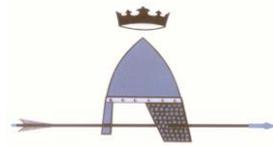




Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2019 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllrs D Furness (Chairman), C Davies, G Favell, J Gyngell and M Kiloh.

In Attendance: Cllr P Fisher, 4 members of the public and Carol Harris, Town Clerk

1. **Apologies for absence** – None.
2. **Disclosure of interest** – None.
3. **The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2019** were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Furness.

4. **Clerk's Report**

The receipt of the **banner and table top display boards** for Council use.

5. **Correspondence and communications received post agenda publication**

An offer to advertise the **wedding venue** in What's On magazine's feature for £100 was agreed.

6. **Almonry**

- i. The Clerk reported on a meeting with Cllr Kiloh and the Architect. It was noted that some of the items included on the Quality Surveyor's(QS) cost plan could be excluded from the **refurbishment and reinstatement works** as additional to the approved planning application. The items suggested for removal included: a covered walkway between the Museum and the Almonry; conversion of the shed to an entrance kiosk; levelling works from the 2nd gate at Western Avenue to the current meeting room; and items for the education facility, at an approx. reduction in cost of £58k. One of the additional costs from the original QS plan was professional fees at over £90k, calculated as a percentage of the project total. It was highlighted that the proposal is to "future proof" the building to ensure no further major improvements would be required for a significant period of time. The architect had advised that the project would be "difficult to do in sections" and recommended use of one contractor to carry out the whole scheme. He had suggested that to produce Building Regs and tender documents fees of £50 would be incurred.

The Clerk confirmed that subsequent advice from Sussex Association of Local Councils suggested that the full QS report may be sufficient to apply to the Public Works Loan Board. A slight revision, as reported above, would be required and it was anticipated that this would cost £75.

The Committee discussed the proposals for the building; highlighting the need for extensive work due to the neglect over an extended period; the desire to improve the facilities for increased use and; and the reinstatement of the wing removed during the 1930's would become another room for hire that would include both access and toilet facilities for disabled people. Members felt that, whilst a large sum of money is required to carry out the works, the Council is custodians of the Almonry and should therefore continue with the restoration and reinstatement works in line with the approved planning application. **The Committee agreed to recommend to Full Council that the necessary revision to the Quality Surveyor's Cost Plan be authorised and an application for the loan from the PWLB be submitted.**

- ii. Members considered the interior of the Architect's drawing plans and **agreed to recommend the Full Council: the existing office as the Council Chamber with formal table and space for members of the public; open plan reception for Town and District Council staff and Tourist Information Centre; existing meeting room as wedding venue and private hire; reinstated area**

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(currently courtyard by the kitchen) a further area for hire, particularly for intimate meetings. The latter will also provide accessible toilet facility.

- iii. Cllr Furness apologised for the intrusion caused to Joy the Barber's business during a recent meeting. Members were reminded of the letter received from the tenant of Suite 2 reported at Full Council. **Members agreed that a minimum of three months' notice of termination of tenancy will be formally provided.** In addition the Clerk will continue to keep the tenant appraised of the situation. The Chairman confirmed that the project will be undertaken together and a timetable will be shared.
- iv. Cllr Fisher suggested that **intermediate works to kitchen:** flooring; store area; and removal of partition wall should be undertaken immediately to provide a clean, tidy area with table space. Members agreed that the store area should be tidied but all remaining works to await the project alterations.
- v. A request for an **"open event" presentation within the Almonry** for people to learn exactly what the proposals are for the building. Members felt that this would help with communication in an honest and open manner. The presentation would then be on display at the Parish Assembly. As we are now in the Purdah period, the Clerk will arrange to be available to answer questions at specific times during the presentation on 10 April. This will be widely promoted.
- vi. Cllr Kiloh agreed to present the **proposals to the Parish Assembly(PA)**. The Clerk confirmed that requests for questions are being sought with precise guidance that only those received by 11 April will be answered at the PA. All other comments and questions will be recorded and considered by the new Council in May.
- vii. The proposed **Heads of Terms with Rother District Council for share of office space** had been circulated and **were agreed.**
- viii. In view of the anticipated increase in **hire by private individuals** the Clerk recommended that **the Hire Agreement be amended to cover provision and potential replacement of keys. This was agreed.**

7. Telham Playing Field

As a result of a constant lack of use of the facilities and no means of increasing accessibility at Telham playing field, Cllr Favell reported the recommendations from the Environment Committee for potential future use. After some discussion, **Members agreed to recommend to Full Council that the play equipment be removed and the area be promoted for bee keeping within a wild flower meadow.**

8. Action Plan objective 1

This was agreed as attached.

9. Committee [website](#) page

The Clerk confirmed that the Mayor's Charity page is currently being updated. There were no further suggestions.

10. Grant to ELF

A grant to Every Last Friday (ELF) had been approved by Council to purchase 2 microphones with stands and 2 guitar amps at a cost of £331.98. The Clerk has now been advised that ELF does not have a bank account. As a condition of the grant was that the equipment would be available for Council use, **Members agreed that the items be purchased by Council and loaned to ELF as appropriate.**

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11. Beautiful Battle

The minutes for February and March had been circulated and were noted. The plan for the garden was reported. Suggestions for how information on plants in the garden was discussed and it was agreed that laminated sheets should be available for visitors.

12. South & South East in Bloom

Comments on improvements for the entry had been received by Beautiful Battle and noted. The Chairman of Beautiful Battle had agreed to accompany the Council for the judging and requested that the Secretary also attend. This was agreed.

13. Bank account

The Clerk reported that advice from the exiting service provider indicated that there is no facility for a dual internet permission system on the account. There has also been a poor customer service provision and increasing costs. Research had indicated two alternative banking providers that could offer dual online authorisation. Although no debit card facility is available, both can provide credit card with a monthly balance settlement at minimal fee. Both have a savings account at slightly more than currently offered and use the Post Office for deposits. As the Co-op currently offer 18 months free banking, subject to terms and conditions, **Members agreed that an application for current and savings accounts to the Co-op should be made.** Committee asked that the Auditor clarify whether funds should be divided between providers. *(Post meeting note: Co-op no longer offer local authorities a bank account)*

14. Financial matters

- I. The budget report at 28 February 2019 was noted, as attached.
- II. The Clerk reported that, despite several requests for an invoice, the service provider for the public toilet at the recreation ground had not supplied one. They had now been in contact with an apology for the missed account. An invoice for the period 2 August 2016 to 31 March 2019 had now been received for £5992. **Members agreed to vire £3000 from the current Environment budget with the remaining £2992 to be paid from General Maintenance (210/4205) 2019-20.**

Confidential matter – *all members of the public and the Town Clerk left the meeting for the following item*

15. Personnel sub Committee

Members discussed and **approved the recommendations to:**

- offer a **permanent position of Grounds Maintenance person to Stephen Chilton**, subject to terms of the existing contract;
- **amend the title of the trainee Deputy Town Clerk to Assistant to the Town Clerk;**
- allocate **£250 budget** to acknowledge **20 years' service** in an appropriate manner for the Town Clerk;
- award the Town Clerk a **one spine point salary increase** in accordance with contract, upon successful completion of the Certificate in Local Council Administration qualification.

16. Date of next meeting: provisionally, 28 May 2019

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9pm.

**CLLR D FURNESS
CHAIRMAN**