FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY
13th JUNE 2019

PRESENT
Cllrs: S Hamlyn, B Duffy, R Shepherd, J Martin, J Sinnott, A Chesters

IN ATTENDANCE
Cllr A Hall
Nicola Young – Town Clerk

1. Election of Chairman
After a proposal from Cllr Sinnott, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn, it was FIN/01/1920 RESOLVED that Cllr Alan Chesters be nominated as Chairman of the Finance Committee.

2. Election of Vice Chairman
After a proposal from Cllr Hamlyn, seconded by Cllr Martin, it was FIN/02/1920 RESOLVED that Cllr Ruth Shepherd be nominated as Vice Chairman of the Finance Committee.

3. Apologies
Cllr Broders – work commitment

4. Declarations of interest
None received.

5. Minutes
After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn, it was FIN/03/1920 RESOLVED to sign the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 11th April 2019 as an accurate record of that meeting.

6. Public Participation
After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Duffy, it was FIN/04/1920 RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders.

Cllr Hall stated he had received an email from the Chair of Whitchurch Chamber of Trade, Hilary Seward regarding the Whitchurch Business Improvement District (BID) Feasibility Study. It was agreed that the email would be read out at Item 17.

Cllr Hall stated that the funding process is flawed, that we had a clear deadline and are now accepting grants after this deadline.

Cllr Chesters informed Cllr Hall that we are a Council and if we have the money he has no objection to providing funding for organisations that apply late. That we are reviewing the funding process and will look at and in the meantime continue funding as we have been doing.

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After a proposal from Cllr Sinnott, seconded by Cllr Martin, it was FIN/05/1920 RESOLVED to reinstate Standing Orders.

7. Remaining Business
   a. Regarding the Edward German Room replacement doors, Clerk informed the Committee that Item 20 in the previous minutes was incorrect, and that the Finance Committee had made a decision at the December 2018 meeting, "to not proceed with replacing the doors in the Edward German Room for the time being." [For reference, minute number FIN/52/1819]
   b. Cllr Chesters referred to the setting up of a Working Group to discuss the reserves policy, that had not been done due to illness and confirmed that this must be gotten on with.
      The Whitchurch Museum & Archives lease has been signed, the Town Clerk has provided all necessary evidence of the transfer to Shropshire Council Business Rates department, and now this Council have received a business rates rebate and the Whitchurch Museum & Archives have received a 100% business rate exemption. The Council have already transferred £1,500 and now need to transfer the outstanding heritage centre allocation balance of £3,500. This has been budgeted for and the Committee agreed to the transfer of the balance.

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn, it was FIN/06/1920 RESOLVED to accept the updated Finance Committee Council Resolution Record.

8. Accounts Months 12, 1 and 2
   After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Duffy, it was FIN/07/1920 RESOLVED to accept Months 12, 1 and 2 Income & Expenditure and Balance Sheets, noting Total Equity of £845,020.

   Councillor Chesters reminded attendees that the meeting was being audio recorded and asked if anyone else was recording the meeting, if so, this must be done overtly.

   Cllr Sinnott requested to know what the DD to Utility Warehouse was for, the Clerk was asked to provide the information for the next meeting.

9. Monthly Purchase Ledger, BACS and Cheque Payments
   Noting total payments of £63,147.79

10. Credit Card
    Noting total credit card bill of £220.38

11. Petty Cash
    Whitchurch Town Council Petty Cash expenses of £103.82

   After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Shepherd, it was FIN/08/1920 RESOLVED to accept Item 9. Monthly Purchase Ledger, BACS and Item 10. Cheque Payments, Credit Card and Item 11. Petty Cash payments as presented.

12. Funding
    After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Duffy, it was FIN/09/1920 RESOLVED to discuss Item 15. Shropshire Playing Fields Association, with Item 12.

   The Committee discussed the funding listed in the report from the Town Clerk, as follows:

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a. **Whitchurch Well-being Forum – Beechtree Community Centre**
   The Committee noted that Council had already provided funding for the Beechtree Community Centre, the Men’s Walking Football group. The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the Beechtree Community Centre actually offer a lot of different things and the Well-being Forum is one of them, and is a separate group to the other groups, like the Walking Football, a separate project. As Council were mindful to fund projects rather than organisations, this is why the application has been included – presented to Committee. The application is to celebrate Volunteers’ Week.
   AGAINST – unanimous – the funding should not be used this type of event.

b. **Women vs Cancer**
   Women vs Cancer sent a letter of complaint that the coffee morning kitchen was not ready for them.
   FOR – refund £45

c. **Shropshire Playing Fields Association**
   FOR - £50 donation this year and set up a Standing Order to pay £50 each year.

d. **Whitchurch Walkers**
   FOR - £80 payment to Walkers are Welcome, this year pay Whitchurch Walkers as they have already paid the subscription, then set up a Standing Order to pay £80 Walkers are Welcome annual subscription

e. **Whitchurch Town Band**
   FOR - £507 to pay for 3 x cornets

f. **Blackberry Fair**
   FOR - £628.45 paid for recycling bins/zero waste rubbish from Twemlows Solar fund

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Hamlyn, it was **FIN/10/1920 RESOLVED** that the Committee unanimously agree the decisions on funding listed in sub paragraphs a. to f above.

13. **CCLA Public Sector Deposit Account**
   Committee received The Public Sector Deposit Fund Fact Sheet – 30th April 2019
   The Town Clerk was requested to invite an investment specialist to Finance Committee as soon as possible.

   Cllr Sinnott raised the issue of General Power of Competence and whether we could purchase buildings or invest funds.

