

STOWMARKET TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of **STOWMARKET TOWN COUNCIL** held in the John Milton Room, Milton House, Milton Road South on Wednesday, 5th November, 2014 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillor G M Brewster (Town Mayor)

Councillors: N G K Gowrley
G Green
G P Harris
B Humphreys
D J MacPherson
N J Rozier
Mrs P J E Robinson
B J Salmon
K E Scarff
Mrs V I Waspe
Mrs A E J Whybrow
D S Whybrow

In attendance: Mr D G Blackburn (Town Clerk)

Present: PC B Abbott (Suffolk Police)
Ms F Law (Friends of Stowmarket Library)

201. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms S L Britton and Mrs L M Mayes.

202. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY OR NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were none.

203. DISPENSATIONS IN RESPECT OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were none.

204. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor's announcements for the period Friday, 26th September, 2014 to Monday, 27th October, 2014 were received by the Council.

The Mayor referred to a proposal that had been circulated to hold a Mayor's Gala Dinner at Haughley Barns on Thursday, 5th March, 2014.

205. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st October, 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record.

206. MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14TH OCTOBER, 2014

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 14th October, 2014 be received.

207. MINUTES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER, 2014

The Town Clerk provided a report upon the recommendations contained within the Minutes of the Risk Management Committee held on Tuesday, 23rd September, 2014. Some amendments were proposed to those recommendations following a change in the Government's position regarding the application of the new Transparency Code which was likely to place the Town Council below the 'de minimis' level at which the Code was mandatory. An overview of the Council's contractual arrangements was also provided and a scheme of delegation proposed that would confirm the authority of the Clerk to handle regular contracts with suppliers whilst also providing safeguards for the review of such expenditure.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the minutes of the Risk Management Committee meeting held on 23rd September, 2014 be received;
- b. That the report of the External Auditor on the Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2013/14 be received and action be taken to increase the Council's Fidelity Guarantee within the Council's insurance policy to reflect the balances held by the Council;
- c. That the updated version of standing orders be approved and adopted incorporating the new provisions regarding the filming and recording of Council meetings;
- d. That the Council takes appropriate action to comply with the new Transparency Code and Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 insofar as they relate to the Town Council;
- e. That the scheme of delegations be updated and the following specific delegations be added to the scheme:

That the Town Clerk (or his nominee) be granted delegation:

- To enter into a lease on behalf of the Council for a period of up to 3 years, (and beyond that period with the authorisation of the Council or Operations and Services Committee, as appropriate);
- To enter into the following on behalf of the Council –

contracts for standard business services (examples of such services shall include business contracts in respect of IT support, photocopiers, telephones, alarm systems etc.) and contracts for utilities (examples of such services shall include electricity, water etc.) subject to periodic value for money reviews of such contracts by the Business Improvement Sub-Committee; and

agreements for insurance cover subject to prior scrutiny and endorsement of the proposals by the Risk Management Committee.

208. QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDERS

There were none.

209. POLICE REPORT

Police Constable Barry Abbott gave a report which covered the period 25th September, 2014 to 26th October, 2014. Two new priorities had been set by the Safer Neighbourhood Team, firstly, to work closely with licensed premises to protect the emerging night time economy and secondly, to engage with young people congregating in the town centre. A range of issues were raised and discussed including:

- the licensing regime and the role of the licensing authority, Police and local Councillors with respect to handling complaints about the operation of licensed premises,
- the value of CCTV to the Police,
- a recent ticketing purge of vehicles parked illegally along Ipswich Street
- the use of the Shopwatch scheme; and
- a recent reduction in the number of complaints about young people in Ipswich Street during evenings.

RESOLVED: That the Police report be received and noted.

210. FRIENDS OF THE STOWMARKET LIBRARY

Ms F Law of the Friends of Stowmarket Library reported that in 2012, the Libraries Service had been devolved into a registered charity although core funding was still provided by Suffolk County Council. A county-wide initiative had seen the creation of 'Friends' groups for local libraries to help with fund-raising and to develop wider community support for the services that they provided. The Friends of Stowmarket Library had raised £2,000 including grant support from the Town Council and financial assistance from County Councillors. The Council was informed of the wide range of activities and events that the Friends had launched for different demographic groups and for those with special needs.

Members of the Council praised the endeavours of the 'Friends' in supporting the Stowmarket Library.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

211. MID YEAR FINANCIAL REVIEW

The Town Clerk submitted a report, C/13/1415, copy on report file, which provided a review of the Town Council's financial position. In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations, the Town Council undertook a mid-year financial review to ensure that there was effective management and control of the budget and to receive an overview of the Town Council's financial position. Assurance was provided by the Responsible Financial Officer that the revenue budget was on course for 2014/15 and that there was no projected overspend.

There had been some substantial capital projects delivered in 2014/15. All had been planned items of expenditure on specific projects that had been approved via Council and/or the Operations and Services Committee. The strategic approach that had been

adopted by the Council would see the revenue budget surplus in 2014/15 used to offset capital requirements so that the Town Council's overall financial position would remain stable although the final outturn position would depend upon financial performance over the following six months and the timing of expenditure incurred with regard to the Milton House Refurbishment Project in the first part of 2015.

The Clerk also briefed Members on the Council's medium term financial position. Whilst there had been strong financial management exercised by Members and staff in the period from 2010/11 to build up the Council's reserves, it was forecast that the Town Council would encounter some significant and unavoidable increases in costs and reductions in income in the following two to three years which were outside of its control. It was anticipated that they would reduce the Council's financial capacity and radically alter its budget position. This meant that the next four year term of the Council from 2015 to 2019 would be much more challenging than the term from 2011 to 2015.

Members of the Council discussed the presentation given by the Town Clerk with references made to the reducing tax base, phasing out of support grant by the District Council and increasing challenges to the Town Council's financial position in future years. The Town Clerk indicated that Members and staff would need to work together positively to address these challenges and that he was hopeful that such an approach would manage the potential impact upon the Council's operations.

RESOLVED: That the report and presentation on the Mid-Year Financial Review be received and noted.

212. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Town Clerk reported on proposals to hold a series of Members' Briefings over the following 12 months.

RESOLVED: That the next Council and Planning Consultation and Strategy Committee meetings be held on 10th December, 2014, the meetings scheduled to be held on 17th December, 2014 be cancelled and a Members' Briefing on Education in Stowmarket be held on 3rd December, 2014 at 7.00pm.

213. ITEMS OF REPORT AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Mayor referred to the revised draft recommendations for the Community Governance Review that had been issued by Mid-Suffolk District Council. The revised proposals incorporated the main observations contained within the Town Council's submission with regard to the town boundary and warding arrangements. A final decision would be taken by the District Council at its meeting on Wednesday, 17th December, 2014.

The meeting ended at 8.37pm.

CHAIRMAN