

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE **FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE** HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2019 AT 7.00 P.M. AT THE TOWN HALL, GREAT
WESTERN HOUSE, 9 DEVON SQUARE, NEWTON ABBOT

PRESENT: Councillors C N Parker (Chairman) Presiding
D Corney-Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors	P Bullivant	Mrs A Jones
	Mrs C Bunday	M Joyce (Dep Mayor)
	R Hall	Mrs L Sheffield
	M Hocking	M E Ryan
	D Howe	

By Invitation: Ms Helen Chessum Transition Newton Abbot
Ms Betina Winkler Transition Newton Abbot
Vincent Wilson Chief Officer Citizens Advice Teignbridge

Representative of Press: Ross Bryant – Mid Devon Advertiser

Officers in Attendance: Phil Rowe – Town Clerk
Sally Henley – Town Development Manager
Alex Robinson – Committee Administrator

279. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Rob Hayes, Chris Jenks and Richard Jenks (Mayor) and Sam Scott, Deputy Town Clerk.

280. **INTERESTS**

Councillors Mrs Lesley Sheffield and Mike Hocking gave notice of their intension to declare an interest in Minute 285 (E&F) and (F) respectively.

281. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee held on 3rd July 2019 were received and signed as a correct record.

282. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

283. **PRESENTATION – PLASTIC FREE**

The Chairman welcomed Ms Helen Chessum and Ms Betina Winkler, Transition Newton Abbot and invited them to update Members on the work of the Plastic Free Newton Abbot Campaign.

Ms Chessum summarised the work of Transition Newton Abbot and raised the following key points, specifically in connection with Plastic Free Newton Abbot:

- The background organisation is Transition Newton Abbot working towards sustainability for residents and businesses of the town;

- The initiative Plastic Free is concentrating on discouraging single-use plastic in the town;
- Single use plastics, don't degrade and end up in landfill or in the oceans and have contributed to a world-wide problem;
- The significant impacts to wildlife, the natural environment and our own food-chain;
- Reported that one third of fish, caught for human consumption now contains microplastic which is then part of our food consumption;
- 'Surfers against Sewage' (SAS) started a campaign on the coastline concentrating on plastic debris in the oceans and also washed up on beaches;
- SAS now collaborate with the efforts inland, in the knowledge that the source of the plastic started within towns;
- SAS have an accreditation scheme available to towns, schools and businesses to work towards a plastic-free environment;
- Locally Dawlish, Ashburton and Bovey Tracey have achieved accreditation for their town;
- Newton Abbot, Teignmouth, Bishopsteignton and Chudleigh are working towards the accreditation.

The Plastic-Free Campaign has five key aims:

1. Support of Local Councils
2. Business Plastic-Free Champions
3. Raise public awareness through social media and local publicity
4. Public engagement with schools, the South Devon UTC is providing a 'hub' and other schools have requested to join and participate; The CIC has been actively involved in liaising with schools in the town; and
5. Development of a Steering Group (to meet four times a year).

Ms Chessum highlighted the progress within Newton Abbot;

- Support for Plastic-free was very strong;
- Despite concerns that it may have small amount of impact when compared with the effects worldwide; the positive benefits were reiterated through examples of the removal of 'CFCs' in refrigerators, aerosol cans and lead from petrol;
- Supported the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency;
- Local litter picks, to which councillors were invited, demonstrated the amount of plastic littered and the risk of causing harm to the environment.

The Chairman invited questions from Members, who raised the following comments:

- Town Development Manager had liaised with local businesses and queried how many participating cafes, restaurants and businesses were needed to gain the accreditation; a programme which would take approximately a year to fulfil;
- Councillors noted the emphasis on single-use plastic as some plastic did have a valuable use;
- Concern at positive impact Newton Abbot could achieve among a vast world-wide issue but important to start somewhere and conscious that there had been progress nationally;
- Public pressure and the support of Surfers against Sewage to put pressure on supermarkets and retailers;

- The Council supported a Motion on the reduction and elimination of single-use plastic two years ago; the Town Council remained committed to the progression of plastic-free;
- Clarified the food waste processing undertaken by Teignbridge District Council and the tolerance of recycled plastic bags suitable for food waste.

The Chairman thanked both Helen Chessum and Betina Winkler for their informative and valuable update on the progress of the Plastic Free campaign for Newton Abbot as part of Transition Newton Abbot. The Finance and Audit Committee expressed its support for the formation of a steering group. Following discussion, accordingly it was;

RESOLVED that Councillor David Corney-Walker be nominated to represent the Town Council on the Plastic Free Newton Abbot Steering Group.

The Chairman invited Helen Chessum and Betina Winkler to leave the meeting.

284. **SUB-COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES/FORUMS**

A. **STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM – 17th JULY 2019**

Arising from the consideration of the report of the meeting (previously circulated) it was,

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strategic Planning Forum – held on 17th July 2019 be hereby approved and adopted.

B. **STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE – 6th NOVEMBER 2019**

Arising from the consideration of the verbal report of the meeting it was,

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Staffing Sub-Committee – held on 6th November 2019 be hereby approved and adopted.

285. **INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

A. **INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENTS**

The Committee received the Income and Expenditure Statements for June, July, August and September 2019 (previously circulated). The Town Clerk advised that there had been some minor queries in advance of the meeting. The Chairman invited further questions from Members.

30th June 2019

Opening Balance	£1,836,933.56
Heritage Lottery Fund Payment	£ 53,813.00
Misc. Income	£ 40,358.16
Total Income	£1,931,104.72

LESS:

Expenditure £ 366,120.12

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £ 366,120.12

BALANCE as at 30th June 2019

Business Call & Current Account: £1,564,984.60

Balances as at 30th June 2019

Current Account	£ 101.00
Business Call Account	£1,564,883.60
Petty Cash Account	£ 200.00

Total Cash in hand at bank £1,565,184.60

Total: £1,565,184.60

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31st July 2019

Opening Balance £1,564,984.60

Heritage Lottery Fund Payment £ 100,471.00

Misc. Income £ 1,905.45

Total Income £1,677,361.05

LESS:

Expenditure £ 466,460.40

TOTAL EXPENDITURE £ 466,460.40

BALANCE 31st July 2019

Business Call & Current Account: £1,200,900.65

Balances as at 31st July 2019

Current Account £100.00

Business Call Account	£1,200,800.65
Petty Cash Account	£200.00

Total Cash in hand at bank £1,200,100.65

Total:	----- £1,200,100.65
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31th August 2019

Opening Balance	£1,200,900.65
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Heritage Lottery Fund Payment	£ 73,341.00
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VAT refund – 2 nd Quarter	£ 77,297.37
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Misc. Income	£ 2,930.80
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Total Income	£1,354,469.82
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LESS:

Expenditure	£ 132,616.16
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TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 132,616.16
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BALANCE 31st August 2019

Business Call & Current Account:	£1,221,853.66
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Balances as at 31st August 2019

Current Account	£100.00
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Business Call Account	£1,221,753.66
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Petty Cash Account	£200.00
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Total Cash in hand at bank £1,222,053.66

Total:	----- £1,222,053.66
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30th August 2019

Opening Balance	£1,221,853.66
Heritage Lottery Fund Payment	£ 60,904.00
Misc. Income	£ 1,923.22
Total Income	£1,284,680.88
LESS:	
Expenditure	£ 324,382.88
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 324,382.88

BALANCE 30th September 2019
Business Call & Current Account: £960,298.00

Balances as at 30th September 2019

Current Account	£100.00
Business Call Account	£ 960,198.00
Petty Cash Account	£200.00

Total Cash in hand at bank £ 960,498.00

Total:	----- £ 960,498.00
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Members noted the detailed reports provided by the Deputy Town Clerk and expressed their appreciation of the transparency and ease with which they could review the financial statements. Accordingly, it was,

RESOLVED that the statements of income and expenditure for June, July, August and September 2019 as submitted to the Committee be hereby approved and signed by the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee.

B. FINANCIAL BUDGET COMPARISON

The Committee received and approved the Financial Budget Comparison summary and report which detailed Income and Expenditure for the Finance and Audit Committee for the period 1st April – 30th September 2019 (previously circulated). The Town Clerk noted that the overall budget performance had been very good. Members commended the level of detail and clarity provided by officers. The Chairman invited comment on the budgets. Following a discussion, accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED that the Financial Budget Comparison summary Income for the Finance and Audit Committee for the period 1st April - 30th September 2019,

be hereby, approved and signed by the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee.

C. PROPOSED BUDGET 2020/21

The Chairman invited Members to consider the proposed budget for the Finance and Audit Committee for 2020/21. The Chairman noted that future payments to the Public Works Loans Board in respect of Newton's Place would be reflected under the Finance & Audit budget summary. Members agreed that the budget should remain as a stand-still budget subject. Following discussion, it was;

RESOLVED that the proposed budget for the Finance and Audit Committee be hereby approved and adopted as a budget of **£57,400** for 2020/21.

D. PROPOSED BUDGETS FOR 2020/21 REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

The Committee received and noted the proposed budgets for the following Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups:

- a) Community Engagement Group - Newton In Bloom budget of **£21,500**;
- b) Community Engagement Group - Museum budget of **£32,800**;
- c) Events Sub-Committee budget of **£22,000**;
- d) Community and Heritage budget of **£27,000**; and
- e) Policy and Resources budget of **£585,560**

Following consideration, Members noted and approved all the budgets listed a) to e) Arising from the discussion it was;

RESOLVED that the proposed budgets listed as a) to e) above be hereby approved and adopted.

E. CITIZENS ADVICE TEIGNBRIDGE – NEWTON ABBOT

The Chairman welcomed Vincent Wilson, Chief Officer, Citizens Advice Teignbridge and invited him to outline the key elements of his Service Provision report, in which it requested an increase in the amount of financial assistance to be granted by the Town Council. Mr Wilson provided Members with a background to the work of Citizens Advice Teignbridge and related specifically to the work in Newton Abbot. He highlighted the significant impact of Universal Credit and other financial pressures that have had affects on local residents. Mr Wilson demonstrated that demands for the support services provided is growing and the work of the volunteers is increasingly complex given constant changes in legislation. Mr Wilson advised that additional funding would be allocated to training to enable staff and volunteers to give advice on increasingly complex matters.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wilson for his update to Members and invited questions from Members. Councillors raised the following key points:

- Confirmed that the additional funding would be used for training;
- The impact on local residents caused by the introduction of the Universal Credit system;

- Citizens Advice Teignbridge is concentrated in the south of Teignbridge from three main centres but outreach work had enabled increased coverage across Mortonhampstead, Buckfastleigh and Chudleigh together with a new home-visiting service.

The Chairman advised that Members would give further consideration to the request for increased funding for the Citizens Advice Teignbridge later in the meeting.

Councillor Mrs L Sheffield having declared an interest abstained from the discussion.

F. GRANT APPLICATIONS – NOVEMBER 2019.

The Chairman invited Members to consider applications for Grants and Financial Assistance, a summary of which had been previously circulated. The differing financial contribution was clarified as a Grant being awarded for a specific project or task and Financial Assistance to support ongoing running costs.

The Committee received the following Applications for consideration:

Grants

1. Newton Abbot & District Society of Arts	£600.00
2. Dyrons Journal	£250.00
3. Newton Abbot & District Allotments Assoc.	£250.00

Financial Assistance

4. Citizens Advice Teignbridge	£3,000.00
5. Newton Abbot Community Transport	£2,750.00
6. HomeStart Teignbridge	£320.00

Following consideration, it was

RESOLVED that

- Applications for **Grants** listed as 1, 2 and 3 be hereby approved; and
- Applications for **Financial Assistance** listed as 3, 5 and 6 be hereby granted.

Councillors Mrs L Sheffield and M Hocking having declared personal interests on 4 and 5 respectively abstained from the discussion and voting thereon.

286. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN 2018/19

The Chairman referred Members to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2018/19. The Clerk referred Members directly to the Final Report and highlighted that in section two, the External Auditor had recorded that no matters had been drawn to their attention that would affect their decision, which was a very positive statement. The Clerk then added that in other matters the External Auditor had highlighted two points, the first having been actioned and the second which had been challenged as incorrect. The External Auditor had been satisfied that the Town Council was fully compliant in accordance with Proper Practices and had issued the Certificate of completion for 2018/19. Members recorded their appreciation of the

hard work undertaken by Officers to meet the requirements of the External Auditors. Accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Council at its meeting to be held on 20th November 2019 be **RECOMMENDED** to approve and adopt the **Annual Governance & Accountability Return for 2018/19**.

287. INTERNAL AUDIT – INTERIM REPORT 2019/20

The Chairman referred Members to the Interim Report for 2019/20 as prepared by the Internal Auditor, previously circulated. The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to provide Members with an update on the implementation of the Recommendations labelled R1-R6. The Clerk outlined the actions taken for each of the recommendations and noted the R5 and R6 relied upon the cooperation of the Payroll Service Provider, Teignbridge District Council to comply with legislation to provide relevant payroll information to the Internal Auditor. The Clerk advised that the Deputy Town Clerk would provide Teignbridge District Council with the relevant extract from the Internal Audit Report to enable them to assist in the future.

Members recorded their appreciation that both the Internal and External Audit reports demonstrated that the Council had been well managed by Officers and they expressed their particular thanks to the Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk for their efforts and hard work. Following discussion among Members about the resolution of the recommendations, accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that the Council at its meeting to be held on 20th November 2019 be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt the **Internal Audit Interim Report 2019/20** and the recommendations labelled **R1-R6** be noted.

288. CHAIRMAN/CLERK ACTIONS DURING THE SUMMER RECESS

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to update Members on the actions taken on behalf of the Council during the summer recess.

The Clerk reported that in consultation with the Chairman of Finance & Audit Committee that he had arranged for a Financial Assistance Award of £250 to THAT Food Bank during the school summer holidays to support the local scheme to keep those children who qualified for free school meals fed throughout the school holidays.

Members commended the Clerk on his action and accordingly it was;

RESOLVED that the Finance and Audit Committee approve the actions taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman, Councillor Colin Parker on actions taken during the summer recess.

289. NEWTON'S PLACE PROJECT - UPDATE

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to update Members on the project. The Town Clerk reported that since the last meeting the Project Manager had reported good progress on site at Newton's Place. The Architect had confirmed the increased labour on site and with the exception of two major installations, the glass wall and lift; the project was progressing towards completion. Pollards had issued an extension of time to complete the construction programme by 20th December and whilst this may be realistic it would require a period in January to complete the necessary snagging and the commissioning of the building before handing back to the Council.

The Clerk added that Creative Core had arranged delivery of the Museum show cases to be held in storage until the completion of the construction phase. Members expressed their appreciation to Councillor Philip Bullivant who had accommodated the storage of nine palette loads, free of charge to the Council. One show case had been installed at the Town Hall to allow the Museum project group to use it as a template for sizing objects and suitable graphics to assist with the installation process scheduled for the new year.

The Chairman invited the Chairman of the Project Board to add to the report. Councillor Mike Ryan reported that he had recently attended a site visit and was pleased at the progress; specifically the installation of the ramp, partition walls and plastering that was underway. Councillor Ryan thanked Councillor Bullivant for his assistance in storing the Museum show cases during the completion of the construction phase.

Councillor Howe recorded the valuable work undertaken by all those involved in photographing the progress of the project, both as a requirement of the Planning Consent but as a historic record of the changes to the building.

Following discussion among Members, accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED that the verbal update from the Town Clerk on the Newton's Place Project be hereby, noted.

290. PARISH PRECEPTS IN ENGLAND 2019/20

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to report on the Comparison Chart, previously circulated, as produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government. Members noted the comparison chart of English Parish Precepts 2019/20. Following consideration, it was:

RESOLVED that the Parish Precepts in England 2019/20 be hereby, noted.

291. LATE CORRESPONDENCE

The Town Clerk tabled a letter from the Royal British Legion, Head Office in connection with their involvement in Remembrance Sunday. Members noted that the Royal British Legion were relinquishing their lead role as Event Manager and would seek to support Town and Parish Councils in future Remembrance Day events.

292. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee would be held on Wednesday 15th January 2019.

Chairman