



Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on TUESDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2017 at The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

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

In Attendance: Carol Harris, Town Clerk

- 1. Apologies for absence** – Cllr J Gyngell.
- 2. Disclosure of interest** – Cllr A Ratcliffe declared a personal interest in item 6 as a tenant of The Almonry.
- 3. Minutes of the meetings held on 25 July 2017** – These were approved by Members and duly signed by Cllr Furness.

4. Matters arising from previous meetings, not on the agenda

The Clerk had circulated the programme up to submission of **planning and listed building applications** to Rother District Council as provided by John D Clarke Architects. Members asked that Mark Anderson be reminded of the schedule.

The contractor undertaking the **urgent repairs** to the Almonry building exterior had confirmed that Oak will be used. Scaffolding will be erected shortly to enable works to commence. The contractor was unable to provide a cost for the repointing until all ivy has been removed so that identification of the area may be ascertained.

5. Correspondence and Communications

Letters of thanks for grant from Battle Bowls Club and Kent, Surrey, Sussex Air Ambulance were received.

6. Almonry

The Clerk reported that, to date, no recommendation has been received from Hastings Borough Council or Rother District Council. However, 2 Town Councils had recommended specialist CCTV contractors. **Members agreed that the Clerk research and arrange the purchase of CCTV to cover exterior areas of the property up to a maximum of £3000.**

In light of email communications received from Members, the **appointment of Meridian Surveyors to obtain a new tenant for suite 4 had been confirmed at the revised recommended rent.** Members acknowledged that rates for the offices are now the responsibility of individual businesses and requested that the Clerk obtain confirmation on what basis the revision of rent had been made.

The Clerk confirmed that an expression of interest had been received from a prospective tenant at the rent proposed. **Members agreed to delegate to the Town Clerk authority to accept a suitable tenant on appropriate terms.**

7. Personnel sub Committee:

Members agreed that the current **Membership of Cllrs Furness, Jessop and Favell should continue for the forthcoming year and that Cllr Favell remain as Chairman.**

The current Terms of Reference were agreed, as attached.

8. Action Plan for F&GP

The draft Action Plan had been circulated to Members. **The Action Plan was agreed as attached.** Members highlighted that each Committee are responsible for identifying projects to include in the Business Plan which will be discussed by Full Council.

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9. Electricity supplies

The Clerk reported that quotes had been received for electricity supplies, including the Almonry building and that these are being evaluated for best value. **Members agreed to delegate to the Clerk authority to arrange electricity supplies for a 3 year contract.** In relation to the invoice received from Extra Energy for the period October 2014 to June 2017 for the Almonry electricity, the Clerk was asked to obtain legal advice prior to any payment being made. She was also asked to confirm that any new supplier does not opt out of Ofgem recommendations.

10. To discuss provision of *councillor@battletowncouncil.org.uk* email addresses

Cllr Jessop reported that SALC recommended Councillors have a Council email address to protect personal items being subjected to any business scrutiny. The Clerk confirmed that the Council's IT professional had confirmed that the "battletowncouncil.gov.uk" domain name can be purchased for £10pa; each email address will be £35. **Members agreed that the ".gov.uk" domain name should be obtained and an email address for all Councillors and the office should be purchased.**

11. Financial matters

The **budget report to 31 July 2017** had been circulated to Members. The Clerk highlighted items that will be over budget and the reasons for this:

- bank charges – costs have increased. The Clerk will investigate options at an alternative bank;
- telephone/broadband – the service had been upgraded to provide a faster internet that will also enable provision in the meeting room;
- rates – the Valuation Office have carried out reviews and the Almonry is now assessed as individual offices: resulting in a dramatic increase. The Clerk was asked to investigate an appeal against this. It was suggested that the Chamber of Commerce may have advice on this;
- electricity supply – as circulated, an invoice had not been received for over 2 years and the budget had been based on best guess.

The Clerk had circulated the **bank reconciliation to 31 July 2017** as required by Financial Regulations. She suggested that this did not add value. Members agreed and asked that Mark Mulberry, internal auditor, be asked to confirm statutory requirements.

Members agreed monthly direct debit payments to:

- **Extra Energy for electricity supply, subject to legal advice as recorded in item 9**
- **PHS Group for sanitary disposal**

12. Grant application

The Clerk reminded Members that the application from **Netherfield Pre-School for £1,000** had been received for the previous meeting but had not contained the necessary financial information. This was now available. **Members agreed in principle to grant £500 subject to other funding being in place.** Cllr Kiloh highlighted that Council Policy needs to be adhered to.

13. Training of Councillors and Staff

The Clerk had circulated various training opportunities offered by Sussex Association of Local Councils available to Councillors and office staff. She confirmed that appraisals will be undertaken with all staff members during September which incorporates the identification of training requirements. These will then be presented to the Personnel sub Committee. Members agreed that: all Councillors should be required to attend the Councillors Briefing (previously New Councillors) course at least once in the 4 year term of office; all Chairmen attend the Chairman's training; and Council Chairman/Deputy

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Chairman should attend the Chairman's Networking session. The Clerk was asked to circulate, for information and clarification of accuracy, the list of Councillors' attendance at training sessions.

14. Mayoral Regalia

The Clerk confirmed that she had met with Susan Linton(SL) who had become disillusioned with the Council process but had agreed to continue to work with the Clerk to take the project forward. The Clerk had also met with the Jeweller identified by SL to discuss the proposed Mayoral Chain. She confirmed that a sample of 'chainmail' had been produced and had advised the Jeweller that Council is unable to agree work without further estimates being obtained. **Cllr Jessop proposed that he would be happy to purchase a Mayoral Chain to donate to the Council. Members thanked Cllr Jessop for his very generous offer and agreed that he and the Clerk should meet with the Jeweller to discuss this proposal.** The Clerk reported that she had requested information from the Tailor on the design and material of the suggested Mayoral Robes and this would be taken to Full Council for consideration.

15. Matters for information and future agenda items

The Clerk reported that 2 quotations had been received for the **Insurance renewal** due on 11 October 2017: one from a broker and one from an insurance company. She would compare these and take to Full Council on 19 September for decision.

16. Date of next meeting: 7 November 2017

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

**CLLR D FURNESS
CHAIRMAN**