

NOTES OF THE **MEETING** OF THE **STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM** HELD ON **WEDNESDAY 13th SEPTEMBER 2023** AT NEWTON'S PLACE, WOLBOROUGH STREET, NEWTON ABBOT AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors A Hall (Chairperson) Presiding

C Davieson
M Joyce
C Parker
M Ryan
L Wood

In attendance: Philip Rowe – Town Clerk
Samantha Scott – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO

SP13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs L Cooke, D Corney-Walker (Mayor) and S Walker (Vice Chairperson), Nigel Canham, Communications Advisor, Linda McGuirk, Principal Administrator and Sally Henley, Town Development Manager.

SP14. INTERESTS

None declared.

SP15. MINUTES

The notes of the Strategic Planning Forum held on Wednesday 26th July 2023 were received and signed as a correct record.

SP16. SALARY UPDATE

The Town Clerk gave an update on negotiations for the 2023/24 national pay award. It was noted that both Unite and Unison had balloted their members with the former agreeing to take industrial action with the latter agreeing to accept the employers offer. The third body on the trade union side, the GMB, was currently canvassing its members. A meeting of the three bodies would be held 19th September when an outright decision would be made.

Members noted the pending pay award will need to be considered as part of budget discussions once a decision had been reached.

SP17. BUDGET AND STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2023/24 AND THE FOLLOWING YEARS

- a) Budget report for the first 4 months of the financial year.

The RFO advised there had been no queries received in advance of the meeting, however, there were budget items which needed to be brought to Members' attention:-

Page	Cost Centre	Account	Comment
1	101	4003	Consultancy fees – potential to be overspent due to unpaid invoices from previous years.
2			None
3	102	1999	Miscellaneous Income - £11,000 water charge refund received.
4	102	4160	Repairs – Property – noted transfer to EMR under account 6000.
5			None.
6	110	4999	Miscellaneous Expenses – tree wrapping in Courtenay Street Christmas 2022.
	120	4166	St Leonard's Tower Maintenance – repair to clock hand and replacement WiFi switch due to water damage. <i>Potential to increase budget going forward.</i>
	120	4167	Electricity – Tower – increased charges. <i>Potential to increase budget going forward.</i>
7	130	2000	Staffing Repayments – repaid under account 4280.
8	122	4259	Victoria Gardens – Increased charges. <i>Potential to increase budget going forward.</i>
9	201	1205	Museum Donations – increased donations received so far.
10	210		Events – due to reduction in volunteers, the Events Sub-Cttee might need to consider increasing budget to hire additional persons to assist.
11			None.
12	211	4393	NinB Contractor Floral Display – tenders currently sought for next five years 2024/28. To be reported to Council 20 th September 2023.
	220	4999	Miscellaneous Expenses – tree survey and works required to allotments for H & S reasons. Budget to be overspent.
13			None.
14	289	4501	Newfoundland Way Toilets – further research required regarding performance of meter.
	290	1009	Grass verge income – DCC had not yet been invoiced, awaiting final cut for the year.
15		4999/6000	Miscellaneous Expenses – purchase of CCTV camera pole for Ashburton Road play park - expenditure transferred.
16			None.
17	901	9001	EMR Elections – Arising from invoices received following the May 2023 elections, charges have increased therefore the EMR needs to be increased also.
18	100	4140	Insurance – Noted that due to asset reinstatement revaluation premium for 2023/24 had increased by £3,000.
		4258	PWLB Repayments – noted reducing.
19			None.

Members referred to the areas where increases had been identified as being necessary and requested the RFO to provide a statement at the Forum's next meeting with the draft budget for 2024/25 populated.

- b) To consider the budget message for the Council's Committees and Sub-Committees on the performance of the 2023/24 budget and any issues with the 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 budgets.

The Forum discussed issues that the committees needed to address, including the future replacement of the Council's vehicles with different power sources and body configurations. Additionally, a decision was required urgently as to the filling of the vacant fourth Facilities maintenance Officer post.

Arising from the above discussion it was

AGREED that the Council's committees and sub-committees needed to identify any necessary growth over and above inflation during the next committee cycle for consideration by the Forum at its next meeting to be held on 8th November 2023.

