

# Marlborough Town Council



## Finance & Policy Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & Policy Committee held Monday, 6 December 2021  
in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 7.42pm

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**PRESENT** Councillor Andrew Ross Chairman  
Councillor Mark Cooper Town Mayor  
Councillor Nicholas Fogg  
Councillor Guy Loosmore  
Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton  
Councillor Mervyn Hall  
Councillor Kymee Cleasby  
Councillor James Sheppard

### ALSO

**PRESENT** Richard Spencer-Williams Town Clerk  
Dawn Whitehall Administrator  
Belinda Richardson Tourism Officer  
Councillor Jo Waltham  
Neil Goodwin Marlborough.News

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### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions.

**319/21 APOLOGIES**  
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Davies.

**320/21 DECLARATIONS**  
Councillor Hall – agenda items 10 and 11 – non-pecuniary interest.

**321/21 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**  
The Chairman reminded Members that there would be an extraordinary meeting of this Committee on 14 December 2021. Councillor Loosmore offered his apologies.

**322/21 MINUTES**  
**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held 25 October 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **323/21 ACTION LOG**

Members noted the action log and the Chairman thanked the Town Clerk, noting that most items had already been actioned.

**ACTION POINT:** to revisit branding and corporate image as an agenda item at the next scheduled F&P Committee meeting

### **324/21 TOURISM OFFICER REPORT**

Members noted the update report. The Tourism Officer gave a verbal summary, which included responding to questions raised at the last meeting. Highlights included:

- Marlborough College was planning a special 'Mound Day' to open Marlborough Mound up to visitors; the Tourism Officer was involved
- A timer had been fitted to the unmanned Visitor Information Point (VIP) at Coopers Corner. This would be activated once there was more certainty about the situation with Covid, allowing public access between 10:00-15:00
- An update on progress with branding, signage development and links with Great West Way and VisitWiltshire
- The Tourism Officer had been invited to take over the Great West Way (GWW) Instagram account for a weekend in January – a great opportunity to showcase the town. Councillor Cleasby expressed interest in becoming involved
- Whether there was an opportunity for promoting Marlborough as being at the heart of GWW 'sustainable tourist trails' – but this would be dependent upon the town having adequate Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points which some Members felt hindered the tourism offering of the town. It was understood ducting had been laid beneath the High Street to enable future cabling for use by events, markets and/or EVs. Councillor Sheppard agreed to investigate what might be possible
- Whether GWW could help to influence WC to commit to a date to provide more EV charger points in the town

**ACTION POINT:** to invite a representative from Great West Way to attend a future meeting to provide an update and answer questions

**ACTION POINT:** Councillor Sheppard to follow up with Wiltshire Council Highways whether existing ducting in the High Street can be used for EV charger points

The Chairman thanked the Tourism Officer and asked for a regular agenda item to be added as appropriate if there was new information to report.

### **325/21 DARK SKIES FESTIVAL REPORT**

The most recent, but not yet final, financial report for the Dark Skies Festival was noted.

### **326/21 FINANCE AND POLICY BUDGET 2022-23**

Members considered the F&P Budget requirement for 2022-23, which would form part of the overall budget discussion at a meeting on 14 December with a view to

recommending a final budget and precept to Full Town Council. Discussion points included:

- Whether to increase the heritage budget to £3,000
- Whether to reduce the bank interest income
- Whether to increase the events budget by £2,000 for the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations in 2022
- That signage, branding, marketing and tourism spend would cut across several budgets (beyond the remit of this agenda item)
- Whether CIL money should be allocated to an overall 'signage' project for the town
- Implications for the overall precept increase; questions about what the Wiltshire Council, Fire and Police and/or other town council precept rises might be and how Marlborough would compare
- Any money collected from taxpayers via the precept would always be spent within the town to provide a direct benefit
- A desire to keep the precept rise below 5%

**327/21 eCOMMS POLICY**

**RESOLVED:** to recommend the draft Electronic Communications Policy to Full Town Council for adoption to replace the limited Social Media Policy currently in place

**328/21 MERCHANTS HOUSE LEASE**

Members considered a request from the Merchants House Trust to either extend the lease to a 50-year term or to transfer the freehold to the Trust. The main driver for the request was that, with approximately 4.5 years of a 7-year lease remaining, it was proving difficult to obtain charitable grant funding. A longer lease would help secure much needed funding to repair the roof. Discussion points included:

- There was no support for a transfer of the freehold
- No objection to the principle of extending the lease, and discussion about a suitable period
- Whether enough information had been provided to decide
- That the Merchants House was a key draw for visitors to the town
- A desire to secure its future for many years to come
- A need to understand the legal implications of changing the lease
- Whether there had been any indication from prospective grantors about what length of lease would be acceptable, and whether it varied by organisation
- That any new lease would be on the same terms, i.e. a peppercorn annual rent

**RESOLVED:** that in principle the Town Council supports the extension of the Merchants House lease to a term acceptable to secure charitable grant funding

It was agreed that before the exact terms (timescale) could be decided more consultation was required to provide detailed information (e.g., charitable donors involved and their expectations), as well as the Town Council's satisfaction that the legal implications were understood and accepted. Members asked that the Trust be

informed that it would endeavour to make a decision concerning the lease and how it could work in partnership with the Trust at its next 2022 meeting.

**329/21      MERCHANTS HOUSE ALLOCATED FUNDS**

Members noted a request from the Merchants House Trust concerning restricted funds of £844, granted by the Town Council in 2017 for a Brown Signs project. The project had not gone ahead, and the Trust asked whether the funds could be redesignated for other purposes.

**RESOLVED:** that the restricted funds could be redesignated to be used for marketing and promotional activities, and must be spent within the next fiscal year

**330/21      HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT**

Updates included:

- It was good news that the Merchants House had been able to secure two George Maton paintings and a sketch of a previous Town Hall for the museum
- That the Chairman would discuss with the Chair of the Property Committee the possibility of opening the Town Hall cells as a visitor attraction

**ACTION POINT:** the Town Clerk to follow up how the Access inventory database set up by Kim Wakeham could be accessed by Town Council staff

The meeting closed at 9.13 pm

Signed: .....  
Chairman

Date: .....