   The Town Clerk advised Committee that the General Power of Competence is in force from local election to local election.

14. **Mayor’s Charity Donations**
   a. The Committee received information on the Mayor’s Charity 2017-2019 donations:
      i. Midlands Air Ambulance £1,276.67
      ii. 79 Squadron (Whitchurch) Air Cadets £1,276.67
      iii. Whitchurch Men in Sheds £1,276.66

   b. Mayor to Whitchurch Council, Cllr Duffy, informed Committee that her chosen two charities for FY 2019-2020 are:
      i. Headway Shropshire
      ii. Whitchurch Scouting and Guiding groups

15. **Shropshire Playing Fields Association**
   Item dealt with under 12c above.
16. Electrical Comparison Prices
After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Shepherd, it was FIN/11/1920 RESOLVED that the Committee agree for Cllr Simon Hamlyn to meet with the Town Clerk to assess the quotes and decide on whether the Council should use brown or green energy.

17. BID Feasibility Study
Concept is that we would become a BID town and that improves the opportunity for local businesses to develop and attract more people to the town. More than one of the BID cities have worked with rating specialists to get their business rates reduced, that one of the benefits that Whitchurch could accrue from something like this, but it's not guaranteed.

The Town Clerk informed Committee that a further benefit in becoming a BID town, is that if we have a successful BID running in the town, we can apply for central government funding for our town centre, the aim is to get our town centre changed and updated, for a more modern usage.

Cllr Hall joined the table, he reported that the BID is a good idea, but the meeting that was held did not agree to go ahead with a BID feasibility study and failed to understand who had agreed that the feasibility study would be carried out by the Mosaic Partnership. Cllr Hall then read out an email from the Chair of the Chamber of Trade, Hilary Seward. “Could the Finance Committee be aware from feedback from attendees that the BID meeting was very informal, not well attended and the feeling was that there would be further discussion before this was followed up. It seems bizarre for the contract to be awarded to the only company that has made representation when there is no rush, to have other companies would bring informative and choice at no cost. Once any feasibility study begins the business community is hopeful that there be a full disclosure of information and that businesses will be involved as soon as possible.”

After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Shepherd, it was FIN/12/1920 RESOLVED to agree to pay £1,000 towards the total cost of the feasibility study of £5,500 from EMR 346 and to continue with the BID and involve all interested parties.

The Town Clerk confirms the recording device was switched off.

18. Confidential Business
After a proposal from Cllr Chesters, seconded by Cllr Sinnott, it was FIN/12/1920 RESOLVED that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure of private and confidential information or staffing matters.

19. Request from Contractor
A request from a Civic Centre contractor was received, after a proposal from Cllr Sinnott, seconded by Cllr Chesters, it was FIN/13/1920 RESOLVED to agree to the request.

The meeting closed at 8.18pm.
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AH came up to table and read out the following email from Hilary Seward:

AH “I think that BID is a great idea, really interesting meeting – to actually work out where funding can come from and put that in place is a good idea. The only thing I would say is that when I did attend the meeting, there was no agreement as to who we would use with regards to doing the feasibility study and there was actually no agreement to that. The company that has proposed, mosaic partnership, I understand that they are a very good company and that they do a very good job and there is no reason why Whitchurch wouldn’t use them as well as anybody else, but you would have thought that you would have had a few other people to come and give you proposals to have a broad view. It is saying here that we are going to, in the recommendation, that we are going to be completed by Mosaic Partnership and I fail to understand who has agreed that. But let me just read you an email that has been received from Hilary Seward, Chair of the Chamber of Trade:

“Could the Finance Committee be aware from feedback from attendees that the BID meeting was very informal, not well attended and the feeling was that there would be further discussion before this was followed up. It seems bizarre for the contract to be awarded to the only company that has made representation when there is no rush to have other companies would bring informative and choice at no cost. Once any feasibility study begins the business community is hopeful that there will be a full disclosure of information and that businesses will be involved as soon as possible.

Regards Hilary Seward”

And I think the consensus for most businesses is that they feel that we have had this meeting, there has been no follow-up and WTC are going ahead with this with no consultation with the businesses. I think you need the businesses on-board and you need the business community to lead this, not the Town Council. It should not be Town Council led. “Thank you”

NY “Just quickly in response, Barbara Rainford has been around to all the businesses and gave them an actual invitation to the meeting, but she has attended every CoT meeting that she has been made aware of, because they are organised quite ad hoc, and, has given a brief to the Chamber on the BID and what has been happening and so has Zoe, as well, so it is wrong to say that they haven’t been briefed. Thank you”

JS “That was the point I was making, we had an informal meeting and I thought we were going to have another meeting where they were going to try to get more members of the CoT to attend the meeting so we would get a more rounded view of what the businesses wanted. We only had a very narrow view of very few people, that was the point I was making.”

NY “Can I interrupt, with the greatest respect Cllr Sinnott, all members of the CoT, the Chair, the Secretary, the Treasurer, President, Vice Chair do not have town centre businesses. With the greatest respect they don’t have that many numbers at the moment attending their meetings either, so I think that it would be good for the feasibility study, which would have their people on the ground working with the businesses within the Business Improvement District area, OK, so that’s what it would be.”

AC – “Continue with BID and involve all interested partners, we need to include that wording too.”

NY – are we voting to offer £1,000 as contribution, it is Shropshire Council’s recommendation that we use Mosaic Partnership, not ours.
AC – yes, propose as recommendation

AC – confidential, thank you for your attendance Cllr Hall – I am sorry that you had to endure that.