SP18. STRATEGIC MATTERS

Further to paragraph SP10. of the meeting held on 26th July, a lengthy debate took place amongst Members regarding its priorities for the next four years and beyond.

As requested at the last meeting, a discussion paper had been prepared by Nigel Canham and previously circulated setting out in summary the themes and possible actions arising from the Council's revised Community Plan 2022/28. It had been suggested that Members could forward to the Town Clerk their priorities for the future which would be collated and brought to this meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed no priorities had been received.

The Forum was informed that Sally Henley, the Town Development Manager, had however submitted a list of ideas to the Town Clerk which the Chairperson requested be circulated at the meeting, as follows:-

	Community Plan Theme	IDEA
1	Community	Increase the number of Annual Town Meeting type events.
2	Community/Town Centre	Extend support for NAST to deal with anti-social behaviour
3	Environment/Town Centre	Focus tasks delivered by the FMO's to better align with the statutory responsibilities of the principal councils.
4	Young People/Town Centre	Encourage schools to use town centre spaces for performances and music.
5	Town Centre	Support and encourage TDC to jointly develop a markets strategy for Newton Abbot.
6	Town Centre	Identify a partner to deliver Sunday Food Markets.

7	Town Centre	Work with stakeholders to successfully deliver an appropriate scheme on the Wolborough Street development site.
8	Town Centre	Improve Newton In Bloom floral displays under new contract.
9	Town Centre/Culture	Provide support for bodies/groups delivering events such as the Maltings Festival.
10	Town Centre	Enter into a dialogue with TDC regarding the plan to provide residential development on town centre car parks.

Members expressed the view that many of the ideas could be supported and that with regard to strategic priorities, the following be prioritised:-

- Support and encourage TDC to jointly develop a markets strategy for Newton Abbot;
- Focus tasks delivered by the FMO's to better align with the statutory responsibilities of the principal councils.

The Forum then gave consideration to the content of the discussion paper prepared by Nigel Canham, concluding that focus should be in the following areas:

- Town Centre – seek to open discussions on the District Council's detailed plans for the Alexandra Theatre and Market Hall and introduce the potential for seeking possession;
- Young People – installation of environmental play equipment in the town centre;
- Community – seeking partnerships with other authorities/agencies to work with the Town Council to deliver on ambitions. Example given of the Rotary Club delivering the Party In The Park and the potential for others to work with NATC to deliver a 'Carnival Week' set of events;
- Town Centre – commence plans for delivery of Newton's Place II;
- Community/Town Centre/Environment – research the resource needs for the FMO's to deliver a quality cleansing regime for the whole of Newton Abbot;
- Town Centre – consider broadening the criteria for the Shop Improvement Grants to increase the potential to improve business fronts beyond what is currently available;
- Town Centre – detailed work to seek partners to commission and install public art throughout the town.

Arising from the debate it was agreed that the Council's priorities should be:

- **Young People** – research the installation of environmental play equipment in the town centre;
- **Community** – focus tasks delivered by the FMO's to better align with the statutory responsibilities of the principal councils;
- **Community/Town Centre/Environment** – research the resource needs for the FMO's to deliver a quality cleansing regime for the whole of Newton Abbot;
- **Community** – seeking partnerships with other authorities/agencies to work with the Town Council to deliver on ambitions;
- **Town Centre** – commence plans for delivery of Newton's Place II e.g. design and planning permission to provide a shovel ready project to allow reaction to opportunities as they arise;

- **Town Centre** – consider broadening the criteria for the Shop Improvement Grants to increase the potential to improve business premises beyond what is currently available;
- **Town Centre** – detailed work to seek partners to commission and install public art throughout the town;
- **Town Centre** – Support and encourage TDC to jointly develop a markets strategy for Newton Abbot;
- **Town Centre** – seek to open discussions on the District Council’s detailed plans for the Alexandra Theatre and Market Hall and introduce the potential for seeking possession.

Councillor M Ryan declared an interest in all discussions relating to the Facilities Maintenance Officers but spoke and voted.

SP19. ITEMS ARISING AND FUTURE AGENDAS

- a) Any relevant issues, which Members wish to raise, not already included on the agenda.

None

- b) To identify items for the next meetings of the Strategic Planning Forum.

None

SP20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 8th November 2023

The Meeting closed at 21:00 hrs.

Chairperson.....Date.....