

FORDINGBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee held on Wednesday 21st October 2020 at 7.30pm

held remotely using appropriate technology in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crimes Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations") which came into force on 4th April 2020

(Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting of the Committee)

Present: Cllr Adams – Chair;

Cllrs Anstey, Earth, Hale, Jackson, Lewendon, Moulard & Wilson

In attendance:

Mrs R Edwards, Asst Town Clerk
Mrs M Coatham, Finance Officer (RFO)
Cllr Partridge (Sandleheath Parish Council)
A representative from the Salisbury Journal
5 representatives from the Men's Shed Committee

1. To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies received from Cllrs Goldsmith, Paton, Perkins and White.

2. To receive any Declarations of Interest

Cllr Adams declared a pecuniary interest in item no. 5 Monies Collected and Payment of Accounts as a supplier to the Council and would remain in the room but not speak or vote.

3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 30th September 2020 and report any matters arising

Cllr Anstey proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 30th September 2020 be signed as a true record. All in favour.

Matters arising:

Agenda item 9 – The order for the new height barrier has been placed. It has a six week lead time.

Agenda item 10 – Cllr Jackson recommended working with the Wessex Rivers Trust to assess the impact of new housing developments on the river and to provide an educational facility at the Recreation Ground. Cllr Wilson reported that the river and the riverbank is a SSSI site under Natural England.

Agenda item 11 – Cllr Jackson asked about the meeting with the auditor. The RFO explained that the auditor has expressed his views but the Council need to have a discussion and set the reserves as they wish. The reserves policy is on the agenda for later.

4. To receive any matters raised by Members of the Public

The Chair gave the Men's Shed permission to make their presentation for funding under agenda item 6.

5. To receive details of Monies Collected & Payment of Accounts

The RFO reported that the following payments have been received (INCOME):

- second payment for the information office £6375
- VAT refund £5249.73
- CIL payment 286.19

Lockdown has affected the Council's income, for example through loss of hall hire and pitch fees, but there will be some cost savings such as lower gas and electricity bills.

Non-regular EXPENDITURE items include:

- Informatical – IT support and licences (£243.94 and £162)
- Brightspace – RIBA stage 4 £1800
- Mayors Chain engraving £150
- Tree works (Gristwood and Toms) £2701.91
- K&B final retention due for town hall works £4702.34

- NFDC premises licence £180
- Bournemouth Water bills in – one to be reviewed as figures do not add up (pool)

Cllr Lewendon proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Mouland and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the schedule of payments of account and that the amounts collected are correct.

6. To consider grant applications under Section 137/CIL

- **Fordingbridge Greener Living**

Cllr Anstey proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Hale and therefore **RESOLVED**: to approve the grant application from Fordingbridge Greener Living for £120. All in favour.

- **Fordingbridge & District Community Association (Avonway Community Centre)**

Cllr Adams reported that a representative from the Fordingbridge & District Community Association (Avonway Community Centre) will make a presentation to Council and answer questions about this application on 4th November.

Cllr Adams proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Jackson and therefore **RESOLVED**: to support in principle the Fordingbridge & District Community Association (Avonway Community Centre) and to decide the amount at a later sub-committee meeting. All in favour.

- **Avon Valley Shed**

Fordingbridge Town Council has previously voted to support the Men's Shed by leasing the old toilet block and allowing it to be refurbished for the purpose of being used as a Men's Shed.

The Men's Shed Committee has submitted a request for CIL funding towards refurbishing the old toilet block and building a second building in the Recreation Ground, both of which they plan to use as Men's Sheds. Plans for the second building had been submitted with the CIL application.

The architect for the Men's Shed asked if members had seen the plans for a second Men's Shed building (in addition to the old toilet block which they plan to refurbish) and whether they had any feedback or comments.

Cllr Lewendon reported that the Council wasn't asked for and hasn't given permission for a second building at the Recreation Ground. The second building wasn't in the plans originally presented to the Council and he understood that the Council's contribution was to be the leasing of the old toilet block only. Cllrs Anstey, Hale, Jackson and Mouland agreed.

A representative from the Men's Shed responded that they intend to refurbish the toilet block as an initial start to the project but that may not be sustainable in itself if the venture is successful. He said they wanted the Council to have a full understanding of the Men's Shed ambitions for growth. He said that they hoped Fordingbridge Town Council would support the project financially but that they would be applying for grants from other organisations and would do their best to succeed anyway.

Cllr Jackson was concerned that development at the Recreation Ground needed an overall master plan rather than decisions being made piecemeal.

Cllr Wilson thought that more presence in the Recreation Ground would be a beneficial to everyone, especially on gloomy winter afternoons.

A second representative from the Men's Shed said that if they're going to invest time, effort and money in renovating a building, they need to know there is potential for future growth and wanted to provide transparency of their plans. He said he couldn't understand why the Council wouldn't want to spend money on a building that would be worth far more - if the Men's Shed isn't a success then the buildings will be under the ownership of the Town Council anyway.

Cllrs Adams and Earth reported that the Men's Shed are planning for the future.

Cllr Anstey reiterated that the agreement with the Men's Shed was for a refurbishment of the old toilet block only. He is in support of this and would vote that the Council supports it financially. However, he said the second building takes it into a different area.

Cllr Hale said he hadn't envisaged a second building and has concerns about the location of it. He said the overall position within the Recreation Ground would need to be considered as it will take space away from the Recreation Ground.

