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**MINUTES** of the **ORDINARY MEETING OF STANLEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held in Stanley Civic Hall on Tuesday 26th April 2022 at 6.30pm

**PRESENT**: O Milburn\* G Binney H Clark K Coulson

A Clegg L Ferry C Hampson   A Hanson

M Martin J Nicholson M Thompson  J McMahon

J Kane D Tully   J Stephenson

\*Chairman

**OFFICERS**: Helen Richardson (Town Clerk)

Ann Barry (Finance Officer)

Sarah Parkin (Events & Administration Support Officer)

James Harper (Environmental Services, Team Leader)

Cllr O Milburn chairing the meeting, welcomed all and confirmed that the meeting would be recorded and the recording would be accessible on YouTube.

**254 Apologies for Absence**

Received from Cllrs C Marshall, A Jones, D Fall, S McMahon, C Bell

**255 Declarations of Interest**

None

**256 Mayors Announcements**

None

**257 Leaders Statement**

Cllr J Stephenson - nothing to say, however passes on thanks to Cllr J Nicholson and Cllr C Bell for heeding our plea at the last meeting and trying to lead the way moving forwards with the whole process on behalf of Stanley Town Council.

**258 Public Participation**

No members of the public were present and no questions had been presented by any members of the public.

**259 Stanley Community Fund**

The Town Clerk reported that at the Finance and General Purposes Meeting on 12th April, discussions took place between members about The Stanley Community Fund and members had a number of questions based on the report and requested a member of the Stanley Community Fund come to the Full Council meeting, however there was nobody available.

Therefore 4 questions have been put to the Stanley Community Fund and they have responded. Opportunity was given to either discuss the responses in this Full Council session or to have the questions and the responses circulated to members by email for their own perusal.

Cllr J Stephenson suggested responses be circulated by email rather than be spoken about during the meeting.

**260 Confirmation of Minutes of Full Council Meeting held on 22nd March 2022**

Minutes approved and signed off as correct. Proposed by Cllr A Clegg and seconded by Cllr C Hampson.

**261 Receipt of Minutes from Finance & General Purposes Meeting held on 12th April 2022 and Accounts for payment and Bank Reconciliation for February 2022**

Cllr A Hanson happy to receive and accept both items as one item. Seconded by Cllr A Clark.

**262 Civic Hall Update**

Update provided by Town Clerk. Members had no comments or questions following the report which was provided. Town Clerk requested that the recommendations put forward in her report be discussed and an agreement reached as to how to move forwards.

The report offers **RECOMMENDATIONS** that:

1. The members **NOTE** the information regarding the current condition of the building and the maintenance required.
2. Members **APPROVE** the recommendation of the Finance and General Purpose Committee on the 12th April 2022 to move the underspend with regards to building projects/repairs from the 2021/2022 budget to an earmarked reserve as a building works contingency budget
3. Members to **DISCUSS, AGREE** and **COMMIT** to a process/plan/consultation following the completion and presentation of the D3 report.

In addition to tonight’s incident of youths being on the roof of The Civic Hall, there was a further incident of youths on the roof again last night. The flat roof cannot be run across. It has already had significant damage when scaffolding was thrown through the window because youths had got up there, these are the big maintenance items in the report which need to be looked at.

* Do Members agree to the recommendations? (points as per agenda and in the report).
* Members to **NOTE** the current condition of the building and maintenance required
* **APPROVE** the recommendation of the finance meeting to remove the underspend
* Discussion and plan as to what happens next – we have significant events planned over the next few months.
* D3 report has been presented Cllrs C Bell and J Nicholson have been working with DCC about the report/building and in relation to funding.

Appreciating this is an extremely difficult decision, but a decision needs to be made.

The building is limping along; we are keeping building as safe as possible, but it does cost money; a decision does need to be made and soon.

**Worst case scenario - If the decision is made to return the building back to DCC**, we have to serve a notice period of 12 months on the lease in order to do so. If building goes back to DCC – in what condition does it go back?

We are working with DCC to get one of the boilers repaired – they have the paperwork as you have to ask for consent.

**If the decision is that we keep the building**, what works need to be done, then what maintenance needs to be done to bring the building up to scratch.

The Town Clerk is seeking opinion from members as to the setting up of a workshop to discuss or small sub group to discuss what steps are needed next to move things forward – no views.

Cllr A Clegg suggests a smaller group.

Cllr H Clark comments that smaller group scenario has happened previously and nothing got done. Has to be a full council decision. If we are keeping the Civic Hall we have to look at what else we are funding.

