

IVYBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of The Watermark Committee meeting held at Town Hall on 25th May 2021 at 6.30 pm

Present: Cllr S Hladkij (Mayor)
Cllr P Dredge
Cllr T Bowden
Cllr M Cade
Cllr Parsons
Cllr T Munro
Cllr A Rea

In Attendance: Mr J Parsons (Town Clerk)
Mrs P Cleal (Senior Finance Officer)

WM21/01 **ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRPERSON:** Cllr Mrs Hladkij opened the meeting by inviting nominations for Chairperson for 2021/22. Cllr Bowden was duly nominated and seconded for this position.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Bowden be elected to this office for the coming year.

WM21/02 **ELECTION OF NEW VICE CHAIRPERSON:** The Chairperson invited nominations for Vice Chairperson for 2021/22. Cllr Munro was duly nominated and seconded for this position.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cllr Munro be elected to this office for the coming year.

WM21/03 **APOLOGIES:** There were no apologies for absence.

WM21/04 **INTERESTS TO BE DECLARED:** No interests were declared.

WM21/05 **TRADING INFORMATION:** Members considered the income and expenditure information (report previously circulated). Cllr Dredge informed Members that the last financial year had been a unique trading year with the Pandemic and although a worst case scenario forecast had been for a deficit of £140K the final figure was £32K. This had been possible through receipts of Covid 19 grants of £57K and furlough (salary) grants of £50K.

Some areas of the Watermark were in profit such as the room hire which was due to the flu vaccinations, schools and Devon County Council hiring rooms for family meetings. Other areas such as cinema and live artists were in deficit and although the coffee shop had been able to trade in a reduced form for a short time, there was still a loss and no catering income had been received. The bar is dependent on live events and with no events able to take place there was very little income

received. The net cost of running the Watermark Building was greatly reduced owing to the allocation of grants received and the reduced level of trading activity. The business units did make a profit which helped to reduce the forecasted deficit and keep losses to a much reduced level.

Cllr Parsons thanked all concerned for their work in helping achieve the figure recorded. He commented this had been a horrendous year and thanked the Town Clerk for pursuing all avenues of grants. Cllr Rea spoke to confirm that this would be recorded in the minutes. All Members and the Mayor agreed. Cllr Bowden added his thanks to Cllr Dredge.

Cllr Dredge continued by informing Members of the first month's figures of the new financial year. He highlighted that the business at the Watermark was usually cyclical and the autumn and winter months were historically busier than the summer. Cllr Dredge mentioned that income had been received from room hire and the coffee shop which had re-opened on 12th April 2021 but was limited to serving customers seated at the outside tables. A grant had been received with regard to the cinema and the furlough grant which referred to March 2021 had also been received. The business units continue to make a contribution and made a profit for the month.

Cllr Munro enquired if caddy and bin liners should be promoted to encourage sales. The Town Clerk said this could be looked into however, Cllr Hladkij mentioned that with the new recycling scheme there may not be the need for caddy / bin liners. The Town Clerk agreed to investigate with the District Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to receive the trading information and to thank the Town Clerk and Cllr Dredge for their work.

WM21/06

TOWN CLERK REPORT: The Committee considered the Town Clerk's report (copy previously circulated). The Town Clerk informed Members the coffee shop re-opened on the 12th April 2021 to outside seating only as per the guidelines and the income was limited to 20% of normal takings but some of the regular customers are returning which is good to see as the Watermark plays an important role in the community. Staff have had issues with a few members of the public but the majority of customers have been happy they are able to visit the Watermark again. An increased amount of advertising on the screens to help explain the guidance and rules has been introduced.

On the 17th May 2021 as per guidelines the Coffee Shop re-opened the inside and the figures indicate an approximate £200 net difference compared to the same time in 2019, this has been helped by the temporary reduction in VAT. A small amount of income has been generated in room hire and this will hopefully continue to increase as more facilities are re-opened. Some past regular hirers such as Devon County Council, Artisan Market also an enquiry regarding the winter flu vaccinations have been in contact and hope to resume once the guidance allows. It is very helpful that the furlough scheme is flexible and although changing in July and August before ending in September

the flexibility allows us to staff the building accordingly. The Town Clerk informed Members that a further grant of £16K was due in respect of the re-start of the business. Many of the grants which we were able to apply for have now gone and unfortunately we did not qualify for the next round of grants from the BFI.

The Cinema is opening in the half term week and showing Peter Rabbit 2 and people are able to book online, phone or with staff at the Watermark. In the coming weeks more general films will be advertised to be screened during the day and this would be monitored in line with any guidance changes after the 21st June 2021.

Cllr Munro enquired if older films were at a cheaper cost and the Town Clerk clarified that it is a set cost of £100 guarantee or 35% of the takings regardless of how many screenings. Cllr Munro enquired about theme screenings and the Town Clerk replied these had been tried and also looked at the possibility of screening live sporting events but these tended to be more popular in the local pubs but could be a possibility in the future. Cultural events and live screenings from Royal Opera House had proved very popular so once they start again these would be available to book.

Cllr Cade enquired about the advertising screen at Endsleigh and the Town Clerk agreed he needed to check as there was an issue with regard to the internet connection. The leaflet holders are also empty however leaflets had been discouraged during the Pandemic. Cllr Cade enquired about the licence for the Watermark and the Town Clerk confirmed this was for the building and not just certain areas or times and a temporary licence had been obtained for the seating outside, however not many customers had ordered an alcoholic beverage and maybe this could be advertised as this was available.

Cllr Rea agreed it is good to try new events and screen films as some will work and some not but he is concerned that the live events require a 100% in order to break even and the bar sales are linked to the live events. The Town Clerk agreed and these are postponed up to October at the moment. The key date is 21st June 2021 and although not all restrictions will be lifted, it is hoped clearer guidance will be given. Cllr Rea enquired how the business units worked, as the national press are indicating more people working from home and the changing pattern for the future could be a split between home working and office working on a more flexible basis. The Town Clerk informed the Members that there was a waiting list for the Business Units and many of the current tenants preferred to have a work place away from their home. Cllr Parsons added it is beneficial for people to be able to be in a work place and to interact with colleagues. Cllr Munro agreed stating that the change in work during the Pandemic and working from home can affect team working.

The Town Clerk informed Members that one member of staff was on maternity leave and due back in February 2022. He also mentioned that

at the recent Personnel meeting the vacancy of Watermark Manager was discussed with a job description agreed.

The timing of when to advertise will be monitored and decided when the Government announces what is happening with restrictions from the 21st June 2021. It is felt this would allow enough time to