The Men's Shed architect offered to work with the Council to develop a design for the Recreation Ground as a whole rather than as a singular project. Cllr Jackson said he'd be pleased to accept that offer.

Cllr Wilson proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Earth and therefore **RESOLVED**: to support the Men's Shed with a CIL contribution with the details to be discussed at a later meeting. All in favour.

Councillors confirmed that no decision would be made on any additional buildings without further research and consideration.

A representative of the Men's Shed said that whilst he welcomed the offer of a financial contribution, without a site to use that money it is of no particular significance. He asked when a meeting would be held to discuss this proposal.

Action: Clerk to arrange a meeting of the full Council to discuss the siting of an additional Men's Shed

Cllr Wilson recommended Councillors visited the Recreation Ground with a copy of the Men's Shed plans.

7. To receive any Finance & Policy matters referred from sub-committees

No matters referred from sub-committees.

[The Men's Shed representatives left the meeting.]

8. To receive a report on building matters:

• Town Hall Update

The conservation officer requires a heritage assessment before she can comment on the physical removal of elements of the Town Hall. The architects have been trying to obtain a fee proposal for the Town Council from a heritage consultancy who would produce the document. There have been delays in engaging someone due to retirement and annual leave; the architects may approach a third company.

The architect thinks the earliest the work could be completed is by late Spring. Planning permission would take eight weeks once the application is submitted. Building regulations could be dealt with while planning was being considered, assuming the submission had the support of the conservation officer. Going out to tender would take five weeks and then there is mobilisation which depends on the availability of the successful contractor. The architect's view was that late spring would be possible but it depends heavily on the planning.

The lease on the VIC expires in April so may need to be extended.

• Changing Room Update

The refurbishment work is listed on 'Contracts Finder' and tender packages have been sent to contractors. The Clerk has met with ten contractors and sub-contractors on site, so there seems to be a good level of interest in the work. The tender package was sent out without the

designer's risk assessment (which we were waiting on) on the basis that this would be sent out once it was available. The Clerk is continuing to chase the architects for that risk assessment.

The package of documents sent out included (in addition to the tender documents) a set of old plans detailing a two storey extension which should not have been circulated. Whilst the actual technical drawings were correct, one of the interested contractors pointed out the discrepancy. Partly as a result of this, he has requested an extension to the closing date for tender (currently 30th October) of two weeks. The Buildings' Manager has contacted the other contractors asking that they disregard the older plans. Having spoken to the contractors that have visited site they all seem to be working to the correct technical drawings.

It may be that, (i) given the request, (ii) the issue regarding the circulation of the older plans and (iii) the fact that the designer's risk assessment is not yet available that we give all the contractors a two week extension, in which case, on the basis that the building trade generally shuts down over Christmas, we would probably be looking at the work starting in the new year. The Clerk will speak to the Buildings' Manager regarding the request for an extension.

Councillors were concerned at the lack of progress, in particular with the Town Hall works.

The RFO said that with regards to the Pavilion changing rooms, the works will still be completed towards the end of the football and rugby club seasons regardless of whether they are started at the end of November or the beginning of January.

The RFO said that the architects working on the Town Hall have historically been slow. However she reported that the town hall roof has been completed and the work has been done well. The RFO didn't think it would be beneficial to change architects, especially as the plans for the Town Hall have been approved. Cllr Wilson asked that the Town Clerk write to the architect to express disappointment.

Action: Clerk to write to architect

9. To review the following policies

- Reserves Policy – update on financial position / review

The RFO reported on a meeting that she and the Town Clerk had with the auditor to discuss the reserve levels.

The auditor advised that when planning for an appropriate maintenance programme of the Council's assets all reserves need to be quantified. These earmarked reserves should be reviewed every year to ensure that they are still required – and the Council should move them if they are not. The funding of future maintenance was discussed with the auditor; whether it should be historic (i.e. collected now against future costs) or directly attributable to those who will benefit (i.e. a loan, PWLB). The current practitioners guide talks about risk assessing all reserves. Between 3 and 12 months of net revenue expenditure should be in the general reserve BUT a Council with income in excess of £200k, should be at the lower end. By the "law of averages" the chances of getting a large unexpected bill are smaller. FTC's current reserve is not far off the mark on that basis. Options to build up the reserve are to increase the precept, reduce / release earmarked reserves or use CIL – "mitigating the impact of future development".

Councillors agreed to hold a sub-committee meeting to discuss the reserves. Cllrs Adams, Anstey, Hale, Jackson, Moulard and Wilson volunteered to attend this meeting and then to make a recommendation to Council.

10. To note any items of Correspondence

No correspondence to report.

11. To receive a report from the Clerk or any other relevant business

Finance & Policy 21.10.20

The Asst Clerk reported that the Christmas lights would be white this year. Colours can be changed next year if requested.

The Asst clerk reported that plans for Remembrance Sunday commemorations are going ahead with reduced numbers of invited attendees only. The area will be fenced off from the main Recreation Ground, stewards will be in attendance to ensure social distancing and a QR code will be available for Covid track and trace purposes. A risk assessment has been drafted and is currently being reviewed by the Clerk. Cllr Anstey raised concerns about extra members of the public attending the Remembrance Day commemorations.

Cllr Anstey reported that the Sports Club is legally owned by Fordingbridge Town Council and said that the Council may wish to consider spending some CIL money on it.

Cllr Mouland reported that the Rugby Club is pleased to accept the fee proposal as put forward by the RFO.

12. To note the date of the next meeting as 25th November 2020

The meeting closed at 8:47pm