**Market Drayton Town Council**

**Minutes of a Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8 July 2021 at 7.38pm.**

**PRESENT: Councillors: R. Aldcroft, A. Allen, T. Beckett, B. Chapman, G. Chevins, M. Erwin, R. Hughes, T. Manton (Chairman), M. Smith, and M. Whittle.**

There was 1 member of the public present and 5 members listening via Teams.

**Present:** **Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk.**

The Chairman announced the meeting was being recorded and live streamed.

**1.FG APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Nellins due to work commitments and Councillor R. Smith due to illness.

**2.FG DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

**3.FG PUBLIC SESSION**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Payne from Market Drayton Community Enterprise to the meeting.

Documents were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

Mr Payne introduced himself as the Chairman of the Market Drayton Community Enterprise. He said he is talking to members because he wants to explore the potential for the Town Hall to be utilised more freely for the benefit of the people of the town. The Chamber is only used for committee meetings and he feels there are a lot of charitable organisations crying out for space and feels the Chamber would be an ideal location and opportunity.

MDCE was created in 2015 and is a registered charity; the organisation needs a base to provide the town an entry into extensive National Charities support and to become a walk in and signpost base for all related health and wellbeing issues.

He proposes the creation of a mezzanine floor in the Chamber. Council have previously discussed this; it would free up the ground floor for trained volunteers to provide a wealth of information to individuals. The administration staff can be located upstairs.

Mr Payne asked members to seriously think about his proposal, it will ensure the Town Hall building is used every day, evening and weekends for special events making it a real asset to the town. They have a charitable status so would be eligible for some grants to put towards the work needed to be done.

The Chairman asked if members had any questions.

Councillor Aldcroft said he has seen an article in today’s Shropshire Star that the group are in discussions with the Corbet regarding hiring a room out in their building, he asked Mr Payne if this is true and he is aware that Shropshire Council have offered the group the old Tourist Information premises in Cheshire Street and asked why this is not suitable?

Mr Payne said he doesn’t know where the press has got that information from; they were talking to the owner of the Corbet sixteen months ago but have not had a discussion with them recently. Shropshire Council wanted the group to do part of their work in return for then using the building so they refused the offer.

The Chairman reminded members there is an item on the agenda for members to discuss in detail the proposal from MDCE.

Mr Payne thanked members for the opportunity to speak at the meeting and left the Chamber.

**4.FG MINUTES**

Councillor Beckett proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED** with 3 abstentions:

**To confirm and agree the minutes of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 25 February 2021.**

**5.FG SMALL GRANTS**

Documents were circulated prior to the meeting.

1. **Hope House**

Councillor Whittle had some concerns that if the grant was awarded there is no guarantee the money will benefit Market Drayton.

The Clerk said Council have previously given to Hope House; the organisation does cover this area.

Councillor Aldcroft asked for the protocol and criteria of small and large grants to be an agenda item on the next Financial and General Purposes Committee meeting to review.

After a brief discussion:

Councillor Chapman proposed, Councillor Hughes seconded and it was **RESOLVED** with 7 votes for, 2 votes against and 1 abstention:

**To agree a small grant of £300 to Hope House.**

Councillor Chevins left the Chamber.

1. **Girls Friendship Society – Market Drayton**

After a brief discussion:

Councillor Chevins entered the Chamber.

Councillor Whittle proposed, Councillor Chapman seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree a small grant of £300 to Girls Friendship Society – Market Drayton.**

1. **Artsfest**

Councillor Chapman said he likes the idea of the monument the Artsfest are proposing. He has no objections to awarding the group £300 but feels if they want to carry out a project, they should do all the works necessary including seeking the correct planning permission themselves; Council administration staff should not have to do any work on their behalf.

Councillor Chapman proposed, Councillor Erwin seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree a small grant of £300 to Artsfest to help towards the planning permission required to erect a wooden and stained-glass sculpture tribute for local NHS Staff, Keyworkers, and Caseworkers.**

**No planning permission or associated paperwork would be submitted by Town Council’s Officers and the sculpture must be maintained by Artsfest.**

**All works and insulations to be carried out by Artsfest.**

1. **Age UK**

After a brief discussion:

Councillor Whittle proposed, Councillor Manton seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree a small grant of £300 to Age UK.**

**6.FG LARGE GRANTS**

The Chairman said he would like members to consider moving £15,500 out of the Community and Governance budget into the Finance and General Purposes budget for large grants so that small and large grants sit together.

