

## CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee Meeting held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Conducted via Zoom

**\*\*Please note – These are draft minutes and will not be ratified until the next meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee date to be decided.**

For the papers discussed at the meeting, please see the Meeting Agenda of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

PRESENT      Committee members:

David Brown  
Russell Chadwick  
Robert Douglas (Chair)  
Jean Parry  
James Smith

Ex-Officio Members      Sally Ann Holland (Town Mayor)  
Denis Murphy (Deputy Town Mayor)

Non-committee members      Cllr Kay Wesley

Also present:    CTC Officers David McGifford (Chief Officer) and Jackie Potts (RFO)  
1 member of the press, 1 member of the public.

#### 1. **Apologies**

Members of each committee are respectfully reminded of the necessity to submit any apologies for absence in advance and to give a reason for non-attendance.

Apologies were received from Councillors Duncan Amies; Paul Duffy; Rob Moreton; George Hayes; Mark Rogan.

#### 2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**

**FAP/45/2021 RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Members are requested to declare both “pecuniary” and “non-pecuniary” interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Cllrs David Brown, Sally Ann Holland, and Denis Murphy declared a non-pecuniary interest on any matters relating to Cheshire East Council.

### **4. Outstanding Actions**

There were no outstanding actions.

### **5. Questions from Members of the Public**

Questions were received from:

- a) Andrew Copestick asking for CTC to justify requesting S106 from Cheshire East Council for Elizabeth’s Statue.
- b) Olga Whitmore requesting a breakdown of Congleton Partnership expenditure.
- c) Olga Whitmore requesting information on Congleton Community Projects spending of CTC’s annual grant.
- d) Olga Whitmore asking if CTC was still paying monthly rental on behalf of HAAA on demolished garages.
- e) Olga Whitmore asking which allotment had expenditure of £1,437 against it.

The questions and responses can be seen in Appendix 1

### **6. Urgent Items**

None.

### **7. Grant Approvals and Commitments 2020/21**

**FAP/46/2021 RESOLVED** that the statement to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021 be received.

### **8. New Applications for Financial Assistance**

**FAP/47/2021 RESOLVED** to award the following grants:

- **Grant ref GR16/2021 – Clonter Farm Music Trust - £325**

### **9. Management Accounts**

**FAP/48/2021 RESOLVED** to receive the Management Accounts to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

### **10. Bank Reconciliation**

**FAP/49/2021 RESOLVED** to receive the bank reconciliation as at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

**11. Savings Account Balances**

**FAP/50/2021 RESOLVED** to receive the Savings Account balances as at 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

**12. List of Payments**

**FAP/51/2021 RESOLVED** to receive and approve the Payments lists between 1<sup>st</sup> January 21 and 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

**13. Potential effect of zero-rate interest rates on investments**

**FAP/52/2021 RESOLVED** to receive a verbal update from a virtual meeting with CCLA stating that although unlikely, if the Bank of England interest rate fell to below 0% negative interest rates could lead to a fall in the value of investments.

**14. 2<sup>nd</sup> Interim Internal Audit Report 20/21**

**FAP/53/2021 RESOLVED** to receive and note the 2<sup>nd</sup> Interim Internal Audit report 20/21 from Auditing Solutions Ltd and to agree that the council's Standing Orders delayed review would take place during the first quarter of 2021/22.

**15. Annual review of the Business Risk Assessment 2021/22**

**FAP/54/2021 RESOLVED** to receive and approve the Business Risk Assessment for 2021/22. It was noted that item 1(e) Paddling Pool was a high risk and it was suggested that for future Risk Assessments an extra column could be added to show a comparison with the previous year's risk value.

**Cllr Robert Douglas  
Chair**

## **APPENDIX ONE: PUBLIC QUESTION TIME:**

### **Question 1: Andrew Copestick, resident**

How can the council justify asking Cheshire East Council the possibility of builders' community contributions towards the Elizabeth statue fund through either Cils or Section 106 money during a pandemic.?

Was this same money asked for in previous projects such as Treo and should any spare money be available, have the Council nothing more important where they feel it should go in the current circumstances?

### **Response from Committee Chair:**

As explained in the Communities and Environment Committee on the 11<sup>th</sup> March the Elizabeth group asked if CTC officers could ask CEC if there was any CILs or Section 106 funding available that could support the Elizabeth project. It was always anticipated that this would be a long shot. Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) are legal agreements that Cheshire East Council enters into with developers. The agreement is usually allocated to specific projects such as affordable housing, highway, parks, green spaces and infrastructure such as schools and health. In the past, discussions with officers at CEC has led to section 106 funding being allocated to help fund the renovations of the Moody Street pocket garden and Margaret's Place Garden. It also helped to fund the River Dane walkway paths and upgraded some of the equipment in local play parks. The Treo statue was funded through private donations.

### **Question 2: Olga Whitmore, resident**

Is it possible to have a breakdown of Congleton Partnership money, the sum of £32,291?

### **Response from Committee Chair:**

This sum is made up of two elements of firstly, our grant to the Partnership and secondly, a proportion of a salary of one of our members of staff. As I am sure you appreciate, given one of the elements relates to personal information relating to one of our staff, it would not be appropriate to provide a more detailed breakdown of this information.

### **Question 3: Olga Whitmore, resident**

What Community Projects are allocated £16,000? There were no community projects due to lockdown last year.

### **Response from Committee Chair:**

Congleton Community Projects receive an annual grant from Congleton Town Council which will still have fixed costs to incur even during the pandemic. Many charitable and community organisations have struggled during this difficult time. We suggest that you contact Congleton Community Projects for additional detail on the projects that they have been carrying out during this difficult period of the pandemic, but we are aware that they are also working hard in preparing numerous exciting events for 2022, being the 750th anniversary of the granting of our Town's Charter.

**Question 4: Olga Whitmore, resident**

Does CTC still pay to Dane Housing DD of £36.28 for renting the garages? The garage has been vacated and demolished in January 2021.

**Response from Committee Chair:**

CTC no longer pays for the renting of the garages which did cost £ 36.28 per month and which totalled £ 435.36 per year. CTC did make a one-off payment of £ 1,000 towards the cost of a new storage container. This one-off payment by terminating the monthly rental payments was justified on the grounds that it represented the very good pay back of just 2.3 years.

**Question 5: Olga Whitmore, resident**

Since there are 2 Allotment Associations in the town, which allotment was paid £1,437?

**Response from Committee Chair:**

CTC owns the land at Hillary Avenue allotments, so it is a CTC asset on the asset register and has an annual budget for maintenance of the land (overhanging trees, bushes etc). This is the only allotment that CTC is involved with.