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Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Policy, Resources & Finance Committee 23rd January 2024 at 7.00pm held by video-conference using Zoom meeting software; and in the Town House, 19 Union Street, Yeovil BA20 1PQ.

Present (in person): Cllrs G Oakes (Chair); T Casey; K Gill; E Hopkins; A Kendall; S Lowey; E Potts-Jones; W Read; A Richards; R Spinner and R Stickland.

In Attendance (in person): Cllr T Lock (Yeovil Lyde Ward); Cllr A Soughton (Yeovil Westlands Ward); Cllr H Stonier (Yeovil Westlands Ward) (from 7:15pm); Cllr A Wilkes (Abbey Manor South Ward); D Woan (Yeovil College Ward); A Card (Town Clerk); S Freemantle (Deputy Town Clerk); H Ferdinand (Deputy Town Clerk); Rev D Keen (St Peters Church); Mark Wilcox (Director of Youth & Community – YMCA Brunel Group); Natalie Walton (Team Leader – YMCA Brunel Group); and Elizabeth Dawson (Service Director, Cultural Services - Somerset Council).

There was one member of the public present in person and two members of the press present virtually (one from 7:42pm).

7:05 pm - Public Comment

The member of the press queried whether there was a theme for this year's Yeovil Celebrates Event. He was told that discussions were still being held regarding this event. He also asked if the Town Council had planned anything to mark the 80th anniversary of D-Day. He was informed that a report would be considered at the next meeting of the Promotions and Activities Committee. He also questioned why some of the elements of the budget were being discussed in confidential session. The Chair explained that some of the information may not have yet been made available to the individuals who any decision may affect.

7:07pm – the meeting commenced.

11/160 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO CONSIDER THE REASONS GIVEN

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Lowery (unwell).

RESOLVED: to accept the apologies with the reasons given.

11/161 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr E Potts-Jones declared a personal interest in agenda item 11/178 – Social Media (Confidential).

Cllr S Lowery – declared a prejudicial interest in item 11/176 Octagon Theatre due to being an employee.

At this point all Somerset Council Councillors present indicated who they were. These were Cllrs G Oakes; A Kendall; E Potts-Jones; and W Read (who all sit on this Committee) and Cllrs T Lock; A Soughton and D Woan.

At this point Cllr Stickland declared that he was the Chair of Yeovil Without Parish Council, in case that Council was mentioned during the meeting.

11/162 MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2023.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 28th November 2023.

11/163 YOUTH DROP IN WESTFIELD UPDATE

Members considered the report regarding an update about the Youth Drop In at Westfield. Rev D Keen gave a brief verbal summary. He mentioned that since this initiative, anti-social behaviour in the area had decreased by 63% (according to police reports). He thanked the Council for their financial support.

The Youth Worker is now working with Preston School Academy and Westfield Academy, mentoring and carrying out detached work with the young people. They are also working closely with the local PCSOs.

The Committee congratulated and thanked Rev D Keen and his team for their work.

Rev D Keen extended an invitation to Committee members to arrange visiting the Youth Drop in at Westfield.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/164 YMCA BRUNEL GROUP YOUTH SERVICES UPDATE

Members considered the report regarding an update about the Youth Services in Yeovil. Both Mark Wilcox and Natalie Walton gave a verbal summary. They thanked the Council for their financial support.

The team had supported a number of safeguarding issues. The impact of detached work had been evident and YMCA Brunel Group were working with fundraisers to improve the reach of their work.

They had been peer reviewed by a Youth Consultant who found that the Youth Services were very good.

The Committee congratulated and thanked Mark Wilcox, Natalie Walton and the wider team for their work.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/165 **YOUTH COUNCIL**

Members considered the proposal from YMCA Brunel Group regarding the Yeovil Town Youth Council.

The aim of the Youth Council would be to enable young people to understand the democratic processes, increase confidence and skills of young people so that they could become active citizens and to encourage young people to become Councillors in the future.

The starting point to setting up the Youth Council would be to involve secondary schools in Yeovil, home educated young people and youth groups.

The Town Clerk highlighted that it was really important that the ideas of the Youth Council are fed into the Council.

RESOLVED: to agree the proposal to establish a Youth Council.

7:41pm – a member of the press joined the meeting virtually.

7:42pm – Rev D Keen, Mark Wilcox and Natalie Walton left the meeting and did not return.

11/166 **APPLICATION FOR GRANT AID**

Members considered the grant application from Somerset Bus Partnership for £2,500.

Discussions were held about the application. It was felt that additional information was required.

RESOLVED: to defer the application to the next meeting, subject to the relevant additional information being received.

11/167 **BALANCE SHEET**

Members considered the Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2023.

RESOLVED: to approve the Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2023.

8:02pm – Cllr S Lowery left the meeting and did not return.

11/168 **BANK RECONCILIATION**

Members considered the formal bank reconciliation as at 30th November 2023.

RESOLVED: to approve the formal bank reconciliation as at 30th November 2023.

11/169 FINANCIAL STATEMENT – OCTOBER 2023 / NOVEMBER 2023

Members considered the financial statement for the months of October 2023 and November 2023.

RESOLVED: to approve the financial statement for the months of October 2023 and November 2023.