He said the Council’s overall budget for 2021/22 will remain the same and asked for members thoughts.

Councillor Whittle said the money sits where it does to help the community; he understands the logic for it to be moved but would prefer it to be left where it is.

The Chairman said the reason for the movement is finance of this money and he would prefer to see the two grants in one budget together, he has had a conversation with the Chairman of that Committee; he understands and has no objections.

Councillor Hughes proposed, Councillor Chapman seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To move £15,500 out of the Community and Governance budget into the Finance and General Purposes budget for large grants for this financial year 2021/22.**

The Chairman said Council have received two requests for financial funding.

Documents were circulated prior to the meeting.

1. Citizens Advice Bureau

The Chairman said the organisation are requesting financial aid of £3,000, they have submitted a lot of data showing the support they give within the town and this covers a whole spectrum of age ranges.

He feels they offer a great service to our community and asked for members thoughts:

Councillor Beckett said in the current climate with Covid19 they offer a valuable service for people of the town to get needed help and advice.

Councillor Beckett proposed, Councillor Allen seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree financial funding of £3,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau.**

1. Ginger and Spice Event

The Chairman wanted members to note that the Ginger and Spice Event is a profit-making company; they have submitted their accounts and it appears to confirm the organisation does not make a lot of money out of the event.

Councillor Chevins said being in the events industry himself he would be very surprised if the organisation makes a lot of money at this event albeit the event is very good for the town and well supported.

The Chairman said this event will also bring a lot of revenue into the town for local shops to benefit from.

Councillor Aldcroft said the proposal says that on the event literature it will be promoting the town, if we are to support the event which is also a good thing.

Councillor Chevins proposed, Councillor Whittle seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree financial funding of £1,500 to the Ginger and Spice Event.**

**7.FG TOWN HALL**

Councillor Hughes thought the Chamber window should be looked at after a decision on the Market Drayton Community Enterprise Request had been looked and decided on.

Members **NOTED** Councillor Hughes comments agreed to change the items around.

1. Market Drayton Community Enterprise Request

The Chairman said members heard earlier from Mr Payne requesting alterations and the to use the Town Hall; he had some concerns; one being why do they need such a large space? and the other is the hugh cost implications this would have on the Council and feels there are other better places within the town. The Town Hall is regularly used by the administration staff and other more suitable organisations albeit the Chamber could be utilised more.

He asked for members thoughts.

Councillor Chapman said the work the organisation is doing is very commendable but he did not agree with the group taking over the ground floor of the Town Hall; they should be at a more suitable premises. Due to the large financial costs, it will take for the changes to be made. The group should stand independently so they have sole control over the project; the Town Hall is the Civic centre of the town and should be respected as that.

Councillor Beckett said he was aware a while back the Council hire out the Chamber and asked if this is still happening?

The Clerk said yes but this could be promoted more; none for profit organisations can hire the Chamber for free and MDCE make use of this facility on a regular basis.

Councillor Beckett thought it would be a better idea for the Council to hire the Chamber out to various organisations rather than letting one organisation take control over it.

Councillor Hughes said the organisation is a worthy cause however, this request has been coming back and forward to Council several times; to transform the building will be too costly and the annual revenue costs will need to be considered. Ideally, they need a new premise with low rent to operate in.

Councillor Chevins also thought the group carry out some good work but the Chamber should be utilised to generate more revenue for the Council and perhaps they could make use of the Chamber more.

The Clerk said they already do.

Councillor Aldcroft said he can not see a problem with the group using the Chamber daily; he does strongly object to the idea that they would permanently occupy the building using all the same facilities as the staff, expecting the Council to install and pay for a mezzanine floor which will cost a lot of money and disruption. They should continue with the exhibitions they put on throughout the year.

Councillor Chapman proposed, Councillor Whittle seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To reject the request from Market Drayton Community Enterprise for alterations and use of the Town Hall.**

**The Town Clerk to write out to the organisation to confirm Council’s decision.**

i) Chamber window

Councillor Chevins left the meeting.

The Chairman said members have two like-for-like window quotes for the large Chamber window, one in a wooden construction and one in UPVC white or grey as requested in a previous meeting. Both Quotes are from local companies.

