

MINUTES OF THE **MEETING** OF THE **STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM** HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 18TH JULY 2018 AT 7.00 P.M. AT THE TOWN HALL, GREAT WESTERN
HOUSE, 9 DEVON SQUARE, NEWTON ABBOT

PRESENT: Councillors M Hocking (Chairman)
Mrs J A Jones (Vice Chairman)

Mrs C Bunday	M Joyce
D Corney-Walker	C Parker
C Coyle-Moore	K Purchase (Mayor)
D Howe	M E Ryan
R Jenks (Dep Mayor)	T Ward

In attendance: Philip Rowe – Town Clerk
Sam Scott – Deputy Town Clerk
Alex Robinson – Committee Administrator

SP1. CHAIRMAN OF STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM

Nominations were received for the election of the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Forum for the year 2018/2019.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Mike Hocking be elected Chairman of the Strategic Planning Forum for the year 2018/2019.

SP2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Julie Cleave and Ms Liz Roberts.

SP3. VICE-CHAIRMAN OF STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM

Nominations were received for the appointment of the Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Planning Forum for the year 2018/2019.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Ann Jones be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Strategic Planning Forum for the year 2018/2019.

SP4. INTERESTS

None declared.

SP5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Strategic Planning Forum meeting held on 29th November 2017 were received and signed as a correct record.

SP6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members gave due consideration to the Terms of Reference and recorded the key priority for the Council continue to be the development of the Newton's Place Project a Museum and community space incorporating the Town Hall. Accordingly, it was,

RESOLVED that, the Terms of Reference be hereby, approved and adopted for the year 2018/19.

SP7. BUDGET AND STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2018/19 AND FOLLOWING YEARS

A. Budget Performance 2017/18

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to introduce the Income and Expenditure statement for 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, previously circulated. The Town Clerk explained that the statement had been presented by Budget Cost Centre and Account Heading. Members considered the budget papers in some detail and clarified the following key points:

Budget by Cost Centre:

Page Ref	Heading	Comment/Note
1	IT support	Unplanned expenditure in relation to replacement cost of two laptops
	Public Relations	Additional expenditure due to publicity for Newton's Place project – some had been offset by HLF Grant
	Misc. Expenditure	Offset by Miscellaneous Income with net expenditure of £3,000
3	Town Crier's Expenses	Purchase of clothing and equipment for new Town Crier
4	St Leonard's Tower	Upgrade to electrical wiring and introduction of Business Rate Charges
	War Memorial	Grant funding for restoration required specialist surveys to be undertaken in advance – associated costs of surveys
	CIC salaries	Year on year the allocation was made in the current year and recharged retrospectively in the following financial year
5	Misc. Income/Exp	The balance of timing of expenditure in relation to Newton's Place project and the income from payments from HLF Grant made in arrears
6	Museum	Underspend ear marked funds for Newton's Place Project
7	Allotments	Bradley Lane Allotments – urgent works to trees required under H&S and works to the watercourse
8	Town Quay	Cleaning – Handyman time costs contained in salaries
	Grass Cutting	Complexities around change in DCC contractor and subsequent poor start to the new contract (Skanska)

Budget by Account:

Page Ref	Heading	Comment/Note
1	Christmas Lights	Additional costs associated with replacement wires

		and electrical switches
3	Public Relations	Additional costs for Newton's Place publicity and Newton Crier

Members noted that the overall budget had performed well. The Chairman reported that as the Newton's Place project embarked on the Delivery Phase there would be pressure on the Council's cash flow but that this would be closely monitored and managed. Members agreed that the Newton's Place Project would remain as the Council's main priority and agreed that the key message to the committees and sub-committees for the forthcoming year would be that services would not be reduced but that budgets should be maintained at a 'stand-still' level accepting the need for inflationary rises to certain charges. Members felt that this was a realistic position and would be managed accordingly and gave their continued support to the Newton's Place Project as being the main priority for the Council. Accordingly; it was

AGREED that the Statements by Cost Centre and Account of Income and Expenditure for 1st April 2017 – 31st March 2018, were hereby, noted and adopted.

B. Budget Savings/Growth for 2018/19 and Following Years

The Chairman invited Members to consider the Budget for 2018/19 and forward years in noting that the Newton's Place Project would remain the Council's main priority for at least, the next two years. The Clerk reminded Members that there would continue to be inflationary rises for some services but was pleased to report that the Deputy Town Clerk had achieved a consolidation of all the energy tariffs and negotiated a reduced price for the Council. The Clerk added that the Council had made provision within the budget to take account of the impending cessation of Council Tax Support Grant by spreading the impact of the reduction across a three-year period. Following considerable discussion, it was

AGREED that the Strategic Planning Forum recommend to all Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council that a stand-still budget remain in place with the exception of contingency being available for the delivery of unplanned services.

