

Droitwich Spa Town Council

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **RESOURCES COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, St Richards House on Monday 4th December 2023 at 6.15 pm

PRESENT: Councillor GR Brookes (Chairman)
Councillor SJ Brazier
Councillor M Brook
Councillor GA Duffy
Councillor N Franks
Councillor RP Hopkins
Councillor Mrs K Fellows (Ex- officio)

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Councillor Mrs C Bowden, EJ Bowden & Mrs JM Chaudry
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor DI Davidson, J Grady, RJ Morris & AM Sinton.

211. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None received.

212. MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 OCTOBER 2023.

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 9th October 2023 in the Council Chamber, St Richards House [*circulated with Agenda*].

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Resources Committee held on 9th October 2023 at the Council Chamber , St Richards House, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

213. Collison Damage to Bus Shelter – Little Hill /Ombersley Way

Following a road traffic accident in the early hours of Saturday morning 7th October 2023 the shelter has been destroyed .The driver absconded and was later arrested by the Police. There is no recourse for recovery of costs through the Town Council Insurers apart from the usual public liability protection. The identity of the motorist remains subject to a MOP (Management of Police Information – Appendix D). In these circumstances the advice from the Insurance Company is for the Town Council to now consider any options for recovery proceedings through the Motor Insurance Bureau [*for information*].

Councillor N Franks asked that sustainable material options be looked at when considering possible replacement of the written off shelter on Omberley Way. Councillor GA Duffy mentioned that the Police SNT & Worcestershire County Council Highways may consider traffic speed mitigation road markings on Ombersley Way, similar to recent measure on Primsland Way.

RESOLVED The information be noted.

214. Graffiti & Vandalism to Bus Shelters- Graffiti & Vandalism to Bus Shelters and Street Infrastructure

To update that options and scope are being investigated for coordinated cleaning, repair, renovation and target hardening of bus shelters in some specific and vulnerable locations of the Town which are subject to ongoing high levels of anti- social activity and damage. The Town Council owns and maintains approximately 30 bus shelters and 5 or 6 of these are in heavily affected locations, including parts of Ombersley Way, Worcester Road and

Celvestune Way. A test refurbishment including the application of Anti – Graf protective coating of one shelter on Ombersley Way adjacent Little Hill has been completed during late October .This will now enable further informed consideration for other locations in line with estimates & budget setting in December and January. In the same way continuing efforts are being made to remove graffiti in general from road signs and street infrastructure – coordinating with WCC Highways, through the Lengthsman Scheme and Approved Contractors suitably qualified for working on the Highway. The areas most affected by graffiti continue to be around Ombersley Way, Briar Mill, Ledwych and the Railway Station. A meeting took place on Friday 17 November 2023 between Councillor P Clements, Sergeant Cathy Atkinson and the Town Clerk to discuss the graffiti matters and interventions *[for information]*.

Councillor GA Duffy mentioned that the WDC Environmental Team may be able to provide some assistance by lending covert cameras for surveillance of some of the targeted areas, conducive towards efforts to apprehend and/or identify those persons responsible for the damage and graffiti. Councillor M Brook suggested that some bus shelter locations may benefit from protection with overgrowth and vegetation to make the structures less accessible to those intent on anti- social behaviour /vandalism.

RESOLVED The information was noted.

215. Salwarpe Road – Solar Vehicle Activated Speed Sign

To notify that the VAS has been vandalised and spray painted with graffiti during the week commencing 20th November 2023. The damage to the sign is significant and is not repairable. The matter has been reported to the Police under Crime Reference Number 22/109834/23. This sign was originally provided from funding sourced through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in collaboration with Worcestershire County Council Highways. Options and scope for replacement and possible insurance recourse are currently be taken forward *[for information]*.

Councillor RP Hopkins suggested deployment of a CCTV camera at the Salwarpe Road VAS location to assist with identification of those persons responsible for the damage once the sign has been replaced. Councillor N Franks mentioned that VAS data recording would be useful to help interpret the level of speeding. Councillor GR Brookes explained that all VAS Site locations were assessed including data analysis by the West Mercia Safer Roads Partnership as part of the licence process for all new sign permissions granted through WCC Highways.

RESOLVED The information was noted.

216. Boiler Replacement – St Richards House

Pursuant to minute references 254/2022-2023 of the Resources Committee meeting held on 16 January 2023, 57/2023-2024 of the meeting on the 12 June 2023 and 112/2023-2024 of the meeting on 24th July 2023, to confirm that the delegated Working Group met on 8th September. Three written quotations were considered all of which fell within the procurement threshold and a recommendation to proceed resolved at the last Resources Committee Meeting in October. To confirm that the works have been fully completed week commencing 13th November 2023*[for information]*.