After a brief discussion:

Councillor Allen proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To go ahead and purchase the white UPVC like for like window to replacement the large rotten window in the Chamber.**

**8.FG ONGOING AUDIO LIVE STREAMING OF MEETINGS**

The Chairman asked members to consider the possibility of continuing with live streaming meetings after the end of all Covid 19 restrictions on 19 July 2021 and the possibility of improving the technology of live streaming by providing mics and associated equipment for the meetings.

Councillor Hughes said currently when you are live streaming, we are compromising the planning meetings; previously all planning applications were projected for members to see. Could a standalone system be added to the system?

The Clerk agreed with Councillor Hughes, previously the laptop was used to project the planning applications for members to have a discussion however with live streaming you need the laptop to operate that, so logistically the two cannot be carried out at the same time.

The Chairman said the live broadcastings of the meetings is a great thing to do and is very much valued by our community. He though it should be kept and promoted so residents are aware of what the Town Council doing; how the Council work and show what their Ward Councillor is doing on their behalf.

Councillor M. Smith said there are various systems to use, the example he has researched for members to look at is for eight wireless conference system desktop microphones and a receiver unit at a cost of £1,499. Council would need two lots of these systems for each Councillor to have a microphone. The system works just like the microphone we are currently using but the quality should be much better.

The Clerk asked if we should contact B.S.B Sound, a company the Council use regularly for events to ask for their help and advice?

Councillor Hughes thought it would be a good idea to ask a company to come out and have some equipment on trial for two separate meetings so that we can evaluate the quality they produce.

Councillor Whittle thought it would be a real asset to this Council if the community could listen into the live meetings and hear the discussion clearly.

Councillor Beckett said we should be coming out of social distancing soon, sharing a microphone should suffice.

Councillor Aldcroft thought a Working Group should be created to investigate the microphones and equipment in more depth.

Councillor Chapman said each Councillor has a laptop; perhaps they could be used.

The Chairman had concerns with this idea because it would mean having to be reliant upon each member remembering to charge and bring their laptop to the meetings.

Councillor Hughes proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To carry on as we are at the moment live streaming the meetings in the same manner.**

**To ask a sound company to come and give Council some advice and guidance on trialling a microphone system for the Meetings.**

**To set up a Working Group with delegated powers to discuss the microphones to improve the live streaming at the Committee Meetings.**

**Working Group made up of the following members:**

**Councillors: M. Smith, T. Manton, and B. Chapman.**

**A report from the Working Group will come back at a later meeting for discussion.**

**9.FG SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Chairman asked members to consider updating and providing synergy between the Council’s website and Facebook page to bring it into the twenty first century, ensuring it is easy to navigate and to promote all the work we currently do.

Councillor Aldcroft asked about proper training for the staff to carry out this role?

Councillor Chapman feels the website needs refreshing because it looks old. It is a specialised job; then appropriate training should be offered.

Councillor Chapman proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED** with 1 abstention:

**To explore the possibility of getting prices from a professional company to build a new Town Council Website which is more modern and up to date.**

**To train the administration staff to update the new Website.**

The Chairman said he would like the Facebook page to continue; but to look the same as the Website page so they are inked together.

Councillor M. Smith said it is possible to mirror the two pages together.

The Chairman urged all members to pass more information to the administration staff so that the two pages are up to date and their work is promoted.

**10.FG MARKET DRAYTON SPORTS ASSOCIATION ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION**

Documents were circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairman said a request has been received from the Chairman of MDSA to increase the Directors from nine to ten.

Councillor Hughes said this is to bring it up to date with the sporting bodies at the club.

Councillor Beckett proposed, Councillor Whittle seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree to increase the Directors from nine to ten on the Market Drayton Sports Association Articles of Association.**

**11.FG POLICE**

The Chairman suggested setting up a Working Group to have regular meetings with the police. To continue the dialogue with Inspector Greenaway with the ongoing issues in Market Drayton.

Councillor Aldcroft said The Clerk, himself and Inspector Greenaway have organised regular meeting every couple of months to discuss the policing issues within the town, last year we met three times and it worked well.

The Chairman suggested organising a Working Group to meet with the Inspector.

The Clerk said she has spoken to the Inspector; she is happy to meet up with a Working Group to discuss their issues but will not meet up with individuals.

