

**Main points arising: Additional agenda item/ Civic Hall hire charges/ Payment of invoice for the Civic Hall/Library Improvement scheme/ IT costs/ Payment schedule for January 2015.**

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT 8PM ON MONDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 2015 AT THE CIVIC HALL, POYNTON.

PRESENT

Chairman: Cllr C Gorst

Cllrs. G Bartos, M Beanland, L A Clarke, B Lewis and G Smith

Attending under SO 56: Cllrs M C G Sewart and R E West

46. Apologies for absence

Cllrs H Murray and A Smith

47. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Interests

None declared.

48. Other Business

The Clerk explained that an invoice had been received from Cheshire East for the first instalment of the Civic Hall/Library improvement scheme. The amount of the invoice (over £10,000) is such that it requires approval from this Committee.

**RESOLVED: That under the terms of SO 19e an urgent item of 'Other Business' be added to this meeting's agenda, namely to consider approval of an invoice from CE for the Civic Hall/Library Improvement scheme (NC)**

49. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015

The Chairman asked about the progress of the precept media release. The Clerk confirmed that it is with Poynton Post for the March 2015 edition - it will also appear on the Town Council website.

**RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015 are approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman (NC)**

50. Local Government Finance Settlement 2015/16

**RESOLVED: That a response by NALC to central government on the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2015/16, including the issue of extending referenda principles to town and parish councils for precept increases, is received and noted (NC)**

51. Civic Hall Hire Charges for 2015/16

The Clerk provided a written brief on proposed room hire charges from April 2015. Members had agreed previously to simplify the room hire charging structure by introducing hourly rates.

The Chairman asked for clarification on the new Worth, Vernon and Anson meeting rooms. The Clerk explained that the Worth and Vernon rooms are being converted from the former offices at the front of the Civic Hall, while the Anson room will be created from the former reception area. They are all of a similar size.

20% VAT had been applied to room hire at the beginning of this financial year (FY), but the Town Council had agreed to absorb 10% of this, to mitigate the effect on hire rates. These had been increased at the start of the FY by 10% rather than 20%. In answer to a query from Cllr Lewis the Clerk clarified that the Town Council continued to pay the full amount of VAT to HMRC, while it clearly accrued a lower net figure in rental.

The Chairman asked about the new rates on the use of the Main Hall which appeared to be 25% higher. Cllr Clarke asked if the Main Hall was over-priced. The Clerk thought the previous hire rate quoted was out of date, but will check to ensure the proposed rate is correct, and proportionate.

**RESOLVED: That the report is received; that the new charges are approved, with the exception of the Main Hall, for which delegated powers are given to the Chairman and Vice Chairman to approve following the Clerk's review (NC)**

52. CE Invoice for the Civic Hall/Library

Cllr Clarke asked if the work to date had been carried out to a satisfactory standard, and the Clerk confirmed that it had.

Cllr G Smith queried whether the payments were agreed as staged payments. The Clerk clarified that Cheshire East had let the contract, and were making whatever payments had been agreed with the contractor. The Town Council had a separate agreement with CE, whereby two payments are due, at end-March and end-May 2015. These were timed to coincide with our VAT returns, since we would be reclaiming VAT on these invoices. Cllr Lewis asked if a retention had been agreed. The Clerk said that there is a £25,000

contingency, and that CE might be withholding a percentage (2½ % or 5%) until such time as any remedial work being carried out. Cllr Lewis said that in that case the Town Council should withhold first payment. Cllr G Smith said that the invoice should be more detailed, and it's not presented in the right way. The Clerk reiterated that this payment was being sought in accordance with an agreement signed with CE, and the Chairman shared with Members the relevant section from that agreement. The Clerk added that the original budget of £192,000 had been approved by the Town Council on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014 – this payment was the first part of that sum.

Cllr Sewart suggested that this Committee could resolve to pay this invoice provided that CE could provide the necessary reassurance around financial safeguards, should the work not be completed to a satisfactory standard.

The Clerk said that the second payment, due to CE on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2015, could ultimately be withheld if the work was not carried out satisfactorily. Cllr Lewis said that would limit us to say 10% of the May 2015 invoice but not this one. He added that he would want to see retention applied to both payments.

**RESOLVED: To approve in principle the payment of the invoice, subject to clarification by the Chairman and Vice Chairman, and subject to satisfactory assurances being sought from CE on retention being applied to the contract (NC)**

#### 53. IT costs

Members considered a note from the Clerk on IT costs for the period April to December 2014, as previously requested.

Cllr Clarke suggested that when it comes to the purchase of hardware, prices should be compared more widely. There are two separate strands to the business - remaining with PC Doctor for software, labour costs etc, but not necessarily remaining with the same contractor for new hardware.

Cllr West suggested that to get a comprehensive, good IT service working with the same IT provider is important and provides continuity. The problem is that costs can start to drift up, with a balance to be struck between service and quality.

**RESOLVED: That the report is received and that the Clerk continues to carefully scrutinise IT costs (NC)**

#### 54. Bank Reconciliations

**RESOLVED: That the bank reconciliations for December 2014 and January 2015, as verified by the Chairman, are noted (NC)**

## 55. Payment Schedule for January 2015

Cllr Bartos queried entry 7858 for £14.40 - tickets for a Mayoral event. The Clerk clarified that this was for the printing of tickets for the Mayor's Spring Concert. Cllr Bartos questioned why the Town Council were paying for this. He said in the past this was taken from the revenue raised by these events, and not paid by the Town Council.

Cllr West said that for the Town Council to pay for anything associated with the Mayor's charity was the equivalent of the Town Council giving a contribution to the Mayor's charity, adding that such costs should normally be taken out of the charity's funds, as a legitimate charge.

Cllr Lewis requested the surplus raised from the Springboard music festival be returned to the Town Council, and not donated to the Mayor's charity. The Clerk clarified that there was at the time a COPS Committee resolution passed that £1,000 be approved to help launch the Springboard event.

On asbestos costs the Clerk clarified that this is part of the total cost for an asbestos management plan and survey.

Cllr Lewis queried the Neighbourhood Plan costs. The Clerk confirmed that a grant of £7,000 had been awarded by central government, with 10% withheld until £7,000 of expenditure could be accounted for. It had, and they had since released the balance of 10% - £700, to the Town Council.

**RESOLVED: That the Payment Schedule for January 2015 is received, subject to the cost of tickets for the Mayor's Spring Concert being paid from ticket revenue, and not charged to the Town Council (NC)**

The meeting concluded at 8.30 pm