Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

held at the Town Hall, Milford Haven

on Thursday, 7th October, 2015 at 6:00 pm

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PRESENT

Councillors: Mrs. Y. G. Southwell (Chairman) A. E. Byrne

R. D. Evans R. Gray

M. J. Norman D. R. Sinnett

G. Woodham MBA (Open) LL.B (Hons)

151. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor, Councillor S. G. Joseph, who was unwell, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor W. D. Elliott BA, who was attending a function on behalf of the Milford Haven Town Council, and Councillor A. H. Miles.

152. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2015:

 RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of

 the Finance and General Purposes Committee held

 on 10th September, 2015, be approved as a correct

 record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

153. INFORMATION FROM THE MAYOR:

Members were advised of the following engagements undertaken since the 28th September, 2015:-

30th September - Opening of Portfield Fair, Haverfordwest (attended

 by the Deputy Mayor)

4th October - Civic Service of Mayor of Tenby (attended by the

 Deputy Mayor)

6th October - Pembrokeshire County Council is Changing Event at

 Milford Haven School (attended by the Mayor)

 7th October - Opening of Milford Haven School’s Annual Art Exhibition at Town Hall (attended by the Mayoress)

 7th October - Opening of Pembroke Michaelmas Fair (attended by

 the Deputy Mayor)

154. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONDAY EVENING’S MEETING OF THE PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE:

The Clerk advised that there were no financial recommendations made at Monday evening’s meeting of the Public Works and Planning Committee.

155. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PUBLIC EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2015:

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of

the Public Events Sub-Committee held on 17th

September, 2015, be recommended for approval

and adoption.

156. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS/FESTIVITIES SUB-COMMITTEE HELD ON 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2015:

 RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of

 the Christmas Lights/Festivities Sub-Committee

 held on 28th September, 2015, be recommended

 for approval and adoption.

157. RENT REVIEW FOR THE MILFORD HAVEN TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES AT THE TOWN

 HALL:

 The Chairman, Councillor Mrs. Y. G. Southwell, reminded Members that at the meeting with the Landlord and Tenant Surveyor, Pembrokeshire County Council, he had said that if this Council could show that the Committee Room was used more frequently by the Pembrokeshire County Council than this Authority, then it might be possible to negotiate a lower rise in rental charges.

As a goodwill gesture, the Town Council staff have always arranged for the booking of the Committee Room, Council Chamber and Murray Suite. The Council’s Secretary had extracted the information from last year’s and this year’s diaries and it was apparent that the Committee Room was utilised more by the Pembrokeshire County Council and other organisations (such as Citizens' Advice Bureau) than this Council.

RESOLVED THAT:

(i) the Clerk submits copies of the diary entries to

 the Landlord and Tenant Surveyor, Pembrokeshire

County Council;

(ii) in order to expedite this issue, the Clerk is

authorised to submit this information prior to

the ratification of this Minute at the Full Council

Meeting on 26th October.

(iii) the Clerk is to ask the Landlord and Tenant

Surveyor whether there could be an

early outcome to the deliberations in order

to assist Members when discussing the

Precept.

158. PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE REMUNERATION OF MEMBERS OF TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS – INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES:

Members discussed correspondence from the Welsh Government which listed the proposed changes in the remuneration of members of Community and Town Councils.

Comments are invited before the end of December and the final report is published in February, 2016, to be implemented in the 2016-17 municipal year.

Unlike principal authorities where determinations are mandatory, Community and Town Councils must firstly decide by resolution which determinations, if any, are to be adopted by the Council.

The rates specified, if adopted, cannot be amended although individual members may opt out of receiving payments (by advising their proper officer in writing of their wishes).

The determinations affecting Community and Town Councils fall into five categories:

1. To ensue at least some expenses involved in representing the community can be met – up to £100 pa.
2. To allow expenses of partnership and engagement outside the Council to be met.
3. To ensure costs of holding civic office are catered for.
4. To allow for particular senior/demanding roles to be recognised – up to 3 posts at £500 pa.
5. To permit the payment of an allowance for the care of dependents to be met where necessary in order to allow all members to attend meetings.

In summary, Community and Town Councils must take the following actions each year following the publication of the Panel’s Annual Report:

* in advance of the following municipal year, decide by formal resolution of Council which if any of the Panel’s determinations to adopt;
* if adopted, put in place a system for members to receive payment and for individual members to opt out of any payments; and
* publish by September following each municipal year the details of any payments made to members, and notify the Panel by post or email.

RESOLVED THAT:

(i) the information be received;

(ii) Members are to complete the consultation

 document on an individual basis if they wish

 to do so;

(iii) this matter is to be revisited when the final

 report is published in February, 2016.

159. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR THE WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015:

Members gave consideration to the Welsh Government Consultation Document – Statutory Guidance for the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act – the introduction of which means that the public sector will need to need to work differently to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales.

Members noted that PAVS was organising an event relating to this matter on 18th November entitled “What can Community Voice projects do for you” which “presents organisations with a great opportunity to plan for the long term and work more closely with partners and communities”.

 RESOLVED THAT:

(i) the documentation be received;

(ii) Members are to complete the questionnaire

 on an individual basis if they wish to do so;

(iii) a Member is to be nominated at Full Council

 to attend this meeting.

