Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

held at the Town Hall, Milford Haven

on Thursday, 10th September, 2015 at 6:00 pm

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PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor S. G. Joseph)

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor W. D. Elliott BA)

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

R. D. Evans D. R. Sinnett

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

Ms. F. K. Galliford, the Council’s Secretary, was also in attendance.

105. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Gray, A. H. Miles and M. J. Norman.

106. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 9TH JULY, 2015:

 RESOLVED THAT the Minutes of the Meeting of

 the Finance and General Purposes Committee held

 on 9th July, 2015, be approved as a correct

 record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

107. INFORMATION FROM THE MAYOR:

 (a) Mayor’s Engagements:

Members were advised of the following engagements undertaken by the Mayor since the 28th July, 2015:-

1st August, 2015 - Priory House Garden Party

9th August, 2015 - Wings over Carew Festival

15th August, 2015 - Open Day at Milford Haven Fire Station

25th August, 2015 - Accompanied Chairman of the Pembrokeshire

 Council and members of the Fire Authority on an

 inspection of the Milford Haven Waterway

28th August, 2015 - Launch of ‘Under the Bridge’ Project

3rd September, 2015 - Merchant Navy Day – a ceremony to raise the

 Red Ensign Flag

7th September, 2015 - VC Gallery in Haverfordwest

(b) Rent Review:

The Mayor advised that he, the Deputy Mayor, the two Chairs of the Standing Committees and the Clerk had met with the Landlord and Tenant Surveyor, Pembrokeshire County Council, on Tuesday 8th September regarding a review of the rent payable on the Town Council offices.

The rent had last been increased in 2007. Based on a rental cost of £6 per sq. ft. the Landlord and Tenant Surveyor had proposed an increase in the Town Council’s rent of £5,000 per annum. There was no rental charge proposed for the Council Chamber, but a charge of £2,000 per annum for the Committee Room, which was used more frequently by the Pembrokeshire County Council than the Milford Haven Town Council.

As a goodwill gesture, the Town Council staff book the rooms at the Town Hall

so there is a record of usage of the Committee Room.

The Landlord and Tenant Surveyor had asked that the Clerk forwards confirmation of the use of the Committee Room by the Pembrokeshire County Council in order that consideration could be given to reducing the proposed rental charge of that Room.

A Member suggested that if the rental charges were to be substantially increased, the Council should consider alternative accommodation which could perhaps be used by other community groups.

 RESOLVED THAT the Clerk is to prepare a report

 on this issue for discussion at Full Council.

108. REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE FACEBOOK WORKING GROUP HELD ON 7TH SEPTEMBER, 2015:

Members discussed the Report of the first meeting of the Facebook Working Group held on 7th September, 2015.

A Member asked whether it was proposed that a Facebook page would replace the Council’s website.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor W. D. Elliott BA, explained that the Council’s website will be uploaded with such items as the Grant Form and the Minutes. Facebook will be used to advertise information which will reach a wider variety of people.

A Member pointed that it is necessary to have a variety of online platforms to reach out to different age groups.

Members referred to the Group’s recommendation 3 (v) “There will be a ‘Meet your Councillor’ editorial on a monthly basis” and considered that this should not be mandatory but a decision to participate should be made by each individual Councillor.

Councillor A. E. Byrne said that, unfortunately, he was not available on Monday evenings, and if the Facebook Working Group’s meetings were held on Monday evenings he would not be able to attend.

Councillor R. D. Evans said that he was very keen to be a part of this Group.

 RESOLVED THAT:

 (i) the words “the opportunity for” be inserted in

 front of “there will be a ‘Meet Your Councillor’”

 editorial on a monthly basis;

 (ii) Councillor R. D. Evans is to be appointed on

 the Facebook Working Group in place of

 Councillor A. E. Byrne;

 (iii) subject to the above, the Report of the Facebook

 Working Group be recommended for approval

 and adoption.

109. 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’s meeting of the Public Works and Planning Committee.

 A Member referred to the Agenda Item concerning the Cemetery Land Acquisition and asked for details of the discussion at that meeting. The Clerk summarised the Public Works and Planning Committee’s recommendation.

