



Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday, 7 July 2015 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllrs M Kiloh (Chairman), G Favell, D Furness, R Jessop, S Pry, A Ratcliffe

In Attendance: Andy Beams (Town Clerk), 4 members of the public

- 1. Apologies for absence** – None.
- 2. Disclosure of interest** – Cllr Ratcliffe declared a personal interest in the agenda item relating to the Almonry, as a tenant of the property. Cllrs Favell and Furness declared personal interests in the grant application for Battle Museum of Local History.
- 3. Minutes of the meetings held on 15 May 2015** – These were proposed by Cllr Jessop, seconded by Cllr Furness, and duly signed by Cllr Kiloh as a true record of the meeting.
- 4. Matters arising from previous meetings** – None.
- 5. The Almonry**
 - (i) Heritage Proposal – Members had received a written proposal from the Museum outlining a working arrangement with the Town Council for the management of the heritage aspects of the Almonry project. Standing Orders were suspended to allow the Museum representatives to speak, and they endorsed the proposal, acknowledging the difficulties presented by a multi-use building and highlighting the potential benefits to the Council, Museum, residents and visitors. The details would need to be agreed at a later date, but Members acknowledged the proposal as a sound basis for an agreement.
 - (ii) Negotiations with RDC – The Town Clerk had provided a written update to Members following a recent meeting with Malcolm Johnston. This confirmed the basic principles of an agreement which would be mutually beneficial, both financially and in terms of the provision of service provided to the public. Members agreed for the Town Clerk to continue negotiating with Malcolm Johnston, working towards the principles agreed.
 - (iii) Almonry refurbishment – Members were reminded that project management for this was now the responsibility of the Town Clerk, who had requested clarity on the exact plans for the building. Contact was currently awaited from two specialist restoration architects for providing detailed plans, which would be needed prior to applying for any grants. A meeting had been arranged with fundraising consultants, which would be reported back at Full Council. Once all the relevant information had been gathered, an additional meeting of the committee would be called to determine an action plan for the project. This would include a decision on whether or not the renovated town model would be included in the Almonry, as while Members acknowledged its' interest to residents and visitors alike, there were concerns as to whether it fitted with the overall plans for the building.
 - (iv) Window repairs – Members had been advised of the quote received and the recommendation of the Town Clerk to go ahead with the immediate repair of the window in Western Avenue. Members agreed with this recommendation, and to assess other repairs as part of the Almonry refurbishment project.
 - (v) Beautiful Battle working agreement – Members had previously received the draft agreement as prepared by Peter Mills and the Town Clerk, and agreed to adopt this.
 - (vi) Elizabethan Gardens – Cllr Kiloh explained the idea had originated to compliment the planned period restoration of the Almonry building. A design had been circulated, and Members agreed to the proposal.

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6. Grants

Members discussed the three grant requests submitted within the timescales for consideration at this meeting. Since the adoption of the new grants policy, the request from the PCC of St John the Baptist did not meet the criteria as it was for general maintenance and running costs. However, it was recognised that the Town Council already budgeted for the upkeep of other amenity areas in the town, and proposed by Cllr Kiloh that this request for financial support should be dealt with amenity budgeting. Members agreed with this alternate approach.

Members assessed the requests received from the Chamber of Commerce and Museum, and agreed to support the requests.

RESOLVED: To provide funding of £250 for the PCC of St John the Baptist, Netherfield from the environment committee budget. To approve the following grant requests:

Battle & District Chamber of Commerce (Christmas committee)	£500.00
Battle Museum of Local History	£500.00

7. Policy review

Members had previously received draft copies of a number of proposed policies. The Town Clerk provided an update with regard to the Investment policy, that a very recent change in rules now allowed Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protection for Local Councils, and this should influence how and where deposits are held.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow a member of the public to make suggestions regarding the letting of facilities for political parties.

Members discussed the principles for a lettings policy, and agreed guidelines for the Town Clerk to use to prepare a draft policy for review at the next Full Council meeting, including the nature of organisation permitted to use the different available facilities.

RESOLVED: To adopt the following policies: Bullying and Harassment, Environmental, Internet Usage and Email, Investment, Sickness and Absence, Training. The Town Clerk was asked to provide recommendations with regard to the amended FSCS rules and prepare a draft Lettings policy for review at Full Council on 21 July.

8. Committee business plan

Cllr Kiloh had previously circulated a draft plan, detailing the strategic aims and a number of key objectives, actions and timescales. Members discussed the plan, and agreed with the majority of the content. A discussion regarding whether or not to set up a Personnel sub-committee considered both sides of the argument, and was put to a vote.

RESOLVED: To adopt the main provision of the draft plan, but by majority decision to not form a Personnel sub-committee.

9. Local Council Award Scheme

Members had previously received details of the scheme.

RESOLVED: Members agreed not to pursue the scheme at this point, as the cost outweighed any definable benefits.

10. Financial matters

Members noted the bank reconciliation statement and budget report.

The Town Clerk provided a copy of the internal auditor's report, consisting of a short letter highlighting any points of concern. This was compared to a comprehensive sample report which an alternate specialist local council auditor (Mulberry & Co) prepared, at a lower fee than currently paid. The Town Clerk recommended changing internal auditors to Mulberry & Co, as he had experience of working with them previously and felt they offered a more comprehensive and suitable service to a Town Council.

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RESOLVED: Members agreed with the Town Clerk's recommendation and unanimously agreed to appoint Mulberry & Co as the Town Council's internal auditor.

11. Matters for information and future agenda items

The Town Clerk informed Members that the Council's energy contract was due for renewal in September. The Deputy Clerk had already begun to obtain quotes, and there was no reason not to select the cheapest quote received. The Town Clerk recommended the decision be delegated to the office to complete the formalities once all quotes had been investigated. Members agreed to this course of action.

12. Staffing

Cllr Kiloh informed Members of the end of the probationary period for the Town Clerk. Monthly meetings had been conducted during this period, and a final meeting had taken place resulting in a set of objectives being agreed. Cllr Kiloh recommended appointing the Town Clerk on a permanent basis.

RESOLVED: Members agreed with Cllr Kiloh's recommendation and appointed the Town Clerk to a permanent position.

13. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 8 September 2015

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.



**CLLR M KILOH
CHAIRMAN**