

At a Meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on Wednesday 3rd December 2014, at the Civic Offices, Wellington Road Community Centre, Rhyl commencing at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Councillor P. Prendergast (Chair)

Councillors C. S. Ball, B. Blakeley, Mrs E. M. Chard, Ms J. Hughes, A. R. James, B. Mellor, B. F. Moylan, Mrs W. M. Mullen-James, S. H. Ratcliffe, A. J. Rutherford, D. Simmons, W. N. Tasker and Miss C. L. Williams.

G. J. Nickels – Town Clerk
R. A. Hughes – Finance Officer
H. J. Windus – Personal Assistant & Secretary

80. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted from Councillors I. W. Armstrong (other commitment), Mrs J. Butterfield JP MBE (on holiday), Mrs J. Chamberlain-Jones (family commitment), Mrs P. M. Jones (family commitment), Mrs M. McCarroll (indisposed), J. May (work commitment), Miss S.L. Roberts (indisposed) and Miss R. Siddall (family commitment).

81. PRESENTATION: DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S HEAD OF COMMUNICATION, MARKETING AND LEISURE

The Chair reported that Mr Jamie Groves had not yet arrived and suggested the the meeting move to the next item.

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Further to Minute No.64 of the meeting held on 12th November 2014, the Chair welcomed Mr Groves, who apologised for his late arrival due to heavy traffic.

Mr Groves said that he was here to answer any questions Members may have about the savings to be made within his portfolio and affecting Rhyl, namely the paddling pool in the Drift Park, youth provision, the Library, Marine Lake, Beach Lifeguards and the Pavilion Theatre and advised that:

- he was proud of the fact that DCC had not simply withdrawn non-statutory leisure provision to make quick savings and of the fact that there were many sustainable facilities here in Rhyl. He said that he was very much trying to make sensible and palatable reductions.

Drift Park Paddling Pool

- the maintenance of the bathing water in the paddling pool at the Drift Park alone cost between £50,000 - £63,000 a year, which was more than the whole budget for the entire Leisure Centre in Rhyl and that a simple way to establish a future maintenance budget would be to perhaps apply a small entrance charge of £2.00 per person per day, as currently there wasn't a budget at all! Mr Groves added that he was confident that this level of charge would be accepted by the public as an extremely inexpensive day's activity.

Youth Provision

- he would be moving resources around to ensure that there would not be any cuts to service provision in Rhyl.

Rhyl Library

- rather than reducing services at the library he would be offering more. The only change that might take place is that the Cash Office and One Stop Shop might be relocated there.

Marine Lake

- there is no financial target to reach to pay for the necessary works to the area, but the lake did need to start generating money.

Beach Lifeguards

- this is now an excellent, professional looking service making a real positive impact with residents and visitors. It was likely that the service would run all through the summer full-time and on reduced hours during all other holidays and that in the winter months staff would work in the indoor facilities.

Pavilion Theatre

- he fully supported the theatre and that there were no plans to remove it. The theatre was vital to Rhyl as the only night time attraction.
- they were about to move to the next phase expanding the modernised Foyer into the Box Office.
- the theatre was coming in under budget again this year which historically was unheard of.
- the theatre cost £700,000 a year to run, which was double the entire Leisure Centre budget for the whole of the County.
- the theatre had drawn a lot of attention from private companies looking to expand their arts and cultural portfolios, so it could be that the theatre would find a new operator. He had been granted authorisation to explore these options more formally and would report back.
- New Brighton had faced very similar challenges to Rhyl and had been saved by the private sector.

[Councillor D. Simmons declared a prejudicial interest in the Pavilion Theatre debate due to his wife being one of the theatre's Operational Managers, and vacated the Chamber taking no further part in the discussion]

In response to Members' questions Mr Groves advised that:

- The private sector may well look at hotel provision as all of the infrastructure was there.
- The Sun Centre was not a hindrance to the coastal investment drive and that at stage two of the process companies were still expressing interest in it.
- It was not the case that the two remaining companies were only really interested in the theatre and that entirely separate companies were also showing interest in the theatre.

- Personally he would look at the provision of an indoor arena in Rhyl before a big name bingo hall, in addition to the Events Arena and not by erecting a roof on it.
- After carrying out a survey of Rhyl businesses on the back of the Rhyl Air Show, which revealed that that one event increased revenue for local businesses by 80%, they would not be prepared to provide sponsorship for the event to relieve the financial pressure on DCC to put the event on.

[Councillor D. Simmons returned to the Chamber at this point in the meeting]

- The savings target for the Drift Park was around £28,000 annually and that the potential saving if entry fees are introduced was £66,000.
- Unlike Llandudno's paddling pool on the Promenade, the removal of the walls around Rhyl's was not an option due to the amount of work that would involve and that due to the high usage of Rhyl's to remove the walls would make keeping users safe almost impossible. Usage at the two pools was not comparable. He was happy to consider discount schemes for local residents.
- He agreed that getting accurate information out into the public domain was crucial but that they could not control the press and the press had recently reported that the proposal in introduce an entry fee for the paddling pool had been misconstrued as an entrance fee for the Drift Park!

82. POTENTIAL JOINT WORKING WITH PRESTATYN TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Clerk presented his report (circulated with agenda) detailing the outcome of an initial meeting he and the Finance Officer had had with the Prestatyn Clerk, Mr Nigel Acott.

Mr Acott indicated that Prestatyn Town Council would be happy to join forces with Rhyl Town Council and during discussions the following three areas were identified as a starting point:

- Flower Beds
- Public Toilets
- CCTV

Members felt that the same discussions needed to be extended to other Town Councils to widen the scope of opportunity.

The Town Clerk referred to Appendix A to the report, which was a schedule provided by DCC of all the flower beds in Rhyl and the maintenance cost applied to each one. He went on to report that he and Councillor W. M. Mullen-James had gone out to all of the flower beds listed to familiarise themselves with each one and judge the impact it made and what might be possible for the future.

RESOLVED *that:*

- (i) *Councillors C. S. Ball and B. Mellor be nominated to join the Town Clerk and Finance Officer to form a negotiating team for all future meetings.*
- (ii) *the Town Clerk to contact all of the larger Town Councils within the former Rhuddlan Borough boundary.*

83. NOVEMBER 2014 STATEMENT OF AUTHORISED PAYMENTS

The Finance Officer submitted the list of payments on the Number 1 Account (circulated with agenda).

RESOLVED *that the report be received.*

84. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Finance Officer presented his report (circulated with agenda) confirming all the actions taken in 2014/2015 to date as per the Town Council's approved Investment Strategy for Members' information.

RESOLVED *that the report be received.*

85. ILLUMINATIONS

The Town Clerk reported that the DCC engineers dressing the Christmas tree in the High Street with lights had contacted him to inform him that there was nowhere near enough lights to give an effective display. They explained that the branches of the tree were particularly dense and suggested that another five sets of lights should do it, so with the agreement of the Chair of this Committee, I authorised the purchase of an additional five sets.

DCC staff contacted him again shortly after to advise that the display was still lacking.

The Town Clerk's response was that he would need to get permission from this Committee before purchasing anymore, and DCC kindly offered to meet the cost of a further five sets so as not to let the tree down.

The Town Clerk asked the Committee to approve the purchase of the five sets of lights and to consider reimbursing DCC for the further five sets.

Members said that they were particularly pleased with the tree this year and with the overall impact it made to the High Street.

RESOLVED *that the purchase of the first five set of lights be approved and the Town Clerk is authorised to reimburse DCC for the second five sets.*

86. DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL / WELSH GOVERNMENT – GREEN SPACE ON ABBEY STREET, RHYL.

Further to Minute No.83 of the meeting of Council held on 19th November 2014, the Town Clerk asked Members' to consider what action, if any, they would like to take on the proposal that the Town Council assumes responsibility for the developing public open space.

RESOLVED *that the Town Clerk is instructed to obtain the finer details of the proposal from DCC and report back and enable the Committee to make a decision.*

87. WELSH INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION 2014

The Town Clerk distributed copies of briefing note he had prepared for Members summarising the findings of the recently published statistics for Rhyl and Denbighshire.

RESOLVED *that the information be received.*

88. PROGRESS REPORTS

(i) Rhyl Town and Area Plan

Nothing to report.

(ii) Rhyl Going Forward Officers

Nothing to report.

89. MEMBERS' INFORMATION ITEMS

No matters had arisen.

90. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It is recommended, pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds of confidentiality.

91. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION – PROGRESS REPORT

The Finance Officer reported upon enquiries made relating to potential grant funding.

A Member advised that they and the Leader of DCC had arranged a meeting with a Welsh Minister in January 2015 and that he intended to raise the matter then in the hope of gaining the Minister's support and advice for the Town Council's project.

RESOLVED *that the information be received.*

92. CLOSURE OF MEETING

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Chair:

Date: