

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD MAY, 2016

Present: Councillor S Cudlip (Chair) and Councillors E Bell, Mrs J A Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr, Mrs H J Cahill, Mrs S Forster, R Meir, Miss S Morrison, N R Page, I Paul, C Snowball, B Taylor, R Whitehead, K Younger.

Apologies: Councillors B Allen, Mrs B E Allen, K Shaw.

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 5TH APRIL, 2016

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

3. PAYSHEET NUMBER 1 - 2016/17

3.1 Expenditure

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) that all payments in Paysheet Number 1 – 2016/17 be approved, it being noted that the direct debits, BACS and cheque payments including Imprest expenditure amount to £83,721.68 being the total sum authorised under this Paysheet.
- (ii) that the BACS authorisation sheet be signed by three Members and the credit transfers be actioned immediately;
- (iii) that the cheques relating to suppliers not being paid by BACS be signed by three Members and the payments be released immediately; and
- (iv) that the Clerk's Imprest Account be reimbursed the sum of £3,572.86 for Civic Expenditure, and authority be granted for this to be signed by the Chairman and Responsible Financial Officer.

3.2 Income

RECOMMENDED the summary sheet showing the range of income received by the Council during the current month be accepted.

3.3 Bank Balances

The Committee considered a statement of Bank Balances held by the Council at the month end, a copy of which had been previously circulated. The Chair examined statements in respect of the Town Council's three bank accounts which were made available to view and the Finance Officer responded to queries raised.

RECOMMENDED the Council note the information and approve the Finance Officer's report.

4. APPLICATIONS FOR GRANTS

4.1 ACES Internet Café Ltd

The Chair welcomed Ms Alison Chapman who was in attendance in support of her grant application to inform the Committee on the services provided by the internet café and the project in general.

Ms Chapman began by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to attend and present to Members on the project. She then informed Members that originally they were only using the ground floor of their building as an internet café but now they were using all of the building to provide a variety of services of benefit to the whole of the community. The internet café provides internet access to those wishing to apply for benefits, search for jobs and provide support for those not confident in accessing the web. The opening hours are currently restricted until the required demand is determined. There is also a plan to open a job seeker club upstairs where individuals can concentrate in a quieter environment away from those using the café for recreational internet access.

A dementia care service is commencing next week in association with the Alzheimers Society and funded through East Durham Trust. This is a free service for dementia sufferers and/or their carers that will include reminiscence therapy and guidance from visiting external advisors on how to access support services. In order to publicise the service and attract interest an afternoon tea is to be held to encourage those who may feel reluctant to acknowledge they have a need for such advice and support. Games for the Brain is another service being hosted in association with the Alzheimers Society which is considered beneficial for those with Alzheimers or any kind of brain trauma to improve their cognitive skills.

A sixties-plus ladies group is also being hosted to give isolated individuals an opportunity to socialise, mix with likeminded individuals and take part in fun

and interesting activities such as bingo, crafts, quizzes etc.

A number of courses are also being provided in conjunction with YMS Training Ltd and Durham County Council such as first aid, food safety, general employability, IT skills, Maths and English. Leasing rooms for such training provides an income stream which helps to cover the running costs and further improvements to the building.

There are various toddler groups such as 'Jitter Bugs' which is a franchise that provides for children up to five years old and delivers 'Baby Move & Groove' and 'Baby Yoga' enabling interactivity between parents and their children. Another toddler group, subsidised by East Durham Belles, commencing on Friday is a seven week program of 'Creative Cookery' and different types of messy play.

A 'You are not Alone' group has also been started which will use the facilities to deliver support and courses to isolated single parents who have not been able to access the same opportunities as their counterparts.

In conjunction with Healthworks a 'Crafty Confidence' course is being delivered which is aimed at young mothers to improve their general life skills. There is also a 'Sit and Fit' exercise course being provided for older or less mobile individuals

In conjunction with East Durham Trust a variety of courses including Debt First Aid, Energy Advice and Keyboard Champion are being delivered to help people struggling or who are accessing the internet for the first time with shopping, switching energy supplier etc.

In conjunction with Durham Housing Group sessions are being delivered on how to bid for a house and again Debt First Aid which is also one of their key priorities.

Ms Chapman stated that they were always open to suggestions for what services are missing in Seaham and they will try to source providers of such services to operate from the building.

At this point comments and questions were invited and the following questions were asked:

- (i) *A Member asked if the organisation was a registered charity and if it had a constitution.*

Ms Chapman stated that they were a Limited by a Guarantee Not for Profit organisation and confirmed that they had a constitution which could be provided to the Town Council.