160. ONE VOICE WALES:

 (a) Minutes of the Meeting of the Pembrokeshire Area Committee held on

 15th July, 2015:

Members gave consideration to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Pembrokeshire Area Committee held on 15th July, 2015.

RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of

the Pembrokeshire Area Committee held on

15th July, 2015, be received.

(b) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Pembrokeshire Area Committee held on 15th July, 2015:

Members gave consideration to the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Pembrokeshire Area Committee held on 15th July, 2015.

 RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of

 the Annual General Meeting of the Pembrokeshire

 Area Committee held on 15th July, 2015, be

 received.

161. MILFORD HAVEN LIBRARY:

An email was received from Mr. M. Cavanagh, Head of Cultural Services, Pembrokeshire County Council, in which he stated that he had written to all Town and Community Councils which have a public library within their area at the beginning of the year with regard to reductions in library opening hours which were due to take effect from 1st April, 2015.

Mr. Cavanagh explained that 2 of the 12 councils decided that they wished to take this opportunity and the opening hours of their libraries were not reduced as planned. A number of other councils considered it and decided not to make a contribution, but some did ask to be given the opportunity again for the 2016-2017 financial year as they would have the opportunity to consider changes to the precept that might finance such an investment.

Mr. Cavanagh stated that if this Town Council wished to raise the required sum through an increase in the local precept, the increase based on a Band D property would be £1.94.

Although there were other options available, such as a smaller contribution to enable some of the opening hours to be returned or all the opening hours but for only part of the year.

It was noted that Mr. Cavanagh was merely making a general enquiry. Mention was made of this Council’s decision at the Precept Meeting held in January, 2015 when it was agreed not to make an annual contribution to the Pembrokeshire County Council to prevent Milford Haven Library from a reduction in its opening hours.

 RESOLVED THAT:

 (i) Mr. Cavanagh’s email be received;

 (ii) based on Mr. Cavanagh’s correspondence, and

 the decision made at January’s Precept Meeting,

 the Finance and General Purposes Committee

 recommends that this Council does not contribute

 to funding the Milford Haven Library.

162. GENERAL DONATIONS FORM:

The Chair, Councillor Mrs. Y. G. Southwell, and Councillor G. Woodham MBA (Open) LL.B (Hons) declared personal interests in this issue as members of St. Katharine and St. Peter’s Church.

Members approved the draft General Donations form which captured the amendments agreed at the last meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Members then gave consideration to an email from Dr. D. Morgan, Development Officer, One Voice Wales, in which he advised on this Council’s position regarding donations to a political or religious cause.

Dr. Morgan said that the key consideration would be whether or not making a grant to an organisation that has religious connections could be considered as having (entirely) a beneficial effect on the community – rather than it being a donation made directly to a specific religious organisation.

A Member referred to the donation made in April 2015 to St Katharine and St. Peter’s Church for the refurbishment of the exterior of the Memorial Chapel. Although based in the Church, this was a project for the community as the crosses hanging in the Memorial Chapel bear the names of those lost in the Great War. The Member expressed concern that this could be a potential issue when the Town Council’s accounts are audited.

RESOLVED THAT:

(i) the draft amendments to the General Donations

Form be approved;

(ii) the relevant paperwork regarding the donation

to St. Katharine and St. Peter’s Church be

forwarded to Dr. D. Morgan, Development Officer,

One Voice Wales, and his advice sought on this issue.

163. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

(i) Acknowledgement of Donations:

The Clerk advised that letters of thanks had been received from the Nantucket Wailers, Milford Museum, Milford Haven Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets and the FM/ME/CFS Support and Carers Group.

(ii) Applications for Financial Assistance:

 Members’ attention was drawn to the limited funds remaining in this budget.

 RESOLVED THAT the following decisions be made

 in relation to the applications for financial

 assistance:-

(a) *The Meads Infant and Nursery School* - £640

 RESOLVED THAT this sum is to be taken from

 this Council’s Reserves.

 Councillor A. E. Byrne declared a personal interest in this issue as his

 grandson attends this School.

 Councillor D. R. Sinnett wished it recorded that he abstained from voting on this issue.

*This donation is to be made in accordance with the Milford Haven Town Council’s powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.*

(b) *Milford Youth Matters*

 Members discussed this application for funding, and agreed that they wished to have a better understanding of this initiative and the Police’s view on it. As they did not wish to delay the application it was RESOLVED THAT, subject to their availability, Ms. S. Jones, Project Coordinator, Milford Youth Matters, and a PCSO be invited to attend either October’s meeting of the Full Council, or November’s meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

(c) *Citizens’ Advice Bureau* - £200

*This donation is to be made in accordance with the Milford Haven Town Council’s*

*powers under Section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 .*

Councillor M. J. Norman declared a personal interest in this issue as he is an employee of Pembrokeshire College which deals with the Citizens' Advice Bureau. He took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

164. SCHEDULE OF ACCOUNTS:

 RESOLVED THAT the Schedule of Accounts as

presented by the Clerk for the month of

September, 2015, in the sum of £11,322.96

be accepted and approved for payment.

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