



CHEPSTOW TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Finance, Policy and Audit Committee of Chepstow Town Council held on Wednesday 20th March 2023 at 7.00pm at the Gatehouse

Present:

Chair: Cllr J Rosser

Councillors: M Griffiths, P Griffiths, T Griffiths, D Rooke, J MacTaggart, A Thompson-Lancaster (remote)

Apologies: Cllrs E Becker, N Meyrick, S Tulley

In Attendance: Mrs L Allen (Town Clerk)
Mrs A Sandiford (Deputy Town Clerk)
Member of Public (1)

66. Apologies

None

67. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda

None

68. To Suspend Standing Orders

68.1 Public Open Forum (15 minutes at the discretion of the Chair)

The member of public raised no issues.

69. Minutes

69.1 The minutes of the Finance, Policy and Audit Committee Meeting held on 8th November 2023 were approved as a true record and will be signed by the Chair following the meeting.

69.2 The minutes of the Finance, Policy and Audit Committee Meeting held on 6th December 2023 were approved as a true record and will be signed by the Chair following the meeting.

70. Matters Arising

Received the Clerk's Report on matters arising from the minutes for items not on the agenda:

Min Ref 17. Old Library Building: It was noted that information on the history of the building was contained in Town Council's minutes, stored in the County Archives.

71. 3rd quarter budget monitoring to end December 2023

The Committee considered the financial position on the 3rd quarter budget monitoring in respect of the current financial year 2023/24 and noted the £17,000 interest received.

The Chair advised that minor amendments to budget projections were required, but these would not affect the end balance.

RESOLVED:

To adopt the financial position on the 3rd quarter budget monitoring in respect of the current financial year 2023/24 to include the minor amendments to the budget projections.

72. Annual Risk Assessment and review of the Risk Management Policy

The Committee considered the annual Risk Assessment Report with the Risk Management Policy and Strategy in line with proper governance practices as detailed in the Governance and Accountability for Local Councils in Wales – A Practitioners Guide.

It was queried if the ‘consequence’ and ‘likelihood’ for item 1.3 - Mayoral Regalia, was correct.

RESOLVED

1. To switch the ‘consequence’ and ‘likelihood’ for 1.3 Mayoral Regalia.
2. To adopt the annual Risk Assessment and Risk Management Policy subject to the inclusion of (1) above.

The Committee highly commended the Clerk on the excellent reports.

73. Standing Orders

The Committee reviewed the Standing Orders as updated to fit Town Council and to include new legislation under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Full Council adoption the Standing Orders as circulated.

74. Financial Regulations

The Committee considered the Financial Regulations as updated to include the recommended changes following the Internal Audit Report. Item 6.13 was amended to replace ‘debit card’ with ‘charge card’ and it was queried if a charge card in relation to the Drill Hall should be included in the regulations.

RESOLVED:

To recommend to Full Council adoption of the Financial Regulations as circulated, subject to amendment of 6.13 to read ‘charge card’ and the inclusion of a charge card for the Drill Hall as necessary.

75. Asset Register

The Committee undertook an annual review of the Council’s register of Assets and noted photographic evidence was ongoing. The Clerk responded to Members’ queries in relation to litter bins and the Dell drinking fountain and advised that Town Council buildings were last valued in 2017.

RESOLVED:

To adopt the Asset Register subject to the inclusion of the Dell drinking fountain and for the Clerk to request a revaluation of Town Council buildings.

76. Insurance

The Committee undertook an annual review of the Council’s Insurance requirements and noted the following:

- Long term agreement until 1st June 2026.
- Inclusion of the Dell drinking fountain required.
- The Drill Hall, on completion of the renewed Lease will be included in Monmouthshire County Council’s block insurance, potentially reducing the annual premium.

RESOLVED:

To approve the existing Policy Schedule, subject to the inclusion of the Dell drinking fountain.

77. Policy Review

The Committee considered the following policies as recommended in the Internal Audit Report:

a) Charge Card Policy

RESOLVED:

To adopt the Charge Card Policy, as circulated.

b) Hybrid Meeting Policy

RESOLVED:

To adopt the Hybrid Meeting Policy, as circulated.

78. Town Crew Partnership

The Committee noted the Town Crew Partnership expires in December 2024 and considered the next steps.

RESOLVED:

For the Clerk to meet with Cllrs M Griffiths, T Griffiths and D Rooke to review the Town Crew partnership, prior to entering into negotiations for a continued service with Monmouthshire County Council.

79. Community Grants

The Committee received the community grant report and applications from:

a) Kre8tive Theatre Kidz

The Committee considered a grant application for £1,000 from Kre8tive Theatre Kids towards the production of Annie Jr in May half term. It was noted that the organisation is a limited company and therefore not eligible for grant funding.

RESOLVED:

To decline the grant application from Kre8tive Theatre Kids on the basis that the organisation is a limited company.

b) Monmouthshire Young Persons Scheme

The Committee considered a grant application for £3,000 from Monmouthshire Young Persons Scheme, set up to provide support for youths who have experienced homelessness. The grant is requested for car repairs for the scheme's two cars as well as engagement activities to improve wellbeing and physical activities for the youths. It was noted that the schemes are POBL owned and further clarification in relation to this was requested.

