

# STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 DECEMBER 2023 AT 7.00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE, STOTFOLD.

---

### Committee Members present:

S Buck (Chair), Mrs M Cooper, S Hayes (Vice Chair), Mrs J Hyde, J Smith, B Saunders, J Talbot.

### Also present:

E Payne, Town Clerk

1 Member of Public (virtually)

---

### **94/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Matthews. It was **RESOLVED** to:

*Accept apologies.*

### **95/23 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **96/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES**

There was one member of the public present. No questions were asked.

### **97/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members received the minutes of the Establishment Committee meeting held on 20 October and 25 October 2023 and it was **RESOLVED** that:

*The minutes are a true record of the meeting.*

### **98/23 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDANCE RECEIVED AND MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION.**

#### **98/23.1 Code of Conduct Training**

In light of the Standing Orders update, the Clerk has booked Cllrs Bendall, Venneear and Headington onto Code of Conduct training, organised by BATPC which is an e-learning module.

#### **98/23.2 Register of Interest**

Following a review of the registers of interest held by CBC, it transpires that Cllrs Dhaliwal, Matthews, Bendall, Headington and Venneear need to complete their registers of interest as a matter of urgency.

### 98/23.3 Councillor Vacancy

The deadline for a by-election to be called expires on 21 December 2023. If there is to be a vacancy, the Clerk will advertise the position for co-option in the New Year.

***Post Meeting Note: CBC advised the Town Clerk that a by-election has not been called. Therefore, a co-option vacancy will be advertised in the New Year.***

### 98/23.4 Learning Nest

The Clerk has signed up the Town Council to LearningNest, a module of the Worknest system which allows unlimited access to training modules. Following on from the H&S audit, where there were a number of courses that are recommended for staff (manual handling, DSE etc), as well as two data breaches in the last 2 months, it is anticipated that the investment will be recouped within a short space of time. The training undertaken will be evaluated after 9 months, with a view to cancelling or extending the subscription.

## 99/23. REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

### 99/23.1 Mayoral Insignia

Members received a report regarding the current mayoral insignia in relation to the Vice Chair and consort. Members felt that a badge may be more suitable for consorts to wear.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Agree to purchase additional civic regalia for the Deputy Mayor and Consorts with designs to be agreed by a future meeting.***
- b) The budget for this expenditure is 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Budget.***

### 99/23.2 Stotfold Town Council – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Members received a report regarding celebrating/commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of Stotfold Town Council. Members felt that it was important to commemorate this event, as a separate activity, not attached to either the Mill Weekend or D-Day Celebrations. Members liked the idea of a historical exhibition, which would appeal to a certain sector of residents, however, were aware that any celebrations should include as many residents as possible. Members noted that there was an agenda item to confirm setting up a Community & Events Committee which would be a good vehicle to organise these events.

A date for the formation of the council was not known, however, it would have been after the May elections.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

***Consider suitable commemorative events at a future meeting of the Events & Community Committee (if resolved to set up this committee).***

### 99/23.3 Investments

Members received a report with a recommendation to open an account with CCLA to improve the return on investment for the Town Council's reserves. Members were advised that it was not a 'deposit' scheme, in the true sense of the word. Members noted that other Parish and Town Councils were happy with their deposits with this organisation, as were local charities but were realistic that there is always risk associated with investments, the value of which can go down as well as up. Members were advised that the Town Council are not covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme due to the size of the organisation. It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) ***Open an account with the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund***
- b) ***Invest £1m.***

#### **99/23.4 Budget 2024/25**

Members received a proposed budget for 2024/25. Members reviewed the notes to the budget with recommendations to increase various budgets and remove earmarked reserves where appropriate. Members agreed with the amount of top up for the earmarked reserves.

Members queried where the income from the electric charging points in Brook Street Car Park was received. It could be added as a revenue stream or put into an earmarked reserve for the future maintenance of car park and facilities. Equally, the income from the charging points at the Memorial Hall could be used for sinking fund for the Memorial Hall car park. However, after discussion, Members considered that it would be a generic 'car park reserve' to cover all the car parks the town council are responsible for.

Members noted that the high levels of earmarked reserves for the cemetery were held to investigate extending the site further and Members considered that this needed to be revisited as part of the long-term planning for the site. Members were conscious of the condition of the cemetery toilets and that this reserve would be used for their repairs. Members were advised that the income for the 4G mast went automatically into this reserve.

Members queried the reserve for office equipment (£5,000) and were advised that there had been an increase in the revenue budget to £15,000. Members were advised that the printer in the office is struggling with the 365 software and a newer machine would have a better functionality including private printing. The change of phone lines from copper to digital would also incur additional costs including alarm updates and getting rid of the fax.