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED The information was noted.

217. Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund

Pursuant to minute reference 148 of the Resources Committee meeting held on 11th October 2021 to note the accumulated receipts which form part of the Town Council financial reserve position. **To accord with regulatory requirements this money must be spent within 5 years of receipt by the Town Council, or if not, returned the originator – Wychavon District Council.** The accumulated balance breakdown including the two separate payment receipt dates is attached for information together with the minute reference from October 2021, for the occasion of the last consideration which was not resolved.

The Town Clerk updated that the two amounts comprising the total CIL receipts were set for expiry of the five year holding and consideration terms in January 2025 and September 2026. To this effect the recommendation was put forward for a considered approach towards possible community projects to utilise the funding at an early opportunity during the current Administration. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council reserves position comprised CIL, Restricted Capital and General Reserves which would be reviewed as an agenda item for Full Council on 22nd January 2024. It was emphasised that CIL has defined restrictions for use which are outlined in the Wychavon District Council award notifications contained in the supporting papers pack provided with the agenda for this Committee Meeting. The Chairman recommended deferment of the consideration for CIL funded projects until the Full Council Meeting of 22nd January 2024 and as part of the overall Reserve position options review.

RESOLVED To defer the consideration for CIL funded projects until the Full Council Meeting of 22nd January 2024 and as part of the overall Reserve position options review.

218. To consider the exclusion of the Public and Press by passing the following motion:

That the press and public be now excluded from the meeting under the provision of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by virtue of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves financial and legal matters.

RESOLVED That the press and public be now excluded from the meeting under the provision of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 by virtue of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves financial and legal matters.

The Town Clerk explained that the items following were commercially sensitive and covered contractual arrangements.

219. Asset Signage Sponsorship Scheme

To update that continuing difficulties are being encountered with collecting the annual revenue share derived from the asset media sponsorship scheme. The Town Council currently maintains three signage sponsor options on an equal share annual supplementary income arrangement with the Service Provider, in place since 2015/2016.

A final Notice for recovery proceedings was issued to the Company following the last Committee Meeting on 9th October 2023. This was acknowledged by email with still no payment forthcoming to date. The intention to remove the sponsorship signage has now been notified to the Company this week and instructed to DSTC Contractors. To note that this matter will need consideration as part of the supplementary income receipts for the annual estimates and budget setting for the next period and going forwards [*for information*].

The Town Clerk recommended a final ultimatum for payment and timeline be issued to the Company given the unsuccessful endeavours made to secure settlement. It was agreed by consensus that that repeated interventions and chasing of the Company was not acceptable or sustainable partnership working. To this effect a final ultimatum for payment should be issued with a short deadline timescale, reverting to debt recovery proceedings for the interim elapsed period owing (1.4.2023 to the date of instruction for recoveries), should cooperation not be achieved. The latter scenario should include permanent removal of the signage and severance of the sponsorship arrangements going forward. The Town Clerk reminded that the outstanding invoice covered the period 1.4.2023 to 31.03.2024 for revenue share collections and in the event of settlement being achieved, a contract termination would then be diarised for the end of March 2024 accordingly. The Town Clerk mentioned that the outcome of these final interventions were important to include in the supplementary income forecasting for the Town Council estimates and budget setting for the forthcoming period 2024/2025.

Councillor GR Brookes suggested that options to continue asset media sponsorship be investigated on a standalone basis by the Town Council without the involvement of the host Company, subject to agreement from WCC Highways. This request was noted for further consideration following the outcome of the current impasse position with the Company.

RESOLVED To issue a final ultimatum for payment of the outstanding invoice Number 128 for £4,500.00 dated 13th September 2023 with a short deadline. Should cooperation not be achieved to instruct immediate cancellation of the arrangements with the Company and permanently remove all sponsorship signage In the event of collection of the outstanding invoice in full to diarise contract severance notification to be sent prior to the beginning of the next Municipal period – commencing 01.04.2024. To pursue collection of the interim elapsed period of revenue share through Debt Management in the scenario of non- cooperation (that is 01.04.2023 until the severance date). To ensure consideration in the supplementary income part of estimates and budget setting for the Municipal period commencing 01.04.2024.

220. Cloud based Phones Solution and Full Fibre Proposals

Following replacement of the Server Unit during August & September 2023, the remaining potential for the Town Council IT Infrastructure is upgrade to fibre connection and integration of the Phone systems. The existing phone system will require a cloud based solution due to the digital switchover programme within 18 months. Three additional options are currently being researched and will be presented for further consideration at a later date.

