

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER AT 7.00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, PENRYN**

**Councillors**

Mrs G A Grant (Chairman)

Mrs B Hulme, Mrs M K May, M J Mullins, M Snowdon and C K Wenmoth

**33. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor C S F Smith (away).

**34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Mrs G A Grant, declared a non-registerable interest in Agenda No. 8 (Pre-Budget Discussion) with regard to the Youth Service budget as she was a Trustee of the Dracaena Centre, Falmouth. The Town Clerk advised in the interests of transparency that she was also a Trustee, although not required to formally declare an interest.

Councillors Mrs G A Grant, Mrs M K May and M Snowdon declared a non-registerable interest in Agenda No. 8 (Pre-Budget Discussion) with regard to any part of that item that may refer to funding for the Christmas Lights as they were members of the Christmas Lights Committee.

**35. DISPENSATIONS**

There were no requests for dispensations.

**36. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No requests had been received from members of the public wishing to speak at the meeting.

**37. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 19 September 2016 be approved and signed as a correct record.

*Proposed by Councillor M J Mullins and seconded by Councillor M Snowdon*

Councillor Mrs M K May raised a point of order with regard to Minute No. 29 (Customer Service Apprentice) and enquired whether it was a breach of Standing Orders to consider a proposal to appoint an apprentice within six months of the decision taken on 19 September 2016. The Town Clerk advised that the decision of that meeting had been to appoint an apprentice 'in principle' and therefore considering the proposal further did not constitute a rescission of the previous decision.

**38. CUSTOMER SERVICES APPRENTICE**

Following the a decision taken at the previous meeting of the Committee to approve the appointment of a Customer Services Apprentice in principle, the Town Clerk advised that she was seeking further direction from the Committee to

how to proceed. The Chairman added that as the Council moved closer to an agreement for the transfer of the library service it was important to move ahead with the appointment of an apprentice to enable them to be embedded in the team and become familiar with Town Council and One Stop Shop functions before learning the additional role of assisting in the library. She added that the Committee should also be mindful of the need to fit in with the course dates for the NVQ that the apprentice would be enrolled in.

During discussion, a number of issues were raised. The Chairman advised that contrary to assertions made at the previous meeting, it was anticipated that only one full-time equivalent post-holder would be likely to transfer from the current library and the Town Council would be doubling the opening hours of the library. She added that the apprentice would only be working in the office for four days a week as they would be attending college for one day a week.

It was suggested that it was too early to consider appointing an additional member of staff, that the footfall would drop in the library and that Cornwall Councillors were expressing concern regarding the devolution of Cornwall Council services to other bodies. It was further suggested that the Town Council should be prioritising the recruitment of volunteers in order that they could assist with the library service from the point of handover and that staff levels had been increased over the previous year with a part-time Customer Support Officer now being full-time and that the remaining part-time Customer Support Officer would not be working to full capacity without supporting Penryn Week.

In response, the Chairman commented that the Town Council should not rely on volunteers to provide the core library service and that support to Penryn Week would always be needed. The Vice-Chairman suggested that the drop in footfall could be a result of the reduced opening hours of the library. The Town Clerk acknowledged that the part-time Customer Support Officer occasionally had additional capacity, but that it was anticipated that she would assist in the training of the apprentice which would help to resolve that issue.

It was commented that the Town Council was losing hours as a result of staff taking time off in lieu and suggested that current staff be paid overtime instead rather than providing additional support through an apprenticeship. The Town Clerk responded that time off in lieu did not result in the loss of hours as staff taking time off had already worked more than their contracted hours, or occasionally were able to take time off for personal reasons and work extra hours to make the time up. She added that paying overtime to current staff at a premium rate would be far more expensive than employing an apprentice.

It was commented that the Town Council was likely to be taking on more services in the future due to increased devolution to Town and Parish Councils as a result of cuts to local authority funding and it should be prepared to do so by ensuring its staffing structure was properly resourced.

It was moved by Councillor M J Mullins and seconded by Councillor Mrs B Hulme that Penryn Town Council works with Truro and Penwith College to recruit an apprentice for the role of Customer Services Officer and Library and Information Assistant.

The vote being tied, the Chairman exercised her casting vote in favour of the proposal.

**RESOLVED** that Penryn Town Council works with Truro and Penwith College to recruit an apprentice for the role of Customer Services Officer and Library and Information Assistant.

*Proposed by Councillor M J Mullins and seconded by Councillor Mrs B Hulme*

There followed a discussion on an appropriate salary and the Town Clerk advised that the Apprentices' National Minimum Wage was currently £3.30 per hour dependent on age, but that advice from the Truro and Penwith College was that a salary of around £5 per hour was likely to attract a good standard of candidate. The Town Clerk further advised that the Town Council may wish to take into account that it was a Living Wage employer, but that the adopted Policy did not refer to apprentices and that it could be argued that a lower wage could be justified given the opportunity provided to gain a recognised qualification, in addition to the prospect of a permanent position.

**RESOLVED** that the salary for the Customer Services be set at £5.00 per hour or the Apprentices' National Minimum Wage, whichever is the higher.

*Proposed by Councillor M J Mullins and seconded by Councillor Mrs B Hulme*

### **39. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR**

**RESOLVED** that the appointment of Hudson Accounting as the internal auditor for the financial years 2016–19, at a fixed cost of £550 per year, subject to review in the case of a major increase in service provision, be approved.

*Proposed by Councillor M Snowdon and seconded by Councillor M J Mullins*

### **40. PRE-BUDGET DISCUSSION**

The Committee considered the recommendations from the Amenities Committee with regard to the budget for the financial year 2017–18. The Committee was in agreement with the recommendations subject to a number of amendments.

*Minor Enhancement Grant* – The Town Clerk requested that the Committee consider whether the £300 limit on funding that had been placed on the previous Minor Repairs Grant was considered appropriate for the Minor Enhancement Grant and the consensus was that the limit should be raised to £400.

*Community Grants* – The Town Clerk advised that the suggestion to allocate £2000 of the £7000 Community Grant budget to the Stuart Stephen Memorial Hall Trust would be giving the Trust an unfair advantage over other applicants and she reminded Councillors that, although the hall was managed by the Town Council, it was owned by the Trust. She further advised that given that many of the Trustees were also Town Councillors, it was particularly important that the Trust be required to apply for grants in the same way as other charities and community groups. It was agreed that the Chairman of the Trust should submit an application and that the situation be monitored.

Having declared an interest in the Youth Service budget earlier in the meeting, Councillor Mrs G A Grant left the meeting for the duration of the following discussion and did not take part in the debate nor the vote. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman took the chair.

*Youth Service* – The Chairman of the Amenities Committee advised that he had met with representatives of the Dracaena Centre and had discussed among other issues the concerns of the Amenities Committee that had been expressed at its meeting on 26 September 2016 that they did not have any information regarding the progress that had been made in providing a youth service in Penryn and as a result of which the Amenities Committee had recommended a 50% reduction in the budget for the Youth Service. The Chairman advised that the Dracaena Centre was using the Old Gentlemen’s Shelter as a hub for their work engaging with young people on the streets of Penryn. In response to a question from the Town Mayor, the Chairman of the Amenities Committee advised that following the discussion with the Dracaena Centre he was now satisfied that the original budget for the Youth Service was appropriate.

**RESOLVED** that the original Youth Service budget of £6750 be included in the draft budget for 2017–18.

*Proposed by Councillor C K Wenmoth and seconded by Councillor M Snowdon*

Following the above decision, Councillor Mrs G A Grant returned to the meeting and resumed in the Chair.

*Projects and Events* – It was suggested that the miscellaneous expenditure be increased to £2000 as a contingency to allow the Town Council to support additional events in the town should the opportunity arise.

*Penry Library* – It was noted that this budget should be subject to further work on costings and the budget amended accordingly.

In addition to the recommendations from the Amenities Committee, Councillors suggested a number of additional items that should be included in the draft budget:

- Alarmed cabinets to house the silverware for display in the museum
- Alterations to the Committee Room in the Temperance Hall to provide additional storage
- A budget of £500 for the Bronscombe Bee and Butterfly Project
- An additional £10,000 to be added to earmarked reserves for the Broad Street pavement fund
- A small budget for Town Hall Weddings to purchase a number of items that contribute to providing the service
- A budget for the hire or purchase of an appropriate PA system to be used for town events

**RESOLVED** that delegated authority be granted to the Town Clerk to produce a draft budget for 2017–18 in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

*Proposed by Councillor Mrs M K May and seconded by Councillor M Snowdon*

#### **41. COUNCILLOR AUDIT**

In the absence of the Councillor auditors, the Finance Officer advised that no issues had been raised at the previous audit and the next audit was provisionally booked for 11 November 2016.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.10pm.