11/170 2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31ST OCTOBER 2023 (MONTH 1 – 9)

The Town Clerk drew members attention to the costs for elections. Another election is likely to be called in the Westlands Ward and would likely cost in the region of £10,000.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

8:04pm – Cllr A Soughton left the meeting and did not return.

8:05pm – Cllr W Read left the meeting.

8:08pm – Cllr W Read returned to the meeting.

11/171 INSURANCE 2024/25

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding deferring the procurement of the insurance provision until 2025/26 and continuing with the current provision for another year.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

11/172 RISK STRATEGY AND RISK ASSESSMENT 2024/25

Members considered the Risk Strategy and Risk Assessment for 2024/25.

The Town Clerk highlighted that any amendments that had been made were highlighted. She had added another section to include “Devolution of Assets and Services”. This included the potential of the transfer of both assets and services, but all the transfer of staff.

RESOLVED: to recommend the adoption of the Risk Strategy and Assessment 2024/25 to Town Council.

11/173 FORWARD PLAN

To approve the forward plan as detailed within the agenda.

RESOLVED: to approve the forward plan.

11/174 DRAFT BUDGET 2024/25

Members considered the draft budget for the financial year 2024/25. Discussions were held about whether, in light of the Financial Emergency declared at Somerset Council and the likelihood of assets and services being devolved to Yeovil Town Council, Yeovil Celebrates should still go ahead.

The process to decide whether the event should be postponed was discussed. The Town Clerk suggested the process that should be followed for a quick decision so that no further officer time or money be spent on the event. Discussions were held regarding retaining the budget line within the budget should it be agreed that the event be postponed.

RESOLVED: (1) that the Committee recommend to the Promotions and Activities Committee that they believe that the event should be postponed; (2) that all members of the Promotions and Activities Committee be consulted as to whether the event should be postponed; (3) following (2), that the Town Clerk use the feedback from the Promotion and Activities Committee members to agree in consultation with both the Chair and Vice Chair of Promotions and Activities whether to postpone the event; and (4) subject to (5), that the budget line narrative be amended to “Events across Yeovil”, which can be vired to any other budget line across the whole of the budget; and (6) to recommend the budget and precept to Town Council (subject to the resolution of the confidential item later in the agenda – 11/177 Asset and Service Devolution)

8:25pm – Cllr T Casey left the meeting.

8:26pm – Cllr T Casey returned to the meeting.

8:35pm – Cllr A Wilkes left the meeting.

8:36pm – Cllr A Wilkes returned to the meeting.

Public Comment

A suggestion was made by the member of the press to use the budget saved from the likely postponement of the Yeovil Celebrate Event to save Yeovil Recreational Ground.

8:40pm – The remaining member of the public and the members of press left the meeting and did not return.

11/175 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity of the remaining agenda items would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s3

11/176 OCTAGON THEATRE (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Committee received a verbal update from Elizabeth Dawson (Service Director, Cultural Services - Somerset Council) regarding the Outline Business Case for the revised Octagon Theatre project.

RESOLVED: to agree in principle the sum of £3.75m towards the cost of the project.

*(Voting: 8 for; and 1 abstention) **

** For (Cllrs K Gill; E Hopkins; A Kendall; G Oakes; E Potts-Jones; A Richards; R Spinner; and R Stickland); Abstention (Cllr T Casey)*

8:56pm – Cllr W Read left the meeting and did not return.

9:24pm – Cllr H Stonier and Elizabeth Dawson left the meeting and did not return.

11/177 ASSET AND SERVICE DEVOLUTION (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Town Clerk presented some financial information regarding asset and service devolution.

Further discussions were held about the five areas of interest – Yeovil Country Park, Yeovil Recreation Centre, Octagon Theatre, Westlands Entertainment Venue and South Somerset Heritage Collection. The Town Clerk highlighted that an additional £1,003,635 would be required (with the caveat that this sum was based on the information that was available at that point of time). The Committee recognised that this was the case.

A meeting had been scheduled with some representatives from Somerset Council, with Yeovil Town Council being represented by the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee and Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk stated that the figures did not include any amount for CCTV.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Town Council that this element be added to the budget and precept agreed in agenda item 11/174 – Draft Budget 2024/25.

9:30pm – Cllr T Lock left the meeting

9:31pm – Cllr T Lock returned to the meeting

9:33pm – Cllr E Hopkins left the meeting

9:34pm – Cllr E Hopkins returned to the meeting

9:39pm – Cllr D Woan left the meeting

9:41pm – Cllr D Woan returned to the meeting

9:52pm – Cllr E Hopkins left the meeting and did not return.

9:57pm – Cllr T Casey left the meeting and did not return.

9:58pm – Cllr D Woan left the meeting and did not return.

11/178 SOCIAL MEDIA (CONFIDENTIAL)

This item was deferred to a future meeting of this Committee.

11/179 STAFFING (STAFFING IN CONFIDENCE)

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding staffing matters.

The Assistant Town Clerk had recently achieved the Certificate in Local Administration (CiLCA). The Town Clerk had recently been approved for fellowship of CIPFA.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

The meeting closed at 10:10 pm.

Signed: (Chair) Date