both the Town Hall and Carnegie House and Committee agreed that monthly instalments should be paid until a resolution is found. Committee requested that the Clerk respond to BCBC expressing concern on the lack of information around the timing of the application. The Town Clerk was asked to make arrangements for the Town Hall property to be re-evaluated for NNDR purposes.

Resolved: Committee agreed for the Town Clerk to contact BCBC to apply for partial rate relief on the Town Hall and to pursue a re-evaluation of the property along with a further section 44a application.

Resolved: Committee agreed that the NNDR payments should be made in instalments until a resolution is found.

10. Bridgend Town Council Van

a) To note Renewal of Motor Insurance

The Clerk informed Committee that the renewal of motor insurance had been received at a cost of £529 which had increased by £40 from the previous year, this was due to excess insurance on drivers with less than 12 months no claims discount. Committee agreed that they would accept the excess ensuring that the staff member was not treated any differently to other staff. This would ensure appropriate cover that all staff within the outdoor team would be able to drive the Bridgend Town Council van.

Resolved: Committee approved the renewal of motor insurance, which included an increase in excess cover.

b) To note Renewal of Vehicle Tax

The Clerk noted that the vehicle tax had been renewed at a cost of £265 for the year.

Resolved: Committee approved the renewal of vehicle tax.

11. Review of Governance Documents

a) Financial Regulations

The Clerk advised Committee that a longer period is required to review and discuss the financial regulations and suggested that the review of financial governance documents should be extended and brought back to a future Finance Committee meeting for discussion.

The Clerk noted that the Review of Governance documents would be brought as an agenda item at the Annual Meeting and could be noted within the minutes that the documents were under review and will be brought back to Council at a future date.

Resolved: Committee agreed to extend the period for the review of financial governance documents including the Financial Regulations and to defer this item to a future meeting.

b) Risk Assessment

Resolved: Committee agreed to extend the period for the review of the Risk Assessment and to defer this item to a future meeting.

c) Statement of Internal Control

Resolved: Committee agreed to extend the period for the review of the Statement of Internal Control and to defer this item to a future meeting.

e) Investment Strategy

Resolved: Committee agreed to extend the period for the review of the Investment Strategy and to defer this item to a future meeting.

f) End of Year Investment Report

Resolved: To note the End of Year Investment Report

12. To discuss Bridgend Town Council Newsletter and Survey Financial Review

The Chair highlighted to Committee the full financial implications of the production of three newsletters a year and expressed concern that the Carnegie House Programme was being used as the current budget heading. It was noted that the production of the newsletter was not solely from the Arts Centre and suggested that the budget heading should be from the Community Engagement budget. The Clerk noted that the budget headings would be updated to reflect this.

Cllr Unwin suggested that the cost of 3 newsletters would exceed the amount of £5,000 for community engagement initiatives. Town Clerk highlighted that the first newsletter would be more expensive due to initial design costs and the fact that it was an 8 page newsletter. She suggested that subsequent newsletters should cost less.

Committee agreed that this issue should be referred to the Community Engagement Committee for further clarification to review and discuss the costs implications.

Resolved: Committee agreed to refer this issue to the Community Engagement Committee for further clarification.

13. To receive Town Centre Fingerpost Sign Renovation Project Report

The Chair put forward a report to Committee regarding renovations required on the fingerposts along with consideration of further structures. The Chair noted that he had sourced two companies whilst a third company had gone into liquidation and costs were provided to Committee within the report. Committee discussed the report and suggested that the Facilities Management team should undertake further research regarding locations and agreed for this issue to be referred to the Regeneration Committee for further discussion.

Resolved: Committee agreed that an approved budget allocation of £10,000 for the provision of the fingerpost sign renovation should be referred to the Regeneration Committee for further discussion.

14. Facilities Management

a) To consider a request from Cllr D White (BCBC) to install a dog bin at Heol-y-Bardd, Newcastle Ward

Resolved: Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to Cllr D White to inform him that the installation of a dog bin at Heol-y-Bardd, Newcastle Ward would be deferred until the collation of the survey had been undertaken. This would allow a clearer idea of how many dog bins were required and where they would be installed.

b) To consider the application for a Screwfix trade account.

The Clerk informed Committee that Bridgend Town Council currently has a trade account with Riverside Hardware which can be expensive for certain items and approval by Committee was sought on the application for a Screwfix trade account.

Resolved: Committee approved the proposed application for a Screwfix trade account.

15. Town Hall

a) To note architect progress and payment for Stage 1

The Clerk informed Committee that the architect had completed stage one and had submitted drawings of the elevation and layout which would be presented to the Town Hall working group shortly.

b) To receive legal advice regarding contracts for additional consultants

The Clerk informed Committee that One Voice Wales had approved that the process regarding additional consultants had been undertaken correctly and that three quotes for additional consultants to undertake work at the Town Hall would be required.

The Clerk sought permission from Committee for the architect to support the Council in seeking quotes for additional consultants for a mechanical and electrical engineer, a quantity surveyor and a structural surveyor and the additional costs that would be incurred in obtaining these quotes.

Resolved: Committee approved to allow the architect to seek quotes for additional consultants and for the additional cost in undertaking this work.

c) To discuss funds deposited in an Evergreen Hall Lease Escrow account.

The Clerk informed Committee that the Treasurer and Chair of the Evergreen Hall charity had been contacted and noted that a response had been received from them thanking Bridgend Town Council for holding funds on their behalf. Until the charity meets to decide their future the charity would be grateful for Bridgend Town Council to continue to hold the funds.

Resolved: Committee agreed to hold onto the funds on behalf of Evergreen Hall until they inform Bridgend Town Council of the future of the charity.

16. To consider Grant Aid Applications

a) Application from Bridgend Athletic Club

Committee considered the grant aid application received from Bridgend Athletic Club and noted that further clarification was needed as it was poorly presented with no actual amount of funding requested and not signed and dated.

Committee agreed not to approve at this present time but to contact the Bridgend Athletic Club to seek further clarification on costs required and to consider if insurance had been sought on the loss of equipment.

Resolved: Committee requested that a letter would be sent to request further clarification.

b) Application from Waunscil Allotment Society

A discussion was undertaken by Committee on the application for a storage container from the Waunscil Allotment society at a cost of £2,380 and agreed that costs should be met by Bridgend Town Council from the allotment budget and not as a grant aid application, however further information would be needed as to the quotes obtained.

Resolved: Committee agreed in principle to support the provision of a storage container but requested that a letter be sent to request a copy of the quotes received.

17. Correspondence

a) Letter from BCBC: Offer Letter - Town & Community Council Fund 2021/22

The Clerk informed Committee that a letter had been received from BCBC awarding £20,500 from the Town and Community Council Fund towards two projects at Bridgend Town Hall. The Clerk noted that the remit of one of the projects had changed due to a decision of full council regarding the southern pedestrian access. She advised that revised quotes would need to be sought and explained that she would update BCBC of this situation.

b) Letter from Bridgend and District Ramblers Group - Footpath Improvement Project Fund

The Chair informed Committee that Bridgend Town Council has three miles of registered footpaths that are user friendly and felt that the Council does not have any aspects that connect with the proposal of the Bridgend and District Ramblers group.

Resolved: Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to the Bridgend and District Ramblers Group to inform them of this decision.

The Meeting Closed 11.05 am

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

Date.....