



Minutes of a Town Business Committee held on Monday 17th July 2023 at 7.00pm at the Town Hall

Present: Councillors Mike Davis (Committee Chair), John Callinan (Committee Vice Chair), Keith Creighton, Mark Edwards, Carol Kambites, Gary Powell and Wendy Thomson

In Attendance: Carlos Novoth (Clerk), a representative of Stonehouse Gardening club and Ward Cllr Mattie Ross

Attendees were reminded that the Proceedings of the meeting could be filmed, photographed or recorded.

B/560 To receive apologies

Council received apologies from Cllr Theresa Watt

B/561 To receive Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

B/562 To approve the minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on 26th June '23

Committee **APPROVED** the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting

By agreement with Committee Members, the Chair brought forward Agenda Item B/571 (7.05)

B/571 To approve a grant application from Stonehouse Gardening club

A representative from the Gardening Club was asked to speak in support of the grant application. The representative thanked the council for its previous grant award and provided an overview of the past year and how the council's previous contribution benefited the club. Cllrs thanked the club for provided an update. During the 2022/23 financial year, council resolved to award a revenue grant for a period of three years of £500 per year in light of the difficulties experienced by the club in regaining its pre-covid membership. Committee **APPROVED** the award of grant of £500

B/563 To receive the latest budget position

Question was raised over a recent revenue grant of £5,000 awarded to the Canals Trust; Officers had arranged for this amount to be covered from

reserves as determined when the grant was first approved - this to be shown on the next budget report.

Committee **NOTED** the latest budget position of Actual Net Expenditure of £71,595.20 and Actual Net Income of £188,217.60

B/564 To approve the latest payments list

Officers highlighted the payment due to him following the use of registered post for several documents. Queries were raised about the grant payment made to 'Child Led Tutors' and payment for cleaning the council offices (a long standing arrangement with GCC).

Committee **APPROVED** the total payment of £14,987.76

B/565 To consider the following from the Oldends Lane Development working group for recommendation to Full Town Council:

1. Working group **recommend** to Business Committee, the three units (Workshop, Pavilion and Hospitality Suite) are joined to the main sewage unit in Midland Road.

Whilst on site investigations are to continue, it was established that in order for the football club to make use of its new toilet facilities and allow a connection of the council's pavilion and workshop, the sewer line would ideally go through the council's car park - a local housing developer has offered to provide assistance with the technical aspects and will within the next couple of months provide details of what will hopefully constitute a workable solution.

A motion was put forward to amend the recommendation to read 'Subject to an acceptable business case, the three units (Workshop, Pavilion and Hospitality Suite) are joined to the main sewage unit in Midland road'. Committee **APPROVED** the amended recommendation.

2. Working group **recommend** to Business Committee that the Heading for the earmarked reserve of £70,000 for the car park in Oldends Lane to be changed to Oldends Lane Sewage Development and this reserve is used to fund the drainage works.

Committee **APPROVED** the recommendation

B/566 To retrospectively approve payment of the annual subscription of £100 to Gloucestershire Playing Fields Association (GPFA)

Committee **APPROVED** the payment of £100 to the GPFA retrospectively

B/567 To report the ad-hoc payment of £100 for the use of Oldends Lane Playing field for an organised event.

Committee **NOTED** the report

B/568 To approve a proposal from 'The Door' - funding for a Beach trip for up to 50 Stonehouse youths

Concern was raised in relation to whether some of the children that would be considered for the trip may not have been able to pay the £5 contribution to the trip. It was suggested that The Door will deal sensitively with this issue if it arose. Committee **APPROVED** the grant award of £1,995 to The Door for the planned beach trip

B/569 To approve the installation of CCTV in the Town Hall car park following

recent incidents

It was felt in light of recent events, the use of a deterrent was necessary to ensure the safety of staff. A question was raised as to whether the recommended positions for the two cameras would cover the whole of the car park area - Officers stated that the only exception would be the rear alleyway and as a result, he would consider located a gate at this point - this to be brought back to the council at a later date.

Committee **APPROVED** the award of the contract to provide CCTV and a recording device at the Town Hall to Kiblec for the total of £650

B/570 To receive Stonehouse Community Association's Annual report and Accounts for year ending 31st March 2023

The town council's representative Trustee provided an overview of the work done by the Stonehouse Community Association and the charging structure. Officers confirmed that the annual report and accounts for 2022/23 provide a similar overview of the estimated outturn provided to full council earlier in the year when the SCA applied for council support.

Committee **NOTED** Stonehouse Community Association's Annual Report and associated Accounts for the 2022/23 financial year

B/571 To approve a grant application from Stonehouse Gardening club

Agenda item brought forward - See details above

B/572 To receive an update from the HR Sub Committee and consider its latest recommendations

Officers confirmed that there were no decisions that required Committee or Council approval. As an update, confirmation was given that staff appraisals would be completed by the end of August and reported to Business Committee in September. In addition, it was envisaged that the two grounds staff posts will need to be reviewed in light of the breadth of work they are covering. In addition, the Deputy's role will also be reviewed to reflect current industry standards - this would be brought to committee for consideration in October 2023.

B/573 To receive an update on the Town Market CIC and to consider a proposal made by County Councillor Nicholas Housden to transfer assets from the Market CIC to Stonehouse town council

Having received the proposal from County Councillor, Nick Housden, town councillors were concerned that it had not been proposed by the Directors of the Market CIC or indeed supported by them. Town Councillors felt that without this, they could not pursue the matter further especially in light of the concerns it shared with one of the Directors during past meetings; concerns that only the Directors could satisfy.

Committee **RESOLVED** to write to County Councillor Nick Housden explaining the town council could not consider the matter further as he was not a market Director but, that a similar proposal would be favourably considered should it be submitted by the Directors; this would be on the basis that they would enter into dialogue with the town council around the CIC's financial and other details.

B/574 To approve a response to GWR's consultation on the future of 'Selling train tickets at stations

The discussion around this item provided split opinions especially in light of the

statistics provided in support of the consultation. However, Cllrs generally acknowledged that Stonehouse had a high proportion of older people that did not necessarily wish to engage with automated ticketing or other systems or, had other difficulties. To this end Committee **AGREED** on the following town council response to the consultation:

- The council valued the existence of the ticket office at the railway station
- Stonehouse had a higher than normal proportion of older people living in the community
- That some of the functions rail users use the ticket office for cannot be provided by the automated ticket machine and
- That there was room for the ticket office to remain open in conjunction with providing help to rail users on or around the platform - the question need not be one or the other.

B/575 To consider a Town Councillor's motion for:-

'Stonehouse Town Council to stop paying Amazon Prime subscription and from making purchases from Amazon'

There was widespread debate on various factors that would help reach some consensus on whether Amazon could or should continue to be used. There were reasoned arguments for and against; whilst in the main, town councillors did not support some elements of the way Amazon conducted their business, they felt that the company was being used as the preferred method of shopping by many causing it to be looked upon as commonplace, especially since Covid. It was acknowledged that use of Amazon was not currently in line with council policy, however there was a need to use them on occasions when local purchasing was not possible. An amendment to the motion was made as follows:

'Stonehouse Town Council to stop paying for the Amazon Prime subscription and to continue to purchase locally from Stonehouse where possible and to only use Amazon when considered necessary'.

Committee **APPROVED** the amended motion.

B/576 To receive updates from the following working groups:

1. **Climate Change Action Forum**
No update
2. **Oldends Lane Development**
Details discussed above under agenda item B/565
3. **Support Stonehouse**
No update
4. **Youth**
Details discussed under Agenda item B/568
5. **Policy**
The Policy working group will be bringing a number of revised policies for BC consideration in September
6. **Internal Audit Panel**
The panel are needed to undertake a internal control check for the first quarter of 2023/24

B/577 To note the date of the next meeting - Monday 4th September 2023

Committee **NOTED** the date of the next meeting