C. Grass Cutting Contract 2019

The Chairman invited the Clerk to update Members on the grass cutting service during 2018 to date, in noting that service continued through to the end of the summer season. The Clerk reported the difficulties in the service as reported by both residents and Councillors alike. It was noted that the newly appointed contractor Idverde had not been furnished with up to date maps from Devon County Council; the maps pre-dated the new A380 express high-way and were of such poor quality that it had been difficult to determine areas of responsibility. The Clerk added that the office staff had forwarded any reported problems to the contract manager who had been keen to assist and resolve issues and, in some cases,, had gone beyond the contract to ensure a higher standard of service. It was hoped that residents would benefit from a notably better service once the initial 'teething problems' had been resolved as this was the first of a three-year contract.

Members noted the additional difficulty of where the responsibility for some of the visibility splays remained with the County Council but were not being effectively managed and residents could not distinguish between the two service providers. The Clerk encouraged Ward Members to monitor and report any problems in an effort to support the contractor in resolving the initial difficulties. The Clerk offered to circulate

copies of the maps to Members to provide a reference to the areas within the contractor's responsibility and to assist with reporting issues.

Following several suggestions from Members it was:

AGREED that the Town Clerk would supply Ward Members with maps (as provided by Devon County Council) in relation to areas within the grass-cutting contract for reference.

SP8. NEWTON'S PLACE PROJECT

The Chairman invited the Clerk to provide Members with an update on the Newton's Place Project. The Clerk informed Members that he would report on matters relating to the Construction Tender and the funding.

A. Construction Tender

The Invitations to Tender were issued 17th July 2018 with responses expected back by 24th August 2018. The potential contractors were based across the region; Plymouth, Exeter, Newton Abbot, Somerset and Worcester. Once returned they would be received by the Chairman of the Newton's Place Project Board and the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee. The Tenders would be subject to scrutiny by the Project Manager and Quantity Surveyor who would prepare a summary report to the Council by 11th September 2018. Providing the Tenders were within budget it was anticipated that the contractor would be appointed by mid-September with a view to them being on site by mid-October for a 42 week contract, due to complete towards the end of August 2019. Once the construction contract had been completed the Museum Designers would fulfil the contract to fit out the Museum to meet the projected opening planned for the end of 2019.

It was noted that the contractors would have a site meeting during the Tender period to clarify any matters in relation to the contract. If all the Tenders were returned with a higher price than budgeted then there was capacity within the specification to refine the delivery phase and defer non-essential elements to a forward programme of building maintenance. This would allow a degree of flexibility in delivering the programme within the prescribed budget.

B. Funding

The Clerk summarised the funding achieved to date:

£800,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund Grant – subject to 'Permission to Start'
£800,000 from Public Works Loans Board at an affordable rate of 2.77%
£45,000 from Foyle Foundation
£35,000 from bequeathed from a private legacy (the final amount to be confirmed)
£22,000 from the Town and Parish Fund (TAP)

Applications for grant funding, totalling in excess of £500,000 were in the pipeline and the project group awaited the outcome.

This being the case the Council still had to meet a shortfall of £300,000 gap in funding and the Clerk had investigated a number of options:

- (i) Mortgage – subject to permission for borrowing approval as sought in a second application to the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Council's bank had accepted an application to raise a mortgage against the existing Town Hall.

- (ii) Sale of Existing Town Hall – The Clerk had had initial discussions with a property developer in the town on the possible purchase and redevelopment of the Town Hall.
- (iii) Short Term support from a local govt source – The Clerk had requested a short-term support from another local authority and awaited their decision.

The Chairman thanked the Clerk for his considerable efforts in investigating potential sources to meet the funding shortfall and acknowledged that the matter would be considered further at the meeting of the Council on 25th July 2018.

C. Acquisition of Asset

The Clerk reported that further to Minute 18/02(361) whereupon the Council had delegated authority to the Clerk to acquire the additional asset (within the parameters of a fee which demonstrated best value); that the Councils' legal representatives had been commissioned to pursue the acquisition of the asset.

In noting the additional borrowing for the Council to meet the shortfall in funding Members recorded that future CIL income would meet the costs of repayment of the loans. Therefore, it was suggested that CIL income be ring-fenced to enable all borrowing to be repaid in the shorter term. Following discussion among Members, accordingly it was;

AGREED that a) the Council was committed to the Newton's Place Project as a key priority for the Council and b) that it was the Council's intention that any loans or borrowing in connection with the Newton's Place Project would be repaid in the shorter time period using CIL income.

SP9. STRATEGIC MATTERS

The Chairman reported that since the Newton's Place Project remained the key priority for the Council; that there were no additional items at that time, but that the matter would be reconsidered again in due course.

SP10. ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Bradley Barton/Highweek Revised Bus Route - The Chairman expressed his concern of the recently introduced bus route, which replaced the existing No. 70 service through Highweek, Bradly Barton, Bradley Valley and into the town centre. Stagecoach had removed some bus stops and the route appeared to only offer a one-way trip into the town causing passengers to have to join the bus much earlier in the journey in order to travel to and from the town adding to journey times and causing inconvenience. Members noted their concern.

SP11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be 14th November 2018, which would be the budget meeting.

CHAIRMAN