



Sodbury Town Council

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022, held in the Charter Suite, Town Hall, Chipping Sodbury at 19:30 hrs**

**Committee Members Councillors:** B Allen, J Ball (Chairman), L Banister, C Hays, B Romaine, P Rumney, S Spooner, A Williams

**Present:**

Cllrs B Allen, J Ball, L Banister, C Hays, B Romaine, P Rumney, S Spooner, A Williams

Clerk: Cate Davidson

Messrs Paul Hulbert and Martin Stacey – representing the Tourist Information Centre

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**97. Apologies**

All members were present.

**98. Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared at this time.

The Chairman proposed that item 104 is brought forward which was **Resolved**.

**104 Chipping Sodbury Tourist Information Centre (TIC)**

The Clerk advised that the TIC papers had been forwarded to all member with the agenda for this meeting.

Paul Hulbert (PH) advised members that he had taken over as Chairman of the TIC in June last year. In 2019 the TIC had made a modest profit of £1,278 but due to the impact of COVID was now predicting a loss of £7.5k in 2022. This will have a significant impact on financial reserves which can only support two years of trading at such a loss. Members were informed that a grant of £5,000 from the Thrive fund has been informally agreed, in addition there is a small grant available from the Omicron Fund, as the TIC has no employees the maximum award is £500.

The TIC is asking for a grant of £2,000 towards the running costs of the TIC for 2022. It was noted that the previous grant had been awarded for maintenance costs as members were not aware of the financial situation at that time. In addition the TIC is requesting permission from STC and Dodington Parish Council to run at a deficit, it was noted that this request should have been made last year but the Committee hadn't been aware of the situation at that time. Dodington PC had agreed the deficit at a meeting the previous evening.

Options going forward are that the TIC has an online presence only or the TIC is run by STC in the same way as the library, clearly the TIC is not currently viable as a standalone organisation. It was noted that there is plenty of volunteer time available but no funding available to manage this.

Discussion was had about comments in the report from the TIC and SS advised that PH and MS had done a thorough job of going through the finances and identifying concerns. It was noted that the Thrive and STC grants have given the TIC time to consider how the TIC can be developed to produce more income and there is hope that some revenue streams may return in due course.



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Members noted that there are a number of problems with the current location, notably being damp, very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer which then requires substantial use of heating/air conditioning which is expensive to run. The office is very cramped and there is little space to expand on the current offer of items for sale.

It was **Resolved** that the requested grant of £2,000 is awarded immediately and that the TIC is authorised to run at a small loss in 2022.

PH asked for clarification of the previous grant that had been awarded for maintenance. Members felt that during this uncertain time maintenance should be kept to an absolute minimum therefore the TIC can claim up to £500 for the 21/22 financial year.

PH thanked members for their time and the positive support for the TIC. All cards have now been put on the table and the TIC hopes to work with STC moving forward to find a viable solution that enables the TIC to continue. PH advised that he would be standing down as Chairman at the AGM but would stay on the Committee.

It was agreed that a working group is set up with members of TIC & STC to look at a way forward for the TIC.

PH and MS left the meeting

### 99. **Approval of Minutes of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

**Resolved** that the minutes of 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 are approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

### 100. **Matters Arising**

No matters were raised at this time

### 101. **Budget Reports to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 (circulated by email)**

The Income and Expenditure schedule to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 was circulated to all Councillors along with a report from the Clerk. Points of note are:

- Current spend is at 77% of budget which is a small underspend for this time of year.
- Predicted spend at year end is 92-95% - this depends on the maintenance works to TORR.
- There will be an overspend to the staffing budget due to the recruitment of the additional assistant.

Members thanked the Clerk for the reports and it was **Resolved** that the accounts are noted and approved.

### 102. **Bank Reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 (circulated by e-mail)**

It was **RESOLVED** that the bank statements have been checked and correspond with bank reconciliations as tabled.

### 103. **Personnel Matters**

The Chairman advised that a Personnel meeting had taken place in advance of this meeting. The Committee had approved the cost of living pay rise of 1.75% in line with national guidelines. It was noted that this is awaiting final approval by NALC but once approved the rise would be backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. It was **Resolved** to ratify the pay increase.



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**105. The Old Reading Rooms (Maintenance Report circulated by email)**

A report from Hill Construction was circulated with the agenda for this meeting. The report identifies some priority maintenance works including several damp areas that need replastering with lime plaster, replacement guttering and maintenance to the office window to enable it to open.

The Clerk was asked to obtain quotes for the damp and guttering works. A quote of £595 has been obtained for the works to the window and it was **Resolved** that this work is completed at the earliest opportunity.

The Clerk advised that there were a number of problems with the tables in the meeting room which are now very old and several of them broken. It was **Resolved** that the tables are replaced with tables that are more mobile to allow flexible use of the room.

**106. Items to report**

No items were raised at this time.

**107. Date of next meeting: 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

Meeting closed at 21.15

Signed ..... *Brenda Allen* .....

Dated *17-5-2022* .....