Cllrs J Stephenson and M Martin suggest a larger group would be their preference so everyone has a say.

The overall general concensus is for a larger group set up – the Town Clerk is to set this up to take forward. Environment Team Leader J Harper suggests setting a timeframe for getting this working group organised and it was agreed that the group set up would be within the next 2 weeks to progress this. No further comments.

**263 Staffing Report**

Town Clerk confirms that there have been significant changes within the staffing team. We have come out of the pandemic and the events side are extremely busy – currently the Town Council team are running Town Council business and the civic events side of things.

The Town Clerk has reviewed the workload which was previously undertaken by the Deputy Town Clerk and the Town Clerk felt it was more important to have admin and project work which needs to be done rather than have another Deputy Town Clerk.

On reviewing work of deputy clerk, involves project works. Recommending

In this regard, the Town Clerk recommends employing a Grants and Project Officer for a fixed period of 12 months. The role would need to be evaluated by HR at DCC as it is a new role.

With regards to the Civic Hall & staffing – the Civic Hall is currently open around 60 hours a week – we had some sporting events recently, we had some negative feedback recently based on how things are being run in the past. There have been issues and criticism over costs, with organisers expecting everything to be done for nothing or as cheap as chips! We have made a commitment to make the best event it can be.

All events need to have staff onsite and in the building for safety and risk to staff, people coming to the building, building safety, management of the event – this is currently being covered by Town Council staff. We do have a pool of casual workers.

We currently have 3 people doing the job of 6 people. The Town Clerk has worked the last 2 Saturdays to support and has lost 30 hours of TOIL.

Our latest event was a large sporting event, we should have had 9 members of staff on duty this weekend – however we only had 5 people, none of which were part of the casual team. The Town Clerk is not convinced that the Civic Hall is the best place to be hosting these large sporting events – safety and risk are a huge concern, concerns which have been witnessed by the Town Clerk herself.

If the building is to be retained, we need to look at the type of events which are booked in as we are not currently geared up for big sporting events. To make sure it will be a safe event, whilst still being profitable.

The Town Council Staff are covering Civic Hall events – we cannot do everything. Things are slipping by the wayside.

The Civic Hall is not massively expensive, we have looked at costings as we are regularly challenged by events organisers. After reviewing recent events the costs being paid compared to what should have been paid are showing that the event income is less than 50% in value.

Hiring the hall practically means you are hiring the whole building. Organisers are expecting to pay 2015 prices or 2013 prices which is not sustainable.

We are dealing with events which have been booked prior to Town Clerk’s arrival in post. Alcohol prices have risen, cost of lighting has risen, we had to put door staff in place ourselves.

All these reviews are putting pressure on casual workers. Some casuals worked previous Saturday but none worked the second weekend which meant cover was left to Town Council team.

The Kickstart scheme has ended. One was successful in accepting an apprenticeship in the Finance team.

One didn’t want a role beyond casual work. The other left without a role.

We have not yet recruited for the environmental apprentice role but should do so by end of this week.

In light of recent resignations - A review needs to take place to ascertain what we need as a Town Council and what we need as a Civic Hall hence recommending fixed term roles rather than permanent positions.

STC currently have 2 agency staff which is very expensive, by having fixed term roles in place, agency staff could apply for these roles, this could be cost saving, fixed term for 12 months.

To enable consideration to ascertain what the Town Council needs, and what will be happening to the building, the Town Clerk is seeking approval for her recommendation to put in place a Funds and Grants Officer for a fixed period of 12 months to see if this is what the council needs.

Also, a fixed term Events and Admin officer for 12 months to consider what is going to happen to the building, if keeping the building members will then need to consider how managing that side of the Civic Hall will be moving forwards.

Seek recommendation that we approve fixed term roles.

There were no comments from members and this was moved for approval which received a unanimous vote from members.

Cllr O Milburn suggests another meeting will be required to discuss the other elements of staffing and events situation as things cannot go on this way.

Cllr H Clark asked for clarification about Stuart Wardle and whether he has now left. Town Clerk confirmed that he has been doing adhoc work on D3 report only.

Cllr J Stephenson raised question over whether we should be putting large events on in the Civic Hall, given the risk and the lack of staff, should we be offering this to other events. Consideration must be given to safety of others, risks and potential accidents and the reputation of Stanley Town Council and Stanley Civic Hall. Are we in a position to give people a safe event in a safe space? If we can’t guarantee a safe event – should we be putting event on at all?

The Town Clerk has confirmed that we have 2 more sporting events booked in – one in May and the second in August (well organised) – other than these two events, the Town Clerk would not recommend booking in any other larger sporting events.

