

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

12 December, 2017

TOWN CLERK'S OPEN REPORT

- 1) Matters arising from the combined meeting of the Town Hall Sustainability & Income Task & Finish Group and the Town Hall Facilities & Wellbeing Panel

- **To review matters arising and note progress on issues being considered by the 2 sub-groups**

Due to the scope and urgency of some of the issues to be considered, the inaugural meeting of the Town Hall Facilities & Wellbeing Panel on 6 December, 2017 is being combined with the Town Hall Sustainability & Income Task & Finish Group. This will cover issues including Town Hall facilities and hire, and may require more than one meeting before recommendations can be made.

As this is taking place after this report has been prepared, any matters arising will be referred to this Committee by way of a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk, and items may be tabled at the meeting if required.

- 2) Street Furniture & Amenities Request for Dog Hygiene Bin in Avenue Ward – deferred from the 26.9.17 GP Meeting

- **To consider and resolve an amenities request**

This matter was discussed and not resolved at the General Purposes Committee Meeting on 26 September, 2017. It was therefore AGREED that this matter would be returned to the next General Purposes Committee Meeting and discussed as part of the overall plan for the provision of street furniture and amenities. Unfortunately, as neither ward member was available for the meeting on 24 October, this matter is still not resolved.

Councillor Bott advised at the meeting on 26 September that, together with Councillor Short, they would meet the site manager from Mainstay Residential Limited in order to discuss the request

for a dedicated dog hygiene bin in Barn Lane, as there is currently uncertainty where this bin can be located.

3) Bridging the Gap

- **To consider whether the newsletter remains a beneficial and proactive means of communication.**

The Council's newsletter, Bridging the Gap, has been produced for a number of years and to date, we have received very few complaints. The two that 'spring to mind' related to the cost of using glossy paper and printing in colour.

There are a number of issues that feature in every edition: Councillor contact details, Getting to Know Your Council, What's On, the Calendar of Meetings, a reminder that all meetings are open to the public, and a general marketing plug for the Town Hall. This was previously agreed by General Purposes.

You will recall that it was also a useful tool in publicising the Tranquility Garden and the Neighbourhood Plan, with the latter having a stand-alone publication on this single issue. It is planned to use Bridging the Gap again in the NDP referendum campaign.

Perhaps it could be used to greater effect in publicising local charities. At one time, the newsletter would feature a different charity in every publication (with a waiting list), but information from local charities on their activities has dwindled, and few are sending details through for publication. It would be helpful if Councillors could promote this platform to the organisations and charities that they are in contact with. Additionally, an article to promote the service could be included in the Spring edition.

Following the publication of the latest newsletter in November, 2017 the Town Clerk responded to the resultant enquiry from a resident:

As a local tax payer, could you please let me know how many Bridging the Gap issues you do each year; and what is the annual cost for design, production and distribution.

In these challenging economic times, I will then be asking my local councillor to challenge / debate whether the cost is proportionate for the messages contained within it; and whether this is a priority for local residents right now.

Town Clerk's Response:

Thank you for your enquiry regarding the Town Council's newsletter, Bridging the Gap.

As a Quality Council, we are mandated to publish (in hard copy) up to four newsletters per year. A copy of the newsletter is circulated via Mid-Week to 13,000 households and the cost of design, artwork, print and distribution works out at just under 26p per copy, per issue. We publish three such newsletters so the cost to the tax payer is just under 78p per annum.

Councillors Bott and Short were copied in to the Town Clerk's response, being the resident's ward councillors. Councillor Short has requested that this is an agenda item, in order for the Council to consider whether the newsletter remains a beneficial and proactive means of communication.

It should be noted that as a Quality Council, social media and the internet cannot be solely relied upon to promote Council activity, and hard copy communication is still essential (and mandatory) in order to reach those who may not have access to or choose not to use the internet.

4) Great British Spring Clean

- **To consider participation in the Great British Spring Clean 2018**

The Town Council has been involved in this initiative in previous years, both in terms of volunteering and making a budget provision towards costs.

Cllr J Fradgley will lead on this item.

5) 2018/2019 Budget

- **To agree the draft proposed General Purposes Budget for 2018/2019 and make a recommendation to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee**

The proposed draft budget was reviewed by the General Purposes Committee at the meeting in October, and this is another opportunity to propose any further changes which may have been identified since that time.

Recommendations will be passed through to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 January, 2018 when the final draft is expected to be recommended to Council.

It is likely that further amendments to the budget may be required, pending the outcome and recommendations of the ongoing meetings of the Town Hall Sustainability & Income Task & Finish Group and the Town Hall Facilities & Wellbeing Panel before the budget is finalised. Any additional requirements beyond that point will need to be financed from Reserves.

Town Clerk
12 December, 2017