



Finance and Governance Committee

Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee held on Wednesday 8th July 2020

Due to the Covid19 pandemic and related restrictions the meeting was held remotely using video-conferencing software

Present: Councillors Grisenthwaite (Chair); Branyan; Bromilow; Gardner; Jones (part), Parker & Watson

In attendance: Bob Bailey, Town Clerk

20035 **Apologies:** There were no apologies

20036 **Declarations of Interest and Dispensations:** There were no declarations of interest specific to items in the Agenda.

20037 **Minutes of previous meeting:** It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th June 2020 be approved.

20038 **Urgent Business: Members considered the following items of urgent business:**

- 1) **Crag Bank Village Hall:** Councillor Grisenthwaite reported on a meeting held at Crag Bank Village Hall with a Village Hall representative. Members were reminded that the Town Clerk and Councillor Watson had previously obtained advice on the management structure at the Village Hall and copies of associated legal documents.

The meeting had provided an opportunity to gain an overview of the structure of the building and operational matters that will need to be addressed going forward. The Village Hall has great potential to be developed into a valuable asset for the residents of South Carnforth. **ACTION:** Further consideration and advice will be sought with a view to a feasibility study on the future of Crag Bank Village Hall being carried out.

- 2) **(Websites & Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations:** The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council's attention had previously been drawn to the accessibility regulations for public sector bodies. The regulations state that websites and mobile applications must be '*...more accessible by making it 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust' and include an accessibility statement*'.

The Town Clerk reported that he had made tentative enquires with a local IT company - who have previously done work for the Town Council - to establish their capacity and availability to undertake this work, which had been confirmed and an estimate of the cost of this work provided.



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Members noted that as well as making the Council's website compliant it would improve the quality of content provided for the general public. **ACTION:** That the Town Clerk request a detailed quotation of the works to be undertaken for further consideration.

- 3) **Town Clerk – Terms and Conditions:** The Town Clerk reported that he had taken the decision to resign as the Town Clerk of Morecambe Town Council. This afforded an opportunity to review his working hours for Carnforth Town Council which had been reduced at the end of last year and with a view to the appointment of an Administrative Assistant. **ACTION:** Councillors Bromilow and Grisenthwaite to meet with the Town Clerk to review his terms and conditions and make recommendations to Town Council.
- 4) **Planning Consultants advice:** Further to consideration by the Town Development & Planning Committee on planning consultant's advice relating to planning application 20/00607/VCN it was reported that a quotation of £1,250 had now been received from the planning consultants appointed to develop the Carnforth Neighbourhood Plan.

Members discussed the importance of expert advice relating to this planning application which will have a significant impact on the town and there was a consensus that the quotation received represented value for money and affordable from within existing budgets. **ACTION:** Town Clerk to seek a second quotation, subject to which, the Town Council be asked to make an urgent decision at its meeting on 15th July.

20039 **Internal Audit:** The Town Clerk presented the report of the appointed Internal Auditor on the financial and internal control systems and accounting statements for the year ended 31st March 2020.

The audit report was structured along the lines of the 'Internal Audit Objectives' specified in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/2020.

The Town Clerk informed Members that the Internal Auditor had again conducted a robust and highly professional audit and was pleased to report that all eleven objectives had been met.



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The Internal Auditor had concluded that '*...the Council has established all the elements necessary to provide a sound system of internal control, and these have operated effectively to provide assurance as to the accuracy of the accounts*'.

It was also reported that there are no outstanding recommendations from previous audits (2017/18 and 2018/19) and that no new recommendations had been made.

Members commented on the findings of the Internal Auditor and wished to thank him for a comprehensive audit that demonstrates that the Town Council has made significant steps in recent years to improve its financial management and governance arrangements. Members congratulated the Town Clerk for his part in meeting these objectives which should give assurance to members of the public on the effectiveness of the Town Council in delivering its functions efficiently and effectively.

It was then **RESOLVED** that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2019/20, supporting papers and Internal Audit report be recommended for approval by the Town Council, published and sent to the External Auditors for review.

20040 **Payments List:** The Town Clerk presented Members with the Payments List for recommendation to the July meeting of the Town Council. Members noted payments for the purchase of a mower to be used by the Outdoor Maintenance Operative and the excellent photographs provided by a local photographer that are now the property of the Town Council. After some comments, it was **RESOLVED** that the payment list be recommended for approval by the Town Council.

20041 **Debt recovery:** The Town Clerk presented a report on outstanding debtor invoices from the financial year 2019/20. The Town Clerk reported that all of these had been sent reminders to pay - some on more than one occasion.

Members noted that several of these had been generated at the end of March a week after the country went into lockdown, which may have some bearing on them remaining unpaid. It is also understood that two hirers of Carnforth Civic Hall have ceased trading, whilst others had previously had difficulties in meeting payments.

In response to a question, the Town Clerk reported that use of the Scribe accounting system to generate invoices and monitor outstanding payments had helped to improve prompt payment and debt recovery but that a system needs to be introduced that can be used to follow up outstanding payments in a more structured and formal way.



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After further comment it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Jones and the Town Clerk develop a debt management system for consideration by the Finance and Governance Committee.

20042 **Updates on activities:**

- 1) **Bus Shelters:** Cllr Gardner provided an update on the latest position with the two bus shelters to be installed on Back Lane and Lancaster Road. All necessary permissions and planning applications have now been completed and the go ahead given for the installation of the bus shelters in August.

Suitable risk assessment and traffic management arrangements will need to be in place, particularly for the bus shelter on Lancaster Road. Nearer the time, details of the project will be posted on social media and the Council's website and a press release issued. Members considered that there would be an opportunity for the installed bus shelters to be 'officially opened' by the Town Mayor. **ACTION:** Councillors Branyan and Parker to source traffic signs and cones and plan the necessary traffic management arrangements;

- 2) **Footpath No. 8 proposals and costs:** Members attention was drawn to the proposals drawn up, as requested, by the Outdoor Maintenance Operative. All Councillors agreed that the outline brief provided to the Outdoor Maintenance Operative had been fully met and to a high standard. There followed a discussion on the estimated cost of the proposals and the additional hours that will be required. **ACTION:** That the proposed work and costs be agreed in principle but referred to Committees for a decision given that the cost of these works will be met from their delegated budgets;

20043 **Date and time of next meeting:** The next meeting of the Finance and Governance Committee will be confirmed later but will revert to a 5:15pm start. The meeting closed at 6:10pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Branyan", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.



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