Cllr O Milburn is happy to keep the 2 events already booked in place and to not book any more in. Seeking agreement from members.

Cllr H Clark suggest we concentrate on looking after the staff we currently have and moving forward, can the organisers put their own security in place. This suggestion was also agreed by Cllr Hampson.

Agreement was made to receive the recommendations for staffing.

Agreement was also made that it was not a good idea to book in any more sporting events beyond the two events we have scheduled already. Agreed

**264 Events**

Miners’ Sunday - Council asked to note that is now being held on Sunday 21st August 2022.

The Queens Jubilee – we will have a beacon lighting – Town Clerk thought it was arranged, however it has not been done so.

Plan would be to light the beacon

Event start 9pm on 2nd June light the beacon at 9.45pm when the whole country lights their beacons, lighting for 15 mins. when the whole country lights their beacon.

Town Mayor leader of the council will be there will be there to say a few words.

We are going to ask PACT house to be open for snacks and drinks.

Beacon burn for 15 mins, then switched off.

There are lots of events occurring on 2nd and STC wanted mark the occasion and to celebrate the Jubilee and the Queens time on the throne.

**265 Neighbourhood Wardens** **update**

Update from J Harper, our Environmental Service Team Leader

Every year the Environmental Services team produce an operations plan to give a guided workplan for environment care takers and wardens. and we use this as guidance works plan for all departments to work together and interact with each other to see how they can work well together effectively.

The plan includes events, activities, communication plans on what is good PR for the council which hopefully you will have noticed an increased presence on social media. Working with the Neighbourhood Wardens, and speaking to them on a daily basis, helps to assess the works which are being carried out.

John Smith, Neighbourhood Warden is very proactive, helpful, he is very engaging and he provides lots of images and information regarding the things he has been involved with. In the last 3-4 weeks, John has been assisting the police in the Stanley area – he is engaging with anti-social behaviour issues, working with landlords, duty of care, visiting businesses looking at waste and bin, stop and checking for waster carrier licences, fly tipping, taking reports from local community – John really cares, he gets his hands dirty, he has been pulling shopping trolleys out of rivers, doing a lot of focussed foot patrols, supporting DCC partnership events within the Stanley Community, engaging with schools, litter picking and events, John is currently working on a big project with the schools in the run up to the Queens Jubilee.

John is also involved with lots of work with Craghead Community Centre and Quaking Houses supporting with the Ukraine aid coordination, as well as lots of tree planting to support with the environment.

Dave Jarvis is a horticulturist and he has been working on Northumbria in Bloom, especially over 3-4 weeks as we have the judges coming for the Spring round of judging on Friday this week. His priority is making everything clean and tidy, Dave has also been engaging with the 10 partners we have as well as engaging with 10 new partners to enter into the Its Your Neighbourhood category. Following the success of Blooming Good Fun over the years we are keen to work with Dave to meet up, discuss and share ideas and work together to encourage the community working together.

Statistic wise – Neighbourhood Wardens are involved in proactive daily patrols – undertaking 26 patrols in the month of March, being involved in graffiti removal, litter removal and working In No Place recovering the damage manhole cover, gateway feature.

During the period of Jan, Feb and March 2022 – the Stanley Town Council Neighbourhood Wardens team have been involved with:

* Wardens – dog fouling – 21 investigations and education
* Littering – focussing on education – 14 litter picking events
* Tidy yards and gardens – 27 investigations,
* Served 11 community protection issues
* 42 Council tax checks and a fixed penalty notice has been issued
* 52 fly tipping investigations
* 5 investigations with the Police 2 of which were waste carrier licences
* Duty of care visits to businesses – under Section 47 of the Environmental Act
* Engaging with businesses
* Attending to 5 abandoned vehicles
* Anti-social behaviour – 29 investigations (23 of which have come through the airwaves and working with the police)
* Northumbria in Bloom – direct engagements with the communities - 115 interactions in last 3 months,
* Community and Environmental - 127 interactions
* Proactive jobs 110 – going out and looking for issues
* 4 environmental campaigns
* Estate walkabouts, Kyo and Annfield Plain, 58 high vis foot patrols, concentrating on high street areas

Having the Environmental team and the Neighbourhood Wardens working as one big team is working really well. James really happy with the way this is working.

No comments or questions from members about this.

Verbal update **NOTED.**

**266 Time and date of next meeting**

Tuesday 24th May 2022, 6.30pm at Stanley Civic Hall. This meeting will be the AGM.