Councillor Chapman said he has daily communication with the police on policing matters of this town in particular the drug issues and issues within his Ward. He supports regular meetings with the police.

Councillor Aldcroft proposed, Councillor Whittle seconded and it was **RESOLVED,** with 4 votes for, 3 votes against and 2 abstentions:

**To set up at Working Group consisting of the Clerk, Mayor, and Chairman’s of Committees to meet up with the Police Inspector Greenaway every six weeks to discuss policing matters within the town.**

**In the absence of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman should attend.**

**A report from each meeting will be on a Full Council or Community and Governance Committee meeting for members to hear an update.**

**12.FG FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Chairman said Under Section 2.2 Accounting and Audit on the Financial Regulations; a new member needs to sign off the monthly reconciliation’s accounts, please note this cannot be a member on the bank signatory list.

This will be once a quarter.

Councillor Whittle said he is not on the bank signatory list and will be willing to carry out this role.

Councillor Allen proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To appoint Councillor Whittle to sign off the monthly reconciliation’s accounts.**

**13.FG FINANCIAL REPORT**

Documents were circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chairman asked if there were any comments members would like to make.

There were no comments made.

Councillor Hughes proposed, Councillor Aldcroft seconded and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To agree the income and expenditure report: 1 April 2021 – 31 June 2021.**

Councillor Allen left the meeting.

**14.FG OUTSIDE STAFF WELFARE FACILITY**

The Chairman said the owner of Holly Farm is his neighbour and knows him so would like to declare a personal interest in this item.

The Chairman reported to members that the Council currently rent a storage facility. The Council have had it for approximately ten years and it consists of a nine hundred square foot store a poly tunnel, parking spaces for the service vehicles, space for a skip and water usage. The rent covers the cost of the store, poly tunnel and water usage only, the space for the vehicles, water bowser, trailer and the skip are not charged for.

A police officer entered the Town Hall foyer.

Councillor Aldcroft left the Chamber to speak to the police office.

He said himself and Councillor Chapman have recently visited the site, there virtually are no welfare facilities.

The Chairman feels a meeting with the owner is needed to discuss possible new toilet and sink facilities and a formal agreement with the owner needs to be formal and drawn up.

The police officer left the building and Councillor Aldcroft entered the Chamber and re- joined the meeting.

Councillor Hughes asked if the owner is happy to make the alterations?

The Chairman said no discussions with the owner have taken place.

The Clerk said we have a good working relationship with the owner and she is sure he would be willing to discuss the Council’s requirements.

Councillor Aldcroft said he went up to the site about eighteen months ago; from a health and safety point of view the roof does not meet the walls and he would consider the store/workshop to be unsafe, it requires a welfare facility and better access to the unit.

We have had a Working Group looking at this in more detail and have investigated the possibility of moving the facility to a new unit on Bert Smith Way and two other locations. Before a decision on anything this evening he feels all the costings needs to be gathered for a future meeting to ensure our outside staff have better welfare facilities and safer working conditions.

The Clerk made members aware that the outside staff have a welfare facility at the Cemetery they can use for breaks etc.

Councillor Hughes said there should be a meeting with the owner of Holly Farm to discuss our requirements in detail to see if they can be agreed because he feels relocating will incur very high costs.

Councillor Chapman said if the current building is unsafe should we not remove the outside staff immediately?

Councillor Hughes suggested having a Health and Safety report on the building and bring it back to committee for members to look at the findings.

Councillor Aldcroft proposed, Councillor Whittle seconded and it was **RESOLVED** with 1 abstention:

**To carry out a Health and Safety report on the Holly Farm store.**

**To have a meeting with the current landlord of Holly Farm to investigate the costings installing welfare facilities and discussing the whole rental in detail.**

**To look at costings for a possible relocating premises.**

**All costings to be brought back to a future meeting for members to look at and consider.**

**15.FG INFORMATION**

Members **NOTED:**

* Town Council have received £72,334.81 from Shropshire Council in connection with the Community Infrastructure Levy and this money now sits in Earmarked Reserves.
* Shropshire Council business rates refund on public conveniences and Community Centres:

Newport Road toilets £2,295.40

Towers Lawn toilets £5,110.81

The Zone £ 935.63

* A copy of the new budget.

The meeting concluded 9.19 pm.

Chairman ……………………………. Date …………………………….