

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Monday, 26th February 2018, at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Geoffrey Andrews (from item 5), Simon Arundel, John Bloxsom, Alice Campbell, Kevin Cranston (Chair), Laurie Davies (from item 5), Steve Dechan, Rob Green, Sarah Lunnon, John Marjoram, Steven Naumann, Margaret Poulton, Vanessa Price, Alan Sage, Lucas Schoemaker, Haydn Sutton and Chas Townley.

In attendance: Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Kate Montgomery (Deputy Clerk), Marianne Sweet (STC Communications); Cllr Eva Ward (Gloucestershire County Council); and Cllrs Simon Pickering and Martin Baxendale (Stroud District Council).

Action

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Camilla Hale (personal).

2. Declarations of interest

Cllrs Marjoram, Sutton and Townley declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 as members of Stroud District Council. It was noted that the dispensation granted to them on 30th October 2017 remains in force. (*See also item 11.*)

3. Gifts and hospitality

Cllr Cranston declared hospitality relating to a trip to Putten in the Netherlands.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 15th January were **approved** by the members present and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

5. Mayor's remarks

The Mayor reported on a visit to Putten in the Netherlands at the invitation of their Mayor, to attend the reopening of the town's recently refurbished community centre which is called "Stroud" in recognition of the generous financial support of Stroud residents after World War 2.

Cllrs Andrews and Davies joined the meeting.

6. Questions from members of the public

There were no questions.

7. District and County Councillors' reports

County Councillor Ward reported that the council's budget had been approved, with some significant changes, including a reduction in the Highways Local fund and scrapping of the Children's Activities and Youth funds. In future ward councillors will have access to a fund of £20,000 for highways projects and £10,000 for anything else.

It was noted that there had been no progress on the vehicle-activated signs project and that a press release had been issued to explain the delay.

District Cllr Pickering reported that the council's budget had been set and that a commercial loan had been approved to support the redevelopment of the Merrywalks shopping centre.

District Cllr Baxendale reported that the upcoming parking consultation would include the possibility of charging for the car park in Stratford Park.

District Cllr Marjoram expressed disappointment about the lease terms offered by the District Council for the Sub Rooms.

District Cllr Pickering reported that recycling and waste performance is very good in the District. It was noted that there are still problems with trade waste being tipped in Fawkes Place.

District Cllrs Townley and Sutton had nothing further to report.

8. Clerk's report

The report was noted.

The Clerk was asked to contact the Stroud Beresford group about funding.

Clerk

Cllr Marjoram reported that he had been very impressed by the consultation work on the station project.

9. Defibrillators

The Deputy Clerk answered questions about a proposal to install community defibrillators around the town. It was **agreed** to support the community to raise funds for four defibrillators for the Town and report back financial implications to the Finance, Community and Policy Committee for approval of any STC contribution.

Deputy
Clerk

10. Meeting dates for 2018–19

Meeting dates for 2018–19 were **approved**.

Clerk

11. Suffrage centenary

Cllr Townley declared a personal interest as a participant in this project.

It was **agreed** to support community and Stroud District Council activities to commemorate the centenary of women's suffrage and to make an application for funding to the Equalities Office.

12. Committee reports

Report of the following meetings, having been previously been circulated were received:

Green Spaces:	22 nd January
Finance, Community & Policy:	29 th January
Consultations:	5 th February

13. Exclusion of press and public

Members considered whether or not it would be in the public interest to exclude the public while details of a proposed offer the Stroud District Council for a lease were discussed.

The County and District Councillors, who were the only members of the public present, were invited to share any comments they had about the Subscription Rooms. Cllr Pickering reminded the Council that Stroud District Council need to reduce their revenue expenditure.

The County and District Councillors left the meeting.

It was **resolved** to exclude the press and public from the remainder of the meeting.

14. Subscription Rooms

Cllr Schoemaker introduced a report and recommendations from the Sub Rooms Working Group, including the results of the community survey, a report on the lease terms from the Council's solicitor and notes on fundraising opportunities. It was noted that the Stroud Trust had asked not to be named in an offer to Stroud District Council.

Members discussed the implications of the Stroud Trust decision and a recommendation from the Working Group that a new organisation would need to be set up, and that this should be done in partnership with Stroud District Council. It was noted that there are considerable advantages to the Sub Rooms being operated by a charity, for example: access to grants, employment terms, community fundraising opportunities, and involvement of volunteers.

Members considered the risks of taking on a loss-making operation and the need for Stroud District Council to provide full disclosure of financial and staffing information. The Working Group's recommendation was based on making an offer to work in partnership with the District Council to manage a transfer in a realistic timeframe allowing for staff consultation, fundraising and establishing a new organisation.

The lease terms proposed by Stroud District Council had been analysed by the Council's solicitor. It was noted that several of the terms were unworkable, and had led to the withdrawal of the Stroud Trust. An offer would therefore be based on alternative, more realistic terms.

Members expressed their gratitude to the Stroud Trust for their considerable support during the process so far and were sympathetic to their decision to step back at this time.

A business plan developed by the council's consultant based on the financial information provided by Stroud District Council, the results of the community survey and community discussions was considered. To ensure financial sustainability the plan requires investment in building improvements funded by grants and donations; and grants of working capital from both councils.

It was **resolved** unanimously to submit an offer to Stroud District Council based on realistic expectations regarding finance and handover. The key elements of the offer to include:

Clerk

- 39-year lease based on a peppercorn rent for the duration of the lease with no rent reviews
- Lease to include the forecourt
- A sub-lease to be granted to a new charitable organisation to be established in partnership with Stroud District Council
- A grant of £230,000 from Stroud District Council to provide working capital
- A transition plan to be agreed with Stroud District Council to cover the period up to handover in April 2019, to include consultation with staff.
- Full disclosure of TUPE information immediately after decision to accept bid. Stroud District Council to deal with any settlements to staff not transferring to the new organisation.
- Stroud District Council to complete repairs identified in the structural survey completed in 2017 and provide a photographic schedule of condition on handover.
- Bid subject to legal requirements as set out in solicitor's report:
 - pre-contract enquiries
 - satisfactory commercial search results
 - SDC being able to provide a Certificate to accord with Restriction entry B.3 of the Proprietorship Register of the title (this relates to compliance with Localism Act)
 - Inclusion of rights of access to the rear
 - Removal of clauses 28.2 and 35 from the draft lease (relating to community forum), but with an assurance that a community membership organisation will be established which will promote community engagement and involvement.
 - Provisions regarding restrictive covenants

- Town Council to provide a grant of £50,000 to be held in reserve for either revenue or match funding for capital bids
- Town Council to arrange buildings insurance
- Capital works to be funded from grants and other fundraising
- Tourist information service to be relocated out of the building.

It was further **resolved** to publish a call for public pledges of funding to support the offer.

The meeting closed at 21.25pm

Chair

Date

Clerk