

STREET PARISH COUNCIL

Extraordinary meeting of the Council held on 21st January, 2020 at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor P. Goater (Chair)
Councillors: C.E. Axten, P. Birch, S. Carswell, M. Daniells, D. Drew, D. Ellis, D. Goater, A. Leafe, L. Mogg, T.W.E. Napper, A. Prior, H. Shearer and L. Zaky

IN ATTENDANCE: L.A. Ruff - Parish Clerk
M. Sandiford – Assistant Clerk Projects Officer
J. Marshfield – Assistant Clerk
County Councillor L. Leyshon
J. Stafford and O. Woodhams – Somerset County Council Library Service

APOLOGIES: Councillors: R. Boyce and J. Diment - another another engagement – reasons accepted

180. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January, 2020 which had been circulated were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the addition of 'As a parish council we are looking forward to working with the YMCA in a positive way to support the vital work they do with young people in Street' after 'initiatives' at the end of the first paragraph of Minute No. 174.

181. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

In accordance with the Code of Conduct Councillors Carswell, P. Goater, Napper and Shearer declared an other interest under Appendix B in any matters relating to the District Council and stated that they would keep an open mind when considering issues at either District or Parish level. Councillor Napper declared an other interest under Appendix B in any matters relating to Somerset County Council and stated that he would keep an open mind when considering issues at County or Parish level.

All members present declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the alteration of the Parish Rooms for Council and library use and that they had been granted dispensation to speak and vote by the Clerk and would keep an open mind when considering the matter. Councillor Axten declared that she was Chairman of the Friends of Street Library and Councillors Drew and Prior that they were a Friend of the Library. Councillors Leafe and Zaky declared a personal interest in the selection of a contractor for the works as they both knew one of them and took no part in the consideration of this.

182. SOLAR STREETS MENDIP

Details of the scheme had been circulated.

RESOLVED

that the Chair be asked to clarify the discounted price and then the scheme to be set up in Street.

183. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 amended by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item, apart from consideration of setting the budget and precept for 2020/21 at the end, in view of the confidential information to be considered on tenders received and legal proposals.

184. ALTERATION OF PARISH ROOMS, SELECTION OF CONTRACTOR AND BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2020/21
RESOLUTION TO BORROW

The Clerk submitted a report, most of which was confidential, which had been circulated. Councillor Napper wished it to be recorded that he felt uncomfortable about the cost and need for the proposals and the loss of space for the Council for a number of years. Councillor Axten reminded members that if the library had not moved to the Parish Rooms in 2019 it would have closed. During consultations held by the County Council there had been more positive responses from people in Street than from any other areas where the library was under threat.

The proposals would create a library and a hub. A flexible space would be available and the building would be more accessible. The provision of a lift would allow all meetings apart from full Council to be held on the first floor and there would be storage there also.

Councillor Shearer felt that it was great that the library had been saved and that it would be difficult to find an alternative space for it and the cost would be greater. There was a lot of space on the first floor which could be used as offices if a unitary authority was formed in the future and more responsibilities were passed to the Council. The IT facilities would be much improved and of particular importance to the disadvantaged. The building was in a good location for access including being near bus stops. Councillor Drew felt that the library had given the building a purpose to an extent and that it had become a space for a cohesive community.

Councillor Leafe asked about costs and felt that the other option previously considered would have created a large room which would have been good for the Council in the future. The Chair explained that £50,000 had been earmarked for works needed to the exterior of the building and £50,000 would be given by the County Council to fit out the interior of the library. Other costs for fees etc. and the temporary relocation of the office were detailed in the report. The Council had agreed not to proceed with the other option as it would have cost far more. Councillor Zaky was informed that it had cost around £8,000 to move staff from the ground floor to the office on the first floor including blocking in a door, cabling and carpet. Members felt that it should be made clear that the precept for 2020/21 would be raised to £460,000 to balance the budget. Councillor Daniells felt that he had been slightly misled and that the improvements were library rather than council orientated. There was no guarantee that the library would move out of the building in 7 years and so a lot would be spent but the library could still be there for a long time. It was agreed that the survey form should be worded carefully to make it clear what the total increase in council tax precept was for and that it was a small increase in money terms. A number of members felt that the building would become a community information hub where the vulnerable could be supported. Council staff had a much better working environment.

O. Woodhams circulated a list of improved services which could be provided in the refurbished library. The County Council would commit to the arrangements set out in the permanent CLP agreement until 31st March 2026 but there was a break clause for the Parish Council at 31st March 2023 if it wished. £50,000 would be provided for the interior of the library and any remaining funds would be contributed to the project.

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Shearer and seconded by Councillor Leafe -

1. to agree in principle that an agreed contractor be selected to carry out the specified works to alter the Parish Rooms at an agreed cost + VAT to enhance the building for the library and make the first floor accessible, improving the building as a whole and renovating the exterior, subject to final agreement following public consultation, consent to apply for the loan being granted and to Somerset County Council entering into the draft permanent Community Library Partnership agreement for 6 years

2. RESOLUTION TO BORROW

RESOLVED

subject to final approval on a date to be agreed following consideration of the results of the precept increase consultation, to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to apply for a PWLB loan of £100,000 over the borrowing term of 14.5 years, repayable by half yearly annuity, for the alteration of the Parish Rooms. The annual loan repayments will come to around £8,111. It is also intended to increase the council tax precept for the purpose of the loan repayments by 1.5% which is the equivalent of an additional £1.60 a year on a Band D property

In accordance with standing order 3 m several members requested that the way in which members voted be recorded in the minutes. The voting was as follows:

Members Who Voted For Motion

Councillor Axten
Councillor Birch
Councillor Carswell
Councillor Drew
Councillor Ellis
Councillor D. Goater
Councillor P. Goater
Councillor Leafe
Councillor Mogg
Councillor Prior
Councillor Shearer

Members Who Voted Against

Councillor Daniells
Councillor Zaky

Councillor Napper abstained from voting. The motion was passed by 11 votes to 2 votes.

RESOLVED

A. that in principle subject to the provisions detailed above, Melhuish and Saunders Ltd. be selected to carry out the specified works to the Parish Rooms at a cost of £177,408.15 + VAT and figures be adjusted for the additional cost of £6,242 with the general revenue reserves being reduced

B. that the current temporary CLP agreement be extended to 31st March 2020 and the document for this be signed by Councillors Carswell and P. Goater and witnessed by the Clerk

C. that specialist legal advice should not be sought on the permanent CLP agreement

D. that the extraordinary Council meeting to make the final decision on the project be held at 6.30 p.m. on 25th February

E. that the grant applications for the Citizens Advice Bureau and Strode Theatre be referred to the Policy and Finance Committee for consideration

F. that the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair be given delegated authority to alter the wording of the survey form and business plan to clarify that the total increase in the council tax precept was to balance the budget rather than to provide a budget for vulnerable people

G. that the Estimates for 2020/21 be as attached as Annex A to the minutes in the Minute Book and the precept on Mendip District Council for 2020/21 to be in the sum of £460,000 giving a tax of £121.47 on a Band D property

H. that the information for the council tax section of the District Council's leaflet/website to be as attached as Annex B to the minutes in the Minute Book

I. that the general revenue reserves be set at £178,812 for 2020/21 to maintain current assets such as Street Skate Park, the Parish Rooms and Merriman Park and fund new projects or services as they arise.

The meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.

Chair _____

