**A Meeting of the Finance, Asset, Community and Environment Committee**

**took place to be held at 7.30pm on Monday 13th November 2023,**

**in the Town Council Offices, the Old Library, Knockhundred Row, Midhurst**

**MINUTES**

**Present**: Cllr D Coote, Cllr D Fraser, Cllr McAra, Cllr D Merritt, Cllr J Travers (Chairman) and Cllr R Watts.

**In attendance**: J. Brown-Fuller (Acting Town Clerk) M. Haywood (Deputy Town Clerk) and four members of the public.

**F/077/23 Chairman’s Announcements:** Cllr Travers voice is better but if it gives way then Vice Chair Cllr Merritt will take over. Cllr Travers noted the attendance of Tim Young, who wished to speak regarding the Richard Cobden Exhibition so agreed to move agenda item 12 earlier in the meeting.

**F/078/23 Apologies for Absence:** Apologies had been received from Cllr M Facer and Cllr A Lambert.

**F/079/23 Declarations of Interest:** None.

*Meeting halted for Public Participation Session*

**F/080/23 Public Participation Session.**

*The meeting was reconvened.*

**F/081/23 Richard Cobden Exhibition**

Cllr Tim Young, a District Councillor for Chichester District Council, addressed the Council in regards to bringing a Richard Cobden Exhibition early 2024 to Midhurst at the Old Library. He would like to arrange a series of talks regarding Richard Cobden who was a local to Midhurst and buried in West Lavington Church Yard.

Questions were raised regarding the political aspect of the exhibition and information was presented to show that the slides that would be on display would be generic and not overly political.

The exhibition would likely be for one month, installed on the top area of the main hall and the displays will be safe for other events to take place within the hall.

Cllr Mcara mentioned that Midhurst Museum holds Richard Cobden’s death mask as well as multiple other artefacts from Dunford House and could this be included in the exhibition.

Councillors thanked Cllr Young for this incredible and interesting offer.

**Decision**: The Council voted all in favour of this proposal and Cllr Young is to liaise with Events Officer with further details.

**F/082/23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 9th October 2023:** The minutes were proposed as an accurate record and agreed by all present.

**F/083/23 Matters Arising and Review of Actions from those Minutes:** None.

**F/084/23 Financial Reports for October 2023:** The financial reports were circulated prior to the meeting.

The following payments in excess of £500 were also noted:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Organisation** | **Details** | **Amount** |
| Design Directive | Lilac Cottage refurbishment consultancy | £2,400.00 |
| Shelley Signs | Interpretation panel at the Wharf | £1,374.00 |
| East Sussex County Council | 6 month ICT support | £1,462.27 |
| SSE | Street lighting | £1,028.59 |
| Mayday HR | HR services | £594.00 |
| Rother Valley Together | Donation to local charity for services | £3,000.00 |
| Midhurst Green Volunteers | Donation to local CIC for services | £1,500.00 |
| Midhurst Youth Trust | Donation to local charity for services | £3,000.00 |

**F/085/23.1 Imprest Card.** No replacement card has been received as at todays date.

**F/086/23 Bank Reconciliations**: The bank statements for September 2023 and October 2023 were signed.

**F/087/23 Events** **Update:**

**F/087/23.1 The Big Town Tidy**

The Events Officer announced the Big Town Tidy event being held on Saturday 18th November and Cllrs are encouraged to join this event.

**F/087/23.2 Christmas Window Competition**

MTC will be holding a Christmas Window Decorating competition again this year with two parts. There will be a public vote via QR code that will be displayed in the participating businesses, with the winner receiving a local restaurant voucher. The second part would be judged by a celebrity or notable person. A comedian has been approached and await confirmation. The theme for the displays is ‘Christmas Songs’.

**F/087/23.3 The Christmas Street Party Friday 1st December 2023**

The Events Officer asked if Councillors could inform of their availability during this event to help and marshal the event.

**Action**: Request confirmation of availability from councillors.

**F/087/23.4 Monthly Market Advertising Flags**

Events officer will obtain quotes and create artwork in due course.

**F/087/23.5 Christmas Lights**

Cllr Coote asked regarding extending the Christmas lights up along Bepton Road. This was previously investigated and decided the budget does not allow for this at present. This could be discussed for future displays and possibly businesses on Bepton Road approached for contribution.

**F/088/23** **Potential Re-evaluation of MTC Property Assets:** Following a discussion, it was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting of the Committee.

**F/089/23 ‘Made in Midhurst’**

Jeanette Sutton, a former Town Councillor, created the ‘Made in Midhurst’ website as an MTC project and the payment of the renewal of the domain name was still being taken from their bank account. MTC were asked if they would like to continue with the Made in Midhurst website and reimburse Mrs Sutton for this year’s domain name fee. All agreed.

**Action**: Contact Mrs Sutton and reimburse for payment of website. Cllr Merritt to get login details and update the website.

**F/090/23 Midhurst Vision**

Cllr Watts explained the current situation with Midhurst Vision’s upcoming project to enhance the Grange walkway, connecting the Grange and the Old Town. The project is being funded via a grant, but a stumbling block has been the ongoing maintenance of the site once the project is delivered.

Early indicators suggest the cost to maintain the site will be around £2,000 a year. Cllr Watts reminded Councillors that the Council commits £5,000 a year to Midhurst Vision projects and proposed that the maintenance of the site could come out of that figure on an annual basis, until other sponsorship of funding streams could be arranged.

With delegated powers, parish/town councils can also introduce street furniture without obtaining planning permission. It was proposed that MTC work with Midhurst Vision to install the street furniture at the site to avoid going through the process of planning and saving the Vision some much needed funds.

**Decision**: To continue to support Midhurst Vision with £5,000 annually, with the maintenance budget coming from that.

**Action**: Cllr Watts to liaise with Philippa McCullough of Midhurst Vision.

**F/091/23 Grants Panel Update -** Cllr Coote presented the Grants update.

Midhurst Society requested a grant for publishing a free magazine to members but it was felt that MTC would be subsiding only the members of Midhurst Society. This could set a precedent.

Agreed that the sum of £482 is left in reserve for Midhurst Food Bank for Christmas parcels if requested.

Cllr Coote would like accounts to be submitted when donations/grants are applied for.

**Decision:** Approve the grants for 2023 as per the grants spreadsheet.

**Action**: Update the grants/donation form to include the request for accounts.

**F/092/23 Matters of Report:**

Cllr Fraser’s proposed event at Market Square and St Ann’s Hill will not be going ahead next summer as previously discussed.

**F/093/23 Date of Next Meeting –** 7.30pm, 11th December 2023

The meeting ended at 8.16pm.

**Signed:…………………………...........…...........…. Date..................................**

**Chairman**