110. ONE VOICE WALES ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, 3RD OCTOBER, 2015:

Members gave consideration to a letter from the Chief Executive of One Voice Wales in which he listed the nine motions being put forward at the One Voice Wales Annual General Meeting which will be held on Saturday, 3rd October, 2015.

Councillor A. E. Byrne, as one of the Council’s Representatives on the Pembrokeshire Area Committee, said that Milford Haven was not mentioned in this letter as there had been a communication issue with One Voice Wales which was now rectified.

 RESOLVED THAT the letter be received.

111. DISCUSSION ON FUNDS HELD PREVIOUSLY IN THE NATIONWIDE BUILDING SOCIETY:

The Clerk said that this issue had been deferred from the last meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee whilst she investigated how other Town Councils in Pembrokeshire utilised their funds. It appeared that they had a similar system to this Council’s – a savings account and a general account.

The Clerk recommended that if the Council wished to invest, then any savings should be invested in either the Nationwide Business Instant Saver Account at a gross annual interest of 1% (monthly interest 0.95%) or a 6 months Business Fixed Rate Saver Account at an AER of 1.10%. The eligible deposits with Nationwide Building Society are protected by a total of £75,000 by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, the UK’s deposit guarantee scheme.

A Member asked the Clerk how much interest was received last time the Council invested funds and she replied approximately £200. Any interest received was deposited into the Council’s savings account when the Business Saver Fixed Rate Account with the Nationwide Building Society reached maturity.

A Member considered that because of the current low interest rates and the cost of administrative time, the funds should remain in the Council’s bank account.

Another Member said that working on the principal that the Council can make its funds work a little bit more, money should be reinvested in a higher interest account.

 RESOLVED THAT £50,000 is to be withdrawn from the

Barclays Bank Tracker Account (with an interest rate

of 0.5%) and deposited into a Nationwide Business

Instant Saver Account (with a gross annual interest of

1%).

112. CHRISTMAS DONATIONS 2015:

Councillor G. Woodham MBA (Open) LL.B (Hons) declared a prejudicial interest as a donation had been made to Christmas Together in 2014 and did not participate in any discussion or voting on this matter.

He also declared a personal interest as a donation had been made to the Milford Haven Market Group.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs. Y. G. Southwell, explained that the Clerk’s report had been prepared in order that Members could decide if they wished to amend the way they consider applications for Christmas donations.

 Members noted that the Christmas Donations budget for this year was £1,400. They discussed the concept of awarding Christmas Donations and how best to extend advertising that there are funds available to assist with Christmas festivities.

 RESOLVED THAT:

 (i) the Clerk’s report be received;

 (ii) the Mayor and Chairman are to prepare a

 Notice to be published in early October stating that the

 Council has a budget of £1,400 available for

 Christmas celebrations, the average donation will be

 £100, and Members will particularly welcome

 applications from those who have not previously applied.

113. DISCUSSION ON MILFORD HAVEN TOWN COUNCIL’S GRANT APPLICATION FORM:

Members made amendments to the Town Council’s Grant Application Form.

 RESOLVED THAT the Clerk is to prepare a draft

 of the amendments made to the Grant Application

 Form for discussion at October’s meeting of

 the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Mayor, Councillor S. G. Joseph, left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

114. STATEMENT OF INCOME:

 RESOLVED THAT the Statement of Income for

the first quarter April to June 2015 be received.

115. SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE:

 The Clerk was asked whether there was anything in the budget line that would cause her concern.

 She referred to the budget line for The Rath Public Convenience, as it was difficult to estimate the cost of this facility, particularly as there had been no indication in the discussions with the Pembrokeshire County Council that this Council would have to pay rates.

RESOLVED THAT, subject to the above, the

Summary of Expenditure for the first quarter April

to June 2015 be received.

116. SCHEDULE OF ACCOUNTS:

 RESOLVED THAT the Schedule of Accounts as

presented by the Clerk for the months of

July, and August, 2015, in the sum of £26,466.57

be accepted and approved for payment.

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