

PENWORTHAM TOWN COUNCIL
STRATEGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting held at Penwortham Community Centre at 6:10pm on Monday 23rd January 2023.

Committee Members Present: Councillors J Flannery, H Hancock,
D Howarth (Vice-Chair), J Patten, A Turner,
I Watkinson, C Wooldridge (Chair) and T Young.

In attendance: Councillors W Adams, G Crewe, K Martin, R Taylor.
Marie Curran, Town Manager & Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)
Beth Blenkinship, Events Co-ordinator
Daniel Guise, Democratic Services Officer

30. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes of the Last Meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the last meeting held on 28th
November 2022 be approved as a correct record
and signed by the Chair.

33. ¾ Year Accounts to end December 2022

The Town Manager discussed the report for the ¾ Year accounts ending December 2022.

The Town Manager reported that overall income had gone up compared to the previous year, including more revenue from the cemetery. Income from Penwortham Community Centre was very similar to the previous year, whereas from Priory Lane Community Centre there was more, because the centre was a lot busier. The Town Manager noted that in 2021 there were still restrictions due to Covid-19, and the figures were expected to reflect that.

The Town Manager reported that there was a higher take-up of memorial benches and trees for the cemetery, and so expenditure on these items had increased, compared to the previous year. Expenditure on Penwortham Community Centre had fallen. The Town Manager explained that although spending on Priory Lane

Community Centre appeared to have gone up, there was an artificial effect due to a change in where wages were recorded.

The Town Manager reported that there was approximately £55k left in the budget for 2022-23, and that the Council was expected to be within its budget for the financial year.

Responding to a question from Councillor Patten, the Town Manager noted that Penwortham Community Centre was often occupied by community organisations providing social services that the Town Council wished to support.

RESOLVED: that the report be approved.

34. **Funding for Mental Health First Aid training**

The Town Manager reported that, in light of grant money received from South Ribble Borough Council (SRBC) for further training, there was no need for the Committee to consider more funding at this stage.

Councillor Howarth noted that the report under consideration was the first one members had received about the training, and the only reason it was under discussion is that another allocation of funding had been suggested. Councillor Howarth expressed a concern that the programme was not being reviewed often enough, and asked how the Council came to be using the current provider.

The Town Manager confirmed that the provider had been recommended by Councillor Watkinson when the matter first came to the Committee. Councillor Howarth noted that Councillor Watkinson had not declared an interest. Councillor Watkinson said that the provider is used by the NEU (National Education Union), and was recommended on grounds of availability and quality, as they were the top-rated trainer.

Councillor Howarth noted that local procurement of the service may save money. Councillor Watkinson stated that SRBC pay a lot more for the training to be delivered through Lancashire Mind. He said their course was identical, as it had to follow a set format for accreditation.

Councillor Turner noted that the Town Council had not put the delivery of the training out to a competitive tender, and asked if anyone was available locally, who could potentially quote for the delivery. Councillor Turner said that travel and hotel expenses may be avoided, in this way.

Councillor Wooldridge stated that Councillor Watkinson had personal experience of the training programme through his work, and that the appointed trainer was a reputable provider who delivered the course for the NEU. Councillor Wooldridge said that any concerns about ensuring a competitive tender process should have been raised when the funding was originally agreed. Councillor Wooldridge said she was nevertheless happy for the Town Manager to seek out alternative quotes for future courses.

Councillor J Flannery agreed that it was reasonable to keep the discipline of getting 3 quotes, but noted that cost considerations, and availability of trainers, may mean that the appointed trainer was the best option.

Councillor Howarth asked, if the appointed provider were the best option, why did SRBC not use them. Councillor Watkinson advised that SRBC had a close relationship with Lancashire Mind, and use them for other work, but it was his understanding that they were more expensive.

Councillor Turner proposed that the Town Manager invite tenders from various suppliers to deliver the Mental Health First Aid training, with the objective of obtaining at least 3 quotes. Councillor Hancock seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED: that the Town Manager invite tenders from various suppliers to deliver the Mental Health First Aid training.

35. **Funding for HEPA filters**

The Town Manager briefly talked through the report, which had been prompted by Councillor Watkinson raising the issue at the previous Committee meeting. The Town Manager said the report provided a quick background, and that members should decide how to proceed.

Councillor J Flannery suggested that specialist consultants can measure air quality and survey for air circulation. Councillors Howarth and Turner agreed that the first logical step would be to identify if there was a need.

Councillor Howarth asked who had decided that there might be a need for the filters. He noted that the machines were primarily used for school classes where there were 30+ children in the same room, and that Lancashire County Council only purchased them for extreme cases where there was no ventilation. Councillor J Flannery said that the public sector outside education was considering the filters, and that these welfare concerns were originally prompted by Covid.

Councillor Watkinson noted that the energy cost crisis, and the consequent need for public warm spaces (which are generally tightly enclosed), has also spurred the adoption of the filters. He stated that public buildings were supposed to have ventilation Risk Assessments, and referred to reports of such filters being installed into government and Parliamentary buildings in Westminster. Councillor Watkinson stated that there was no doubt they do a job in helping to prevent Covid, flu and other respiratory diseases. He expressed a particular concern about the working environment for Town Council staff.

Councillor Young asked if test results would be affected by how a room is being used at the time. He asked if the tests might need to be run with different sized groups occupying the same room. Councillor J Flannery said he was not an expert, but he thought the number of people occupying a room would make a difference.

Councillor Howarth asked if SRBC had bought any filters. Councillor Watkinson confirmed they had purchased 3 units.

Councillor J Flannery proposed that the Town Manager invite tenders for an air quality and ventilation survey, and bring quotes back to a meeting of the Committee in February. Councillor Turner seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED: that the Town Manager invite tenders for an air quality and ventilation survey and bring quotes back to a meeting of the Committee in February.

36. **Grant application from Penwortham Town Football Club**

Councillors discussed the submitted application. Councillor Howarth proposed that the Council provide a grant of £100 to support sporting activities. Councillor J Flannery seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED: that the Council provide a grant of £100 to Penwortham Town Football Club, to support their sporting activities.

..... Chairman

(The meeting finished at 7pm)

The minutes of this meeting will be published on the website
www.penworthamtowncouncil.gov.uk