To note that the overall IT Service provider for the Town Council has recommended an example of a combined broadband and phones solution which will replace two separate existing obligations. It is understood that this option is possible on a 36 months contract basis with no separate capital expenditure, set up fees or leasing agreement- subject to final interpretation. Indicative details are attached for information *[for information]*.

The Town Clerk updated that a second option had been received from another Service Provider in addition to the example circulated with the Committee meeting agenda pack. The second option projected savings of over £1,000 per annum over existing obligations and had no fixed contract or set up costs. This was considered encouraging towards informed further evaluation of all three or four different proposals at an earlier opportunity in the New Year – suggested most likely Resources Committee meeting scheduled for 5th February 2024.

There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED The information was noted.

221. HMRC PAYE Anomaly

Pursuant to minute reference 111/2023-2024 of the Resources Committee Meeting held on 24 July 2023 to note that further correspondence has been received on this matter from HMRC. The Payroll Agent (Wychavon District Council) has maintained written communications throughout endeavouring to resolve the anomaly with HMRC, acting on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Clerk has contacted HMRC directly by phone on 31st October & 6th November 2023 to escalate concern that this matter remains unresolved with a request for a full response. The interventions from the Town Clerk has determined that the anomaly most likely originates from a request by WDC to HMRC in period 9-2022/2023 (January 2023) for reallocation of PAYE to another account. WDC have been updated to coordinate their further responses accordingly and the explanation from HMRC is still awaited [*for information*].

The Town Clerk updated the current position and measures being taken to achieve a resolution between the Payroll Agent (Wychavon District Council) and HMRC- as outlined. There were no questions arising.

RESOLVED The information was noted.

222. St Richards House – Installation and Maintenance of all Fire Systems and Option for installation of Wireless Fire Alarm System

Pursuant to minute reference 150 of the Full Council Meeting on 25th September 2023 various service delivery issues have been raised with the existing Fire Safety provider. To consider the attached private and confidential report and estimates for a wireless fire alarm system to be fitted which upgrades the existing system for the building and extends the coverage to the unoccupied second floor. It is noted that the current arrangements do comply with Fire Regulations but the matter originates from recommendations made by the existing Service provider during their scheduled maintenance regime.

The Heritage Managers have recommended caution with introducing a full wireless system due to issues encountered with other Museum Sector locations with regard to environmental monitoring and special considerations for the safe preservation of the artefacts collection. For these reasons some locations have had to retrospectively revert back to wired in fire systems. **Officer's recommendation is to delegate options for review of the Fire Systems to a Working Group of the Resources Committee to make recommendations.** Suggested scope to include Costs of changing provider and existing arrangements, Museum environment factors and any anticipated changes to the Museum layout and wider areas of the St Richards House building.

The Town Clerk suggested that consideration for enhanced Fire Systems including second floor detection sensors at St Richards House be aligned with the building alteration projects and works currently being prioritised for scheduling. It was reaffirmed that there were no current sector defects with the existing arrangements maintained by the Company and all measures complied with fire regulation standards .By consensus the Committee agreed to assign a delegation working party comprising Councillors GR Brookes, M Brook and GA Duffy to look at scope for all fire system to coincide with the anticipated works for St Richards House expected to progress in 2024 (namely options to improve the ground floor Museum and conversion to lettable office space for the second floor).

RESOLVED To delegate responsibility to a working group comprising Councillors GR Brookes, M Brook and GA Duffy to investigate alternative options for the existing fire systems arrangements. Matters to include revisions to align with proposed changes of use for parts of the St Richards House premises, best value costs, and economies of scale with

any practical changes & business interruption factors attributed to changing Service Providers.

223. Office Tenancies- St Richards House.

To be advised that one of the established tenants for the St Richards House building office space has requested consideration for a reduction in their lettable space used as at 28th November 2023. The request has been acknowledged whilst options are looked at. The changes will likely be effective from January 2024. Alternative uses and letting options will be coordinated and linked to the supplementary income aspect of the Town Council estimates and budget setting through December and January [*for information*].

Councillor N Franks asked if there were any structural alterations required due to the room tenancies changing? The Town Clerk assured that the hand over process was straight forward with no alterations required.

RESOLVED The information was noted.

224. ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Creditor accounts in the sum of £36,277.39 were considered for payment. Total expenditure presented £36,277.39 [*lists attached with Agenda*].

There were no questions arising.
Total expenditure authorised = £36,277.39

RESOLVED-. That the statement of accounts appended be received and the expenditure totalling £36,277.39 be authorised and duly passed for payment. Total expenditure authorised = £36,277.39.

The meeting closed at 7.02pm.

Chairman of Committee

15 January 2024

Chairman of Council

18 December 2023