



# Stonehouse Town Council

## MINUTES

### OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 7PM IN THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, STONEHOUSE

#### Present:

Theresa Watt (Convenor of Committee)  
Chris Brine (Chairman Town Council)  
Simon Lewis (Vice Chairman Town Council)  
Pam Swain (Deputy Convenor of Committee)  
Vicky Redding  
Paul Stephens

Also Present: Town Clerk Gill Jennings, 7 members of the public

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#### **K1/42 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES**

None received

#### **K1/43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are reminded of their obligation within the requirements of the Adopted Model Code of Conduct to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests where applicable.

**Cllr Paul Stephens declared a personal interest in K1/52**

#### **K1/44 ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** (Maximum of 15 minutes – Any member of the public may speak only once in respect of any business itemised on the Agenda for a maximum of 5 minutes)

Rick Jordan proposed that the Elm Road building should be purchased and redeveloped as a community building, he had been in preliminary discussions with Gloucestershire Land for People, Prince's Trust and others to ascertain where funding might be found. When asked what purpose the community building might fulfil residents present at the meeting suggested a children's centre or adult education suite or a combination of the two. Residents felt that the community offer had not been addressed by the planning application and insufficient community space had been allowed to compensate for the loss of public amenity. Residents also expressed their concern that the library in Stonehouse should be retained and that this might also move to the Elm Road building.

#### **K1/45 TO FORMALLY APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2013**

The Minutes were approved although it was noted that Cllr Watt's presence at that meeting should be struck from the record.

#### **K1/46 YOUTH BUILDING**

1. Items outstanding from project manager and current status – An update was provided in that security issues were still under discussion, the project had been delayed by utility companies and unexpected costs had arisen in the relocation of a drain and power cable. **Clerk to progress security concerns.**

2. To agree the cost of insurance of the youth building in the sum of £276.23

**The cost was agreed by F & S due to time constraints. The funds would be from ART budget.**

3. To consider arrangements for an Opening ceremony  
Although the date of 4<sup>th</sup> November appeared realistic for completion the Committee agreed that snagging and furnishing would take place before making any announcement. **It would be left to the Youth Working Group to make arrangements.**

#### **K1/47 BUILDING FACILITIES WORKING GROUP**

To receive a report

**The Building Facilities Group had met on 9<sup>th</sup> September and provided a report. There were no matters for decision by F & S.**

#### **K1/48 SHARED LOCATION**

To receive a report on the consultation findings (Cllr V Redding) and to consider the way forward.

The consultation findings were discussed. It seemed that the majority of users were borrowing books and accessing the library by foot, but from the comments gained it appeared that people were not keen on the change of location. There was concern about the lack of space.

Cllr Redding had discussed the consultation with Anne Riley, Group Manager of Stroud Libraries and had found that the library in its current location had 1539 visits per month. 38% of borrowers were under 17 and this group had not been captured in the Town Council survey. She also stated that the Arts Council reported that libraries going forward would be centrally located, collaborating with other services, advancing into digital technology and virtual library format.

**Having considered the consultation results and the fact that the library might evolve into a different format the Committee agreed to recommend to Council: That the physical space in the Town Hall would be an issue whereas in the future a virtual library would take up less space therefore for the time being the library should remain where it is. That the County Council are encouraged to look at alternative locations or alternative format.**

#### **K1/49 TOWN HALL**

1. To consider other potential uses for the Town Hall - the CAB have approached the Town Council regarding the creation of 3 interview rooms. Funding is currently available for alterations, there is also the possibility of making the hall more user friendly

2. To consider a programme of general improvements

**The Building Facilities group were tasked with providing a report on both issues. The Clerk was asked to collate information for discussion.**

## **K1/50 COMMITTEE STRUCTURES**

To receive a report from the Policy Working Group

A report was provided by the Policy Working Group from their meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> September and subsequent meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> September. Having considered this the Committee agreed to recommend that:

- 1. Public Participation was kept to a 15 minute agenda item but further public comment on important items would be allowed at the Chairman's discretion.**
- 2. Working Groups – Youth and Building Facilities should now report to ART.**

## **K1/51 FINANCE**

- To approve payments and receipts for August and agree Committee expenditure against budget.

**Expenditure against budget £10057.57 and Income £1412.00 was agreed.**

- To approve payments to date (Sept) and to receive a report on disputed Accounts

**Payments to chq 7547 £45408.67 were agreed.**

- To consider investment alternatives and instruct the RFO

**The Committee considered 4 options and chose the Cambridge Building Society who offered bespoke facilities to councils. The RFO is to arrange a further investment.**

- To discuss objectives for future S106 funding

**The Committee agreed that it was important to ensure that the remaining £55000 S106 funding was used for adult recreation. Two options were available:**

**Redevelopment of Oldends Pavilion**

**Purchase of Land at Ryeford Fields as a picnic area**

**The Clerk was asked to provide further reports.**

- To consider a grant application from Home Start for funding

**The Committee considered the application and accounts provided and agreed a grant of £500 by unanimous vote.**

## **K1/52 ELM ROAD YOUTH CLUB**

- With a planning application currently out for public consultation in response to the Town Council's objections the owner has asked whether the Council wishes to purchase the site. The Committee are asked to consider this and make a recommendation to Town Council

The Clerk stated the developer was due to carry out a public consultation on the 10<sup>th</sup> October. Cllr Brine expressed his concern that the offer to purchase had been made to put the council into a corner following their objection to the planning proposal and that the sum required of £250,000 was unrealistic. The Committee acknowledged there was public interest in the site but as Cllr Redding had pointed out a community building would incur ongoing maintenance costs which required an income stream to match. The Committee felt that it was important to emphasise to Stroud DC planning that the community offer was insufficient on the current plan. The Committee agreed that the feasibility of developing the site might be within the scope of a Community Land Trust and that this had been mentioned in the Council's CLT application.

**The Committee would recommend to Council that it responds to SWJP Developments stating that the asking price is unrealistic but that the Council will try to obtain funding to carry out a feasibility study.**

**K1/53 COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP**

1. To consider a report from the Communications Working Group (to be circulated)

A report from the meeting of the Communications Working Group of the 6<sup>th</sup> September was considered.

- **The Committee agreed with the recommendation to have a photo and biography of each councillor on the website.**
- **The Committee agreed the Charging Policy for the Newsletter and agreed to consider a Charging Policy for the Website in due course**
- **It was agreed that an Open Morning would be held in Easter to promote the work of the Council.**

The request by the Working Group for admin support for communications would be referred to the Staffing Committee.

**K1/54 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

4<sup>th</sup> November 2013

The Meeting adjourned to discuss a confidential report from the Staffing Committee and by Resolution excluded the press and public.