

Amersham Town Council

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2015

PRESENT: Councillor M. Vivis (Chairman and Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor Mrs A. Lamont (Town Mayor)
Councillor R. Jones
Councillor H. Newton
Councillor N. Shepherd
Councillor Mrs L. Walsh

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk
Mrs L. Richardson - Deputy Town Clerk
Mr Mark Richardson – Facilities Manager
Councillor C. Morgan
Councillor Mrs C. Jones

The evening begun with a presentation from McCarthy and Stone detailing a development proposal for the Old Town. Mr David Stagg also spoke about the future of Old Amersham Village Hall.

Cllr Mark Vivis agreed to act as Chairman in the absence of Cllrs Williams and Lacey. Cllr Vivis opened the meeting with a short tribute to Cllr Davida Allen – an ex Mayor of Amersham who died suddenly this week.

40. **APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from Cllrs M. Lacey (Deputy Chairman); A. Seymour; MJ Phillips and Mrs L. Staite.

41. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were no declarations.

42. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 AUGUST 2015:** There were no matters arising.

43. **TO PRESENT THE QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT – JULY - SEPTEMBER 2015:** The second quarterly Finance Report was circulated to all Councillors. The accompanying notes gave an over view of the figures although we are still down on income due to the change in finance personnel. The Town Clerk was confident that we would be completely up to date by the end of the third quarter. It was AGREED to approve the accounts for July, August and September. It was also noted that the Budget Presentation was being planned for Monday 07 December – the same night as the Community Services Committee meeting. The Town Clerk was asked to circulate this date.

44. **TO CONSIDER URBAN PLANTING FOR AMERSHAM ON THE HILL:** A report had already been circulated by Steve Catanach to Councillors. The plan is to soften the urban feel of the retail streets in Amersham on the Hill by planting a series of trees in Hill Avenue and Sycamore Road. Steve has researched 21 potential sites for the trees and Bucks CC have approved each location. Each tree root will be anchored and lined with a membrane before the hole/base of the tree is covered with a metal grille and stone resin. The cost to plant 21 trees is £16,658 which amounts to a total of £794 per tree.

The Councillors were concerned on the cost but keen to approve the scheme as it would transform the shopping roads of Amersham on the Hill. The vote was 6 votes in favour of going ahead – this would be ratified at Council and the trees are likely to be planted in the Spring. Cllr Morgan and Mrs C. Jones indicated that they were in favour. ACTION: JW/SC

45. **UP-DATE ON THE EXISTING CHRISTMAS LIGHTS CONTRACT AND THE ADDITIONS FOR 2015:** The Town Clerk circulated the current lights contract and the additions being made for this year. This included some extra power units on the first two street lights in Whielden Street and a further unit in The Broadway to extend the festoons as far as Joe's the newsagent. The Council would also provide lights for a Christmas tree to be erected in front of Market Hall from the west end. A new power unit would be added to a street light in Amersham on the Hill outside the Tom Yum Restaurant. These additions were approved and the whole budget comes in at approx. £17,800 – within the £18,000 budget.

The overtime for manning the road closures for both Christmas events was also approved – this is *in addition* to the monies given to the Community Groups. However the request for LED reindeer in the Memorial Gardens was refused. Councillors felt that this form of decoration was out of keeping with the Gardens which are “Gardens of Remembrance”. There was also concerns that such decorations could easily be stolen and that the winter planting could get trashed in the dark. ACTION: JW/SC

46. **TO APPROVE THE £1000 GRANT FOR THE CHRISTMAS SHOWCASE AND £1000 GRANT TO THE AMERSHAM SOCIETY FOR THE LATE NIGHT CHRISTMAS SHOPPING EVENING:** Requests were received from The Amersham Society for the Christmas Shopping Evening on Friday 04 December and from the Amersham Action Group for the Christmas Showcase on Saturday 05 December 2015. Both requests were approved. ACTION: JW/TC

47. **TO DISCUSS THE FUNDING OF 2016 CARNIVAL:** This item will be put on the agenda of the Council meeting on Monday 16 November 2015. The Round Table had been invited to the Council meeting tonight and will be invited to the meeting on 16 November. Every attempt will be made to meet with the Group but they have been very hard to contact. ACTION: JW/ZR

48. **TO CONSIDER THE PLEDGE TO ASSESS THE STEP FREE ACCESS FOR AMERSHAM STATION:** The Councillors discussed this project but felt that the price tag was too expensive for the small sum that we could make available. The Town Clerk was asked to respond to the MP stating that Members give moral support but would make no financial pledge at this stage. ACTION: JW

49. **TO APPROVE THE CLOSING OF A SEPARATE BANK ACCOUNT FOR THE ARTS FESTIVAL:** Historically the Arts Festival funds has been kept separately for some time. However with the increasing use of the ATC card machine more money is going through the account and having to be refunded. It was AGREED to close down the separate Arts Festival Bank Account and run the event from ATC audited bank accounts.

ACTION: JW

50. **UP-DATE ON THE DEVOLVED CLUSTER AND FUTURE BUDGET**

OPTIONS: We currently carry out works for other Parish Councils, schools, private high profile housing areas and one-off jobs in the private sector. We have regular devolved works on behalf of BCC in Amersham and Gerrards Cross – these agreements run for four years albeit on a reducing budget (Amersham’s budget from BCC will reduce from £24,546 this year to £20,345 for 2016-19). The estimate for 2014-2015 will be turnover of £100,000 with approx profit of £45,000.

For future contracts – Little Chalfont is up for renewal in April 2016 – this is worth £29k to us but there is no guarantee that they will continue to use us. However we have had expressions of interest from Wendover PC, Chesham TC and Farnham Royal PC for devolved grass-cutting.

Options to consider include:

- * Should ATC take on more staff and equipment if work is available?
- * Is it appropriate to operate in the private/residential sector or should we focus on other Parishes, schools and businesses?
- * Private sector work is readily available but some find our rates too expensive.
- * Could a subsidised grass cutting service be offered for residents?
- * Have a look at the cricket pitches – if we reduced down to one cricket square just for Amersham teams – this would reduce the staff time and cost of preparing two – especially as two of our regular teams are outside the Amersham boundary.

The Councillors asked for more information and a full business plan.

51. **UP-DATE ON THE RE-APPLICATION FOR FLINT BARN COURT AND AGREEMENT AS TO THE TYPE OF BARRIER:**

The Town Clerk up-dated Councillors as to what has been happening over the past couple of months. The various reports were being done and we would need to appoint an agent to take forward our re-application as soon as possible. It was AGREED that we would wait until Cllr Williams was back to gain his input

ACTION: JW

52. **CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL MATTERS:** There was nothing new to report.

53. **BUCKS COUNTY COUNCIL MATTERS:** The Town Clerk stated that the Local Area Forum were calling for items with a deadline in December.

54. **MATTERS FOR REPORT:** It was AGREED that ATC would not be able to offer the Chiltern Chamber of Commerce free use of Flint Barn for their meetings but we could offer the charity rate to them. It was also agreed that the Grants Committee would be made up of Cllr Mrs Caroline Jones; Cllr Rob Jones; the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Part two

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admissions to meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they include the likely disclosure of exempt information, stated to be confidential.

55. **ITEM INVOLVING ATC PROPERTIES**

57. **ITEM INVOLVING ATC EQUIPMENT**

58. **ITEM INVOLVING A BUILDING IN THE COMMUNITY**

59. **ITEM INVOLVING ATC PROPERTY**

The meeting closed at 21.40pm.

Chairman.....

Date

F&GP