Cllr Hayes was thanked for his assistance in the formation of this budget.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) ***Set up a new reserve for car park maintenance, to be funded by income from the car charging points in Brook Street and the Memorial Hall.***
- b) ***Revisit extending the cemetery at a future meeting of the Cemetery Committee.***
- c) ***Update the budget with the recommendations.***
- d) ***Ratify the budget at the next meeting.***

#### **99/23.5 Interim Internal Audit 2023-24**

Members received the interim internal audit. There were no questions. Members were advised that it was part of the annual governance statement that this process should be reviewed regularly. It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) ***Note the audit.***
- b) ***Recommend its adoption by Council.***
- c) ***Review the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2024 onwards.***

#### 99/23.6 Mossman EMR

Members received a proposal to release the earmarked reserve currently held for the Mossman Centre to the tenants for future maintenance. Members noted that the tenants have a full repairing lease and that any funds released would be used for repairs to the fabric of the building and site, not for running costs. Members had a brief discussion regarding the origins of the Mossman legacy. It was **RESOLVED** to:

- a) ***Release £4,457 from the Mossman Earmarked Reserves to the Guiding Association, shut down the reserve and its associated bank account.***
- b) ***Ask the Guiding Association to advise the Town Council what the funds had been spent on.***

#### 99/23.7 Events & Community Committee

Members received a report recommending that a separate Events & Community Committee was set up, reporting to the Establishment Committee. Members considered that with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and D-Day commemoration, setting up this committee would be prudent and would cover a variety of community engagement activities. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that:

- a) ***An Events & Community Committee is set up, reporting to the Establishment Committee.***
- b) ***Membership of this committee to be agreed at the next meeting of the Town Council.***
- c) ***Agree the Terms of Reference in the report.***

#### 99/23.8 Christmas Lights Switch On Event

Members received an income and expenditure report for the Christmas Lights Switch On Event. Members noted that some of the expenditure was for equipment that would be used for a variety of activities and future events. It was **RESOLVED** to:

***Note the report.***

#### 99/23.9 The Haven Additional Works

Members received a report on additional expenditure relating to the works at The Haven. Members were advised that the area had not been measured correctly. Members recognised the benefit to the Town Council with a community garden and the location for the Christmas tree. It was **RESOLVED** to:

***Approve the release of additional sum of £6,622.21 from General Reserves.***

#### 99/23.10 Health and Safety Audit

Members received a report on a health and safety audit, undertaken in October 2022. The report had not been implemented at the time and the staff were only aware of it when a follow up meeting with Worknest had been scheduled. Members were advised that the organisation is safe it is about accurate records of works undertaken. Members were advised that there would be a health and safety week in the office to ensure that the actions of the audit were undertaken and recorded. It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) ***That the Council understands its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.***
- b) ***To note the progress to date on the implementation of the recommendations from the health and safety audit.***

#### **99/23.11 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations**

Members received an updated set of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Members noted that the changes requested at the last meeting had been implemented. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that:

***The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are adopted.***

#### **99/23.12 Co-Option Policy**

Members received a proposed policy to manage future co-options which had been requested following a review of Standing Orders. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that:

***The Co-Option Policy is adopted.***

#### **99/23.13 Staff Handbook**

Members received a report regarding the distribution of a new staff handbook. The Town Clerk was seeking clarification on a number of points. Members clarified the following points:

- a) Gift & Hospitality – de minimus of £25.
- b) Dress code – no specific dress code specified unless staff are provided with uniform.
- c) Drug and alcohol – reserve the right for the Town Clerk to investigate if the need arises.
- d) Sickness absence – Occupational health is requested if absence exceeds 3 weeks or there is a pattern of sick leave that warrants further investigation.
- e) Jury service – unpaid leave. Staff can claim back from the court service.
- f) Compassionate/Bereavement leave – 3 working days leave paid with an extension at the discretion of the Town Clerk. Direct family only (parents, spouse/partner, children, siblings, grandparents).
- g) Annual leave – noted that staff can carry forward 5 days into the next leave year but that this should be restricted to being taken before the end of May unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- h) Homeworking – Noted that this section is included.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

***Note the distribution of the staff handbook to all employees.***

#### **99/23.14 Staff Salary**

Members received a report on the nationally awarded pay rise for staff. It was **RESOLVED** to:

***Note the report.***

#### **99/23.15 Bank Reconciliation**

Members received the bank reconciliation for October 2024. It was **RESOLVED** that:

***The Bank Reconciliations for October 2023 inclusive were signed by the RFO and Cllr Buck.***

**99/23.16 Work Programme**

Members received the Work Programme for this committee, and it was **RESOLVED** to:

*Note the work programme.*

**100/23 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Members resolved to exclude the Press and Public for the consideration of the following items under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

**100/23.1 Staff Matters**

Members received a confidential report, and it was **RESOLVED** to:

*Note the report.*

**100/23.2 Additional Staff Resource**

Members received a confidential report on additional staff resources. It was **RESOLVED** to:

*Consider the implementation of the report, and its budget implications at the next meeting.*

**101/23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

24 January 2024

The meeting closed at 2054.

MINUTES APPROVED (date): \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED BY CHAIR: \_\_\_\_\_