

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the VIRTUAL **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** meeting held on Thursday 22 October 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Francis (Chairman), Backhouse, Blackwell, Clay, Harris, Hill, Munn and Poile

OFFICERS PRESENT: Tracy Kelly (Town Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES AND REASON FOR ABSENCE** – None
2. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS** – None declared.
3. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION** – No members of the public were present. No Press were present.
4. **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS** - The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 September 2020 were approved by Full Council at its meeting on 24 September 2020.
5. **ACCOUNTS**
 - a) **Outstanding cheques** – Members **NOTED** the previously signed cheque lists.
 - b) **Financial Statements** – Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure from 1 September to 30 September 2020.
 - c) **Financial Summary** – Members **NOTED** the summary from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020
6. **FINANCIAL MATTERS**
 - a) **Investments** – Members **AGREED** to the reinvestment of further funds into the overnight interest deposit account. Members **AGREED** to review the investment policy and to take into consideration that if the Bank of England placed a negative interest on savings accounts funds would need to be drawn down into the everyday business accounts to reduce the amount of bank charges incurred.
7. **SOUTHBOROUGH HUB WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Harris (Chairman of the Southborough Hub Working Group) updated Members with the report below. It was **AGREED** that further alterations discussed at the meeting would need to be included into this report before it could be discussed by Full Council where decisions could then be reached:

1. Maintenance Contracts

The maintenance of the Hub should be outsourced. The cost and complexity of doing this inhouse would make it uneconomic. The tasks should be outsourced with a suitable Service Level Agreement so STC can ensure that the required service levels are met and when not met there are effective escalations and ultimately financial penalties. Suggest getting a first proposal and using that as a basis for further proposals to ensure a level playing field.

2. Staffing

The Hub Manager's position is going to require a person who is able to adapt to the changing requirements as the Hub first opens dealing with, the new maintenance provider and the initial rentals of the hall and meeting rooms will be the main focus. As the role develops the focus on the hall and meeting rooms will increase with more involvement from councillors, potentially volunteer helpers, and more focus on social media.

Additional part time staff will be needed as house supervisors to make ready meeting rooms and the hall, so they will need to be physically fit.

3. Marketing of Hall & Meeting Rooms

- a. An informative web presence is essential to advertise the offered facilities. This should include photographs of the facilities, schematics of the offered layouts and pricing. Given the current COVID expectations, we should show both standard and COVID capacities for the hall and meeting rooms.
- b. The potential market for the hall and meeting rooms has been well researched by the Hub Advisory Group. This will be important information to be used by the Hub Manager.
- c. Pricing will need to be agreed and the recent pricing survey provides a reference. We recommend that
 - i. Highest level for Commercial Hires
 - ii. Local groups a lower level
 - iii. Anyone/group that makes committed repeat bookings is discounted
 - iv. Friday and Saturday night bookings are premium priced.
 - v. To start with bookings only available for fixed time slots, e.g. 9:30-12:00, 12:00-13:30, 13:30-15:45, 15:45-17:30, 19:00-22:30, 22:30-Midnight. The time slots have no additional allowance for setting up or clearing up.
- d. Booking should not be automated, instead the web site should provide a phone number, email address and a web enquiry form. We did not find any similar civic hubs or halls with automated systems. The published phone number will need consideration to minimise the interference with the regular running of the STC office.
- e. Contractual agreements for hall and meeting room hire will need to be prepared. The Hub WG has some templates.

4. Maintenance Costs

Maintenance cost estimates have been supplied by Rosemary Jones (Invicta Surveyors) and already passed to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

5. Day to day and planned maintenance programme

The planned maintenance programme will not become clear until we have hand over from the contractors with the full documentation. Any outstanding maintenance items will need to be addressed when we have reviewed the outsourcing proposals.

6. Involvement of the Hub Advisory Group

The Hub Advisory Group has provided an informative survey of the interest in the Hub from Southborough and surrounding areas. It would be useful to feed back to this group the suggested layouts for comment. Also going forward, it will be

important to involve this group with the opening programme and the opening of the Hub.

7. Opening of the Hub

STC should appoint a dedicated working group or redirect this group to plan and implement the opening of the new STC Hub. The opening should be considered as not just the official opening of the Hub and Medical Centre but as an opportunity to involve the community and potentially to extend the programme over a week. There is potential for local groups to establish themselves and encourage residents to get involved. Potential hirers could advertise their offerings.

8. **CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS** - It was proposed that during the consideration of the Following items, the public and press shall be temporarily excluded (Standing Order 3 (c)): -

These items are considered confidential for the following reason(s)
Information relating to the financial and personnel affairs of the Council.

- a) **Staff Wages** - Members **NOTED** the staff salaries for September 2020

The Chairman called for an extension to the meeting at 9pm for an additional 30 minutes.

- b) **Appointment of External Accountants** – Members **NOTED** the report surrounding this Councils appointment of external Accountants to advise on VAT implications surrounding the Hub Development and the ongoing running of the Hub after completion. Members **AGREED** that the Clerk together with Councillors Francis and Clay seek advice from an external Accountant with the expertise to deal with the VAT Implications to the Town Council and bring that advice back to Committee. It further **AGREED** that investigations be carried out to find a specialist Accountancy firm to advise on the possible higher accountancy level the Council may now find itself in.
- c) **Southborough Hub Operations** – Members discussed the ongoing Hub Operations, concerns, and recent Hub Visit. Members **NOTED** that these matters would be further reported to Full Council.
- d) **Southborough Hub Finances** – Members discussed the financial concerns and requests for further information. Members **NOTED** these matters and that these matters be further discussed at the upcoming Full Council.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN