

LEDBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF A MEETING
OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON
THURSDAY 17th OCTOBER, 2013
IN THE MARKET HOUSE**

Present: Councillor C Jupp - Chairman
Councillors R Barnes P Bettington
A Bradford M Eager
E Harvey M Roberts
T Widdows P Winter
R Yeoman

In attendance: Councillor D Durham

Also present: K Mitchell - Clerk to the Council

F.45 - 10.13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor K Francis.

F.46 - 10.13 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no interests declared at this point of the meeting.

F.47 - 10.13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Two retained Fire Fighters from the Ledbury Fire Station attended the meeting to voice their concerns over proposals contained within the Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020, Draft Consultation document.

Ledbury Station Commander Keith Wildig, outlined the proposal for Ledbury, advising that the station currently has two on-call fire engines. Proposed cuts would result in a change to the level of cover at Ledbury fire station from two on-call fire engines to one.

He explained that this would leave Ledbury exposed if the remaining fire engine was called to attend a fire elsewhere. He also explained that the document contained three proposals for financial savings. These were not options; all three would need to be implemented in order to achieve the savings required up to 2016-17.

He urged members to consider the proposals and to send in a return.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wildig and Mr Hill for attending and for answering members' questions.

In the interest of expediency, the Chairman moved the following agenda item (8) forward.

F.48 - 10.13 CONSULTATION

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS)

Community Risk Management Plan Consultation 2013.

The closing date for the consultation is 10.01.2014.

The draft Plan sets out the issues facing the authority at a time when cuts of £4.7 million have to be found. Up to £2.7 million of these savings need to be found through changes to frontline services.

The proposals for changes to fire and emergency cover arrangements have been set out into three broad proposals:-

Proposal 1

To remove a fire engine from each of the three fire stations that currently have three fire engines – Hereford, Redditch and Worcester fire stations. At Hereford and Worcester fire stations, the removal of a wholetime fire engine will also remove a wholetime crew of firefighters, while removing an on-call fire engine from Redditch fire station will remove an on-call crew.

Proposal 2

To remove one fire engine from three of the ten fire stations that currently have two fire engines. The three fire stations are at Bromyard, Ledbury and Tenbury Wells. Removing the three fire engines will also remove an on-call crew at each fire station.

Proposal 3

Proposal 3 has looked at fire stations in four clusters - North and South Worcestershire and North and South Herefordshire. The options for each cluster are presented as a choice between either removing a fire engine from a fire station with two fire engines or closing a fire station with a single fire engine.

Members had been previously circulated with hard copies of the excerpt relating to Ledbury Fire Station and the consultation questionnaire. (Full Consultation document circulated by email)

In view of the closing date being 10th January 2014, the Chairman proposed taking initial comments and then to consider a response at the next meeting.

Following discussion, it was agreed,

That Councillors R Barnes, M Eager, E Harvey, C Jupp and T Widdows work with the Ledbury Fire Officers to put together a draft response for consideration at the next meeting.

F.49 - 10.13 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12th September 2013, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F.50 - 10.13 FINANCIAL MATTERS

1. Summary of Receipts and Payments

Members were circulated with a Summary of Receipts and Payments from 1st September to 10th October 2013.

RESOLVED: That the summary be approved and adopted.

2. Invoices for payment

Members considered a list of invoices for payment.

RESOLVED: That the invoices, as presented be approved for payment.

3. External Audit

Members noted the completion of the annual audit for the year ended 31st March 2013. The External Auditor's Certificate has been received and there were no matters arising from the audit giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

The External auditors had suggested that the Council should revise its financial regulations over the upcoming financial year.

RESOLVED: That this be noted.

4. Budget 2014/15

Members considered the first draft of the budget required by the Finance & General Purposes Committee for 2014/15. Each budget line was examined and highlighted for change or for further consideration at the next meeting.

Councillor Widdows declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to his position as Governor at John Masefield High School.

F.51 - 10.13 WAR MEMORIAL

The Clerk advised that there was no update available on the status of the application for funding for a structural survey to be carried out.

F.52 - 10.13 TAKE ON OF HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL SERVICES

Members discussed taking on of Herefordshire Council services, focusing mainly on public toilets and the imminent closure of one block on 1st November 2013.

Some members felt that in view of the Town Council having no set budget for this purpose in the current financial year, consideration of taking on any of Herefordshire Council's services should be delayed until after budget rounds for 2014/15 had been completed and more information is made available from Herefordshire Council. Councillor Harvey felt that a concerted effort should be made to investigate all the options and to talk to local businesses and rural parishes.

Members sought clarification on the following matters:-

- What will happen to the Church Lane toilet block if it is closed? Does Herefordshire Council intend to sell it off?
- Will the remaining public toilet block be retained?

Members requested sight of the output from Herefordshire Council's cabinet meeting being held week beginning 21st October.

Following further discussion it was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the Town Council be recommend to take no action until Herefordshire Council provide a full list of service cuts, together with any supporting information.

A named vote was taken

VOTING:	For	7
	R Barnes	A Bradford
	C Jupp	M Roberts
	T Widdows	P Winter
	R Yeoman	
	Against	2
	M Eager	E Harvey
	Abstentions	1
	P Bettington	

F.53 - 10.13 OUTSIDE BODIES

The Minutes of the Ledbury Town Remembrance Day Parade Committee meeting held on 10th September 2013, were received and noted.

F.54- 10.13 CORRESPONDENCE FOR INFORMATION

None received.

F.55- 10.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

The next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is scheduled for the 21st November, 2013.

Item for next agenda:-

Take on of Herefordshire Council Services

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.13m.

Chairman Date