

Minutes of a meeting of the Property and Personnel Committee held in The New Millennium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on 12 December 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ – Chair
Councillor Northeast
Councillor O'Neill
Councillor Butcher
Councillor Tilbrook

Laura Chrysostomou, Town Clerk

2023 to 2024

11. Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures were noted.

12. Filming of Council Meetings, Use of Social Media and Mobile Phones

The procedures were noted.

13. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillor Worne who was unwell.

14. Declarations of interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declaration of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on this Agenda. The standing declarations were noted.

15. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

16. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

There were none.

17. Public Forum

There were no members of the public present, and no representations were made.

18. Officers Reports

18.1. Absence Monitoring Report

Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which detailed the staff absence records for the full years 2017 to 2018 to 2022 to 2023 and quarter 1 and 2 for 2023 to 2024.

It was resolved that:

The report be noted.

18.2. Manor House Venue Hire Terms and Conditions Review and Fee Charge Proposals 2024-2025

18.2.1. Members received a report, previously circulated, which set out a review of the Manor House Venue Hire Terms and Conditions and Fee Charge Proposals for 2024 to 2025. Members were asked to review and approve the proposed changes.

18.2.2. They agreed that the increase in room hire and car parking charges was a necessary and fair change to keep up with the economic climate.

Members were supportive of the ten percent discount for local resident's weddings. They believed that the New Millenium Chamber was an ideal venue for weddings. Members wanted to be sure that the pre-requisite for the discount was clear, it was agreed that at least one of the people getting married had to be a resident of the town to get the discount.

18.2.3. The Committee went on to discuss the advertising for weddings at the Manor House. Members suggested contacting related organisations such as wedding planners to market weddings at the Manor House. It was also suggested that we utilise the popularity of short form videos to advertise the venue and explore the possibility of professionally filming a wedding. The Town Clerk supported these suggestions and informed Members that they had previously made plans to film parts of a wedding for this purpose, but the arrangements fell through and had not been revisited since. As well as this, Members mentioned with the Windmill Cinema hiring the Chamber for the next few weeks, it may be worth displaying some of our adverts in the

entrance, it was thought that given the popularity of their showings these adverts would be seen by a significant number of people.

18.2.4. Members had questions about Barclays ending their regular venue hire at the Manor House. The Town Clerk informed Members that Barclays had moved their pop up consultancy to the Littlehampton Wave and this was thought to be because of financial reasons. Members felt it was a shame as the Manor House was an easy to access location for many of the people using the service whereas the new setup would be more difficult to access for many people.

18.2.5. There were questions regarding the car parking charges and whether there was a benefit to paying annually rather than monthly. The Town Clerk explained that most hirers of the car parking spaces did so on a long-term basis but had moved to monthly payments during the COVID lockdowns. Every time a payment is made, administrative work must be done and so the proposals included an administrative fee for monthly hire to cover the additional work incurred. It would therefore be more cost effective for the hirer to pay annually.

It was resolved that:

1. The revised terms and conditions for Venue Facilities for Manor House room hire and Weddings & Ceremonies be approved.
2. The Manor House room hire charges be increased by 5%.
3. The wedding and ceremonies hire charges be increased as set out in the report.
4. A discount of 10% to be offered to residents on their wedding hire.
5. The car parking charges be increased by 10% and an administrative charge of £13 plus VAT be applied to hirers paying monthly or hourly.
6. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to apply a discount to long hours and or multiple bookings.

18.3. Upgrade to web content management system

Members had a report, previously circulated, regarding an upgrade to the Town Council's web content management system. The Town Council ran three websites, a main website, one for the Museum and one for the Visit Littlehampton brand. The web content management system that was used to operate and manage the Town Council's three websites required an upgrade as the current version was no longer supported which meant no new security updates were being produced.

Members agreed that although the work seemed expensive, it was a necessary cost considering the importance of cybersecurity and the fact that we had multiple websites to maintain.

It was resolved that:

The work necessary to upgrade the web content management system and a Supplementary Estimate of £4,250 to meet the costs be approved.

19. Finance

19.1. Committee Budget Monitor

Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which highlighted significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to the Property and Personnel Committee budget for 2023 to 2024.

19.1.1. Following the discussion of Barclays ending their regular hire of the Manor House, Members asked how this would affect the budget for 2024 to 2025. The Town Clerk shared that they had factored this loss of income into the budget report for the Committee's information.

19.1.2. Members discussed the cost of utilities for 2023 and noted that there had been an underspend in the budget. The Town Clerk explained that further work would be undertaken to ascertain a more accurate underspend figure by year end to be used to offset future utility costs for 2024 to 2025.

19.1.3. The Committee noted that the National Pay Award had been agreed and the budget would reflect this change.

It was resolved that:

The report be noted.

19.2. Committee Budget Proposals 2024 to 2025

Members received a report, previously circulated, regarding the draft Property and Personnel Committee Budget for 2024 to 2025 and the projected budgets for 2025 to 2026 and 2026 to 2027.

19.2.1. Members discussed the Manor House and the Planned Preventative Maintenance required. The Committee was asked to agree a way forward for meeting the cost of this maintenance, and it had been suggested that a loan be taken out to pay for the necessary work.

Members agreed that undertaking the necessary work as one larger project, rather than taking a piecemeal approach, would provide economies of scale, avoid reactive repair costs and potentially reduce disruption. Taking on this amount of work would require a significant amount of money and with consideration that the Town Council had no other loans to repay, it was agreed that taking a loan from the Public Works Loan Board was the best way to undertake the work. It was also suggested that funding be found from alternative sources such as grants as the Manor House was a Grade Two listed building and may qualify for certain grant funding. Members agreed that

this was worth pursuing but would still have to decide if they wanted to move forward with the loan.

Members were concerned with how the report displayed the potential loan repayment plan; it seemed that the yearly repayment would not cover the cost of the loan. It was clarified that the numbers shown were for a half yearly repayment plan and with further clarification, Members agreed that the loan was the best way forward to meet the required costs.

It was resolved that:

- 1) A loan to cover the costs of the Manor House Planned Preventative Maintenance Programme was the preferred way forward and this be approved.
- 2) Alternative funding sources such as heritage grants be explored for the Manor House Planned Preventative Maintenance.
- 3) The draft Committee budget for 2024 to 2025 and the projected budgets for 2025 to 2026 and 2026 to 2027 be recommended to the Policy and Finance Committee.
- 4) The Committee's Earmarked Reserve position be noted.

20. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7:21pm.

Chair