

# FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

## Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**Due to the Covid19 pandemic and related restrictions the meeting was held remotely using the Zoom Cloud meetings application**

**Present:** Councillors Grisenthwaite (Chair); Bromilow (Town Mayor); Gardner; Jones and Watson

**In attendance:** Bob Bailey, Town Clerk

<b>20072</b>	<b>Apologies:</b> Apologies were received from Councillors Branyan and Parker
<b>20073</b>	<b>Declaration on interests and dispensations:</b> There were no declarations of interest or dispensations for items on the agenda
<b>20074</b>	<p><b>Urgent Business:</b> The following items of urgent business was considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Community Benefit Fund:</b> An application has been received from the Carnforth Free Methodist Church for funding of £1,000 towards their Community Church building project, with this money being used to fund new chairs;</li><li><b>Administrative Officer:</b> The Clerk had submitted for consideration a draft of a job description for the post of Administrative Officer. The proposal was to make an appointment by April 2021 based on 10 hours per week on Salary Point 3 of the national pay scale (£18,562 per annum pro rata). Councillors were reminded that approval to fill this post had previously been given by Council and costs included in the 2020/21 budget, but the post has not yet been advertised.  Members considered and commented on the draft job description making one small amendment.</li><li><b>Skills Audit &amp; Member Development:</b> The Chair noted that the deadline for submission of the form had passed and that just four completed forms had so far been received;  After some discussion, <b>it was agreed that: the Town Council be recommended to approve the Community Benefit Fund application; that the Town Council be asked to endorse the job description for an Administrative Officer with a view to an appointment being made by April 2021, and that all Members again be asked to complete and return the Skills Audit &amp; Members Development form at their earliest convenience.</b></li></ol>
<b>20075</b>	<b>Minutes:</b> It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the notes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved.
<b>20076</b>	<b>Carnforth Civic Hall:</b> The Clerk gave an update on the latest position on the negotiations and logistical arrangements for the use of the Civic Hall as a vaccination centre for a period of 12 months. Planned work on the building is due to commence on 28 <sup>th</sup> December for a period of two weeks and vaccinations are due to commence from January.

This will be for a period of 12 months, seven days a week and means that the Air Training Corps (ATC) will need to clear their equipment before 28<sup>th</sup> December.

Members were advised that under delegated authority the Town Mayor and Councillor Grisenthwaite, as Chair of this committee, had approved the monthly rent proposed by the National Health Service (details had previously been circulated to all Councillors).

The revised lease with the ATC is currently being finalised along with a 'Licence to Occupy' with the National Health Service. It was also reported that on the advice of Councillor Watson, photographs of the building in its current state had now been taken and saved.

Councillors Smith and Watson in particular; the Clerk and Civic Hall Manager, were thanked for their work on this significant issue and **it was then RESOLVED that the Town Council now formally approves the exclusive use of Carnforth Civic Hall for a period of up to 12 months by the National Health Service as a vaccination centre.**

**20077 Crag Bank Village Hall:** Councillor Grisenthwaite presented a paper setting out the current position regarding the management and administration structure at Crag Bank Village Hall. It was noted that there is now only one trustee of the building, with one part time officer responsible for its financial administration. Both have informally shown a willingness for the management and 'trusteeship' of the building to be assigned to Carnforth Town Council and subsequent legal advice on such a proposal has now been received.

Councillors Grisenthwaite and Watson had considered the financial implications around the impact on business rates that taking on responsibility for the Village Hall would have. It is considered that save for a few minor repairs that building is safe and secure and that there are clear opportunities to maximise rental income from the use of the building which has the added benefit of its own car park. It was noted that given that the Civic Hall cannot be used by our existing hirers for up to 12 months it may be possible to offer them the use of Crag Bank Village Hall as an alternative.

After some comments, questions and observations, **it was RESOLVED that the Town Council be recommended to approve that formal arrangements to take on the running of Crag Bank Village Hall be made.**

**20078 Microsoft 365 Business:** The Clerk presented a proposal to migrate all Council business to Microsoft Office 365 for Business aimed at increasing productivity and improving efficiency and effectiveness. The paper set out nine benefits of this migration including potential for an overall reduction in costs; improved security; file sharing and storage; video-conferencing and future proofing Council business.

It was reported that the cost of this migration and 16 MS 365 licences would be £797 per annum.

Since then the Clerk, has contacted Lancaster City Council to ask whether they can support the Town Council's migration to MS 365 and the associated licences – this has been acknowledged by the City Council and is being considered.

After some questions, **it was RESOLVED that further consideration be deferred until the January meeting when a formal response from Lancaster City Council should have been received.**

**20079 Budget Monitoring & Planning:** The Town Clerk presented a report setting out the up to date 'Net Position' of the Town Council's budgets as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The committee were asked to note that this shows a favourable variance of over £60,000 arising from a combination of the award of a business grant and both unplanned and unused expenditure arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

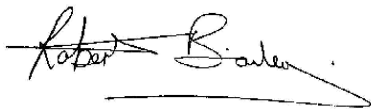
As requested, Committees have now considered their commitments to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and their plans for 2021/22 and a paper setting out these proposals was considered by the Finance and Governance Committee, including Town Council aspirations for the coming year.

The cost of the *Carnforth Express* in 2021/22 and that planned in 2021/22 was challenged, particularly as no income from advertising had been generated in this financial year. The high quality of the newsletter and its popularity in the town was acknowledged as was the fact that this year, much of the available space had been taken up through providing relevant and important advice and information on the coronavirus pandemic. It was suggested that rather than income through advertising a better option might be to seek sponsorship towards the annual cost whilst, at the same time, reducing the potential workload in managing advertising. It was agreed that this will be looked at in detail during the next financial year.

In response to a question about the likely outturn for 2021/22, the Clerk reported that there remains some 'unknowns' given the current position regarding Carnforth Civic Hall and decisions to be made at the December meeting of the Town Council. Notwithstanding this, and as previously agreed, Councillors Grisenthwaite, Jones and the Clerk will be considering the expected outturn, draft budget and precept for 2021/22 for consideration and approval by the Town Council in January. Their followed a brief discussion on the required Reserves and how the fixed income from the use of the Civic Hall in 2021/22 may be best utilised.

It was then **RESOLVED that the current net position be noted and that a draft budget and precept for 1st April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 be produced for consideration and approval by Carnforth Town Council in January 2021.**

<b>20080</b>	<b>Payments List:</b> The Town Clerk presented the Payments list. The total payments amount to £7,908 including payments from the Carnforth 'Steps into the Light' grant and a laptop. After some comments and questions, it was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the payments listed be <b>RECOMMENDED</b> for approval by the Town Council at its meeting on 16 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
<b>20081</b>	<b>Effectiveness of Internal Controls:</b> The Chair recommended, and Councillors agreed to defer this item until a future meeting of the Committee.
<b>20082</b>	<b>Job Title:</b> Councillors considered a proposed change to the Clerk's job title to adequately reflect the role as a 'Proper Officer' as set out in statute to reflect responsibilities to ensure that Council decisions and financial management arrangements are lawful. It was then <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Town Council be recommended to approve a change in the Clerk's job title to 'Clerk and Proper Officer'.
<b>20083</b>	<b>Date of next meeting:</b> The next meeting of Finance & Governance Committee will be on <b>Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b> at 5:15pm. <b>The meeting closed at 6:30pm</b>



Clerk to the Council Date: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020