- (ii) *A Member asked if the organisation had appropriate safeguarding measures in place to prevent misuse by users and if proof of ID was*

obtained from users in case of any inappropriate or criminal activity and suggested that Newcastle City Council central library may be able to offer some advice.

Ms Chapman stated that all staff have been DBS checked, the organisation has a safeguarding policy in operation and both Durham County Council and Healthworks have conducted relevant risk assessments. The internet service provider package, obtained for the building, includes an additional service that externally manages usage by providing a firewall, tracking all internet activity and filtering to prevent inappropriate content being accessed. In addition all users are signed on to individual laptops and the period of time they use it is logged so that any inappropriate usage identified or attempted can be immediately traced to the individual concerned. Ms Chapman also stated she would look into the legalities and practicalities of obtaining proof of ID from users.

(iii) A Member asked if the users of the services were only from Seaham.

Ms Chapman stated that the majority of users of the services are from Seaham and Murton. They have also had people from Peterlee, Horden and Wheatley Hill as individuals who have attended courses provided in the facility are then returning to use it.

(iv) The Chair asked how the organisation planned to measure the benefits that are potentially emerging from all of the client access that is occurring.

Ms Chapman stated that they use the 'survey monkey' service to capture the ages and postcodes of all users and also why they are accessing the service so that subsequent benefits obtained by the individual can be identified. For example if an individual had accessed debt advice and then gone on to have ways to make savings identified or if they had been referred to a debt consolidation plan and how much they were then being saved. This data is recorded in survey monkey and can then be extracted to demonstrate benefits provided by postcode, gender, age, services accessed and job activity.

(v) The Chair appreciated this was a new service in its early stages and asked how many customers she ultimately expected to be using it on a daily or weekly basis.

Ms Chapman stated that her original business plan estimated a range of between 80 to 100 people using it on a weekly basis. The facility had only been open since 11th April, 2016 and last week there were 65 users so the expectation was to exceed the original estimate.

- (vi) *A Member asked if Ms Chapman had applied to any other organisations or local councils for funding given the various locations which users were resident.*

Ms Chapman stated that she had applied to the East Durham Area Action Partnership but wasn't eligible for funding from them. Consideration had also been given to the Windfarm grant but postcode of the facility wasn't eligible.

In discussion Members actively encouraged that Ms Chapman also apply to neighbouring Town and Parish Councils as their residents were benefiting from the services provided.

At this point the Chair thanked Ms Chapman for her informative address and she left the meeting.

Members gave further consideration to the information provided and acknowledged that the organisation appeared to be going to provide a valuable service to the town. As residents of other communities were also benefiting it was considered appropriate that funding should also be obtained from their respective Town and Parish Councils. Members felt that any grant funding from Seaham Town Council should be for the benefit of Seaham residents. It was also highlighted that monitored and secure internet access was available at Seaham library and that such access was protected via the Durham County Council server.

It was agreed that prior to making a final decision on whether to provide a grant that Ms Chapman be requested to provide a copy of the constitution of the organisation and a detailed breakdown of how the £800 requested is intended to be used.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council note the information provided.
- (ii) Ms Chapman be requested to provide a copy of the constitution of the organisation, a detailed breakdown of how the £800 requested is intended to be used for the benefit of Seaham people and more information concerning the security controls in place to prevent inappropriate use.
- (iii) The Council defer making a decision on this item to a future meeting until the requested information is received.

4.2 Seaham Triathlon

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillor B Taylor declared an interest, left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Committee considered an application for grant in respect of the Seaham Triathlon which was scheduled to take place on Sunday, 3rd July, 2016. In discussion Members felt that it was appropriate to continue supporting this event which helps local charities as in previous years.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to award a grant of £250 to the Seaham Triathlon with a request that they also apply to other grant funding organisations and provide details of those approached.

4.3 County of Durham School Benevolent Fund

The Committee considered an application from the County of Durham School Benevolent Fund who sought a grant towards their ongoing costs in in the provision of grants to needy families. In discussion Members considered it appropriate to provide support.

RECOMMENDED the Council agree to award a grant of £70.00 to the County of Durham School Benevolent Fund.

5. SEAHAM TOWN HALL – BOOKINGS

RECOMMENDED the schedule which detailed the bookings made in respect of the Town Hall for April, 2016, together with Income and Expenditure be noted.

6. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

RECOMMENDED the Annual Governance Statement be approved and it be signed by the Chair of the Finance and Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk.

7. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.