RESOLVED:

To defer this item pending clarification of the scheme.

80. Summer playscheme Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) and Chepstow Town Council (CTC)

The Committee was unable to consider the Service Level Agreement between MCC and CTC for the provision of play in the financial year 2024/25, due to its late arrival to the Clerk.

RESOLVED:

To delegate authority to the Clerk with Cllrs D Rooke and J Rosser to consider the SLA for recommendation to Full Council.

81. Old Library

The Committee considered correspondence from the tenant at the Old Library outlining proposals for the Art Space, including an invitation for the Mayor to attend an award ceremony and a request for Town Council's approval to run a café at the premises.

A discussion ensued about the café and whilst the Committee did not object in principle to this, it was noted that planning permission would be required for a change of use and the lease would have to be checked and possibly renegotiated, potentially resulting in an increase in rent. The Clerk advised that a rent review was due to be carried out on the premises and requested if she should seek advice from the agent in this matter.

RESOLVED:

To agree in principle to a café at the Old Library, subject to further examination of the existing lease to determine potential renegotiation of the lease and advice from the agent.

82. Flea Market

The Committee considered the written report from Cllr M Perkins regarding a Flea Market in Chepstow. It was suggested that a small-scale pilot could potentially work in September/October, however the Committee considered the projected staff hours to facilitate a flea market was unattainable this year due to other planned events for the town.

RESOLVED:

To refer this matter back to Cllr M Perkins for further consideration, particularly to outsourcing the provision of a flea market in the town.

83. Hybrid enhancement

The Committee noted that hybrid facilities were still being explored in Monmouth, following attendance by the Clerk and Deputy Clerk at meetings in Caldicot and Usk.

84. Internet Banking Arrangements

Members considered whether Councillors should be added as authorisers for online banking payments to ensure that payments may still be made if there were to be an unexpected absence of staff.

RESOLVED:

To defer this item to the ordinary meeting in June.

85. Bank Reconciliation

In line with the revised Financial Regulation (2.2) to appoint, a member other than the Chairman to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts). The member shall sign the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of verification and this activity, including any exceptions shall on conclusion be reported to and noted by the Finance Committee at its next meeting.

RESOLVED:

To nominate Cllr J Rosser to verify bank reconciliations of Town Council's bank accounts.

86. Earmarked Reserves

The Committee considered the Earmarked Reserves (EMR) and amended as follows:

- 321 Gatehouse – Retain EMR at £40,150.34
- 322 Old Library – Retain EMR at £13,953.37
- 323 Bulwark Community Centre – Retain EMR at £21,978.39
- 324 War Memorial – Retain EMR at £12,679.00
- 325 Elections – Retain EMR at £8,932.00
- 326 Staff – Transfer £23,774.00 to General Reserves
- 328 Match Funding – Retain EMR at £16,871.00
- 329 Bus Station Toilet (11 Thomas Street) – Retain EMR at £9,054.00
- 331 Drill Hall – Retain EMR at £65,302.10 + £18,018.50 (347) + £11,562.61 (349) = £94,883.21

- 335 Hardwick Sports Facility – Retain EMR at £5,000.00
- 337 Notice Boards – Retain EMR at £3,466.92
- 343 Destination Play Park – Retain EMR at £107,283.68
- 344 Devolved Services – Retain EMR at £20,808.41
- 346 Cost of Living Emergency – Retain EMR at £4,807.89
- 347 Outstanding Projects – Vire £18,018.50 to (331) Drill Hall
- 349 Tourism Events Post Covid – Vire £11,562.61 to (331) Drill Hall
- 350 Climate Change – Retain EMR at £29,317
- 351 Public Toilets Bulwark – Retain EMR at £5,000.00
- 352 Place plan projects – Remove - balance = £0.00
- 353 Shopmobility – Retain EMR at £3,000.00
- 354 Tourism & Marketing – Retain EMR at £40,000.00
- 355 Community Grants – vire £1,000 to new budget head ‘Community Photocopying’ and transfer balance of £7,250 to General Reserves

87. Drill Hall

87.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the status of the replacement roof and noted works were due to start imminently.

87.2 The Committee considered in depth the Terms of Reference for the Drill Hall Committee and Drill Hall Operating Committee.

RESOLVED:

To defer this item to an extraordinary meeting of the Committee, to be arranged by the Clerk.

88. Dog Waste Contract Renewal

The Committee considered the renewal contract with Merlin Environmental Services Ltd for the weekly emptying of dog waste bins.

RESOLVED:

To renew the contract with Merlin Environmental Services Ltd, subject to payment at the end of each month. (*Litter Act 1983, s5,6*).

89. Community Photocopying

See Item 86 (355) above.

89. Items for Next Meeting

Social media and communications policies.

90. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm that the next ordinary meeting of the Finance, Policy and Audit Committee will be held in the Council Chamber and via Zoom on a date in June, to be confirmed at the Annual Meeting. In the meantime, an extraordinary meeting to be convened to consider Min 87.2 above.

CLOSE: This completed the business of the meeting at 9.40pm

SIGNED CHAIRPERSON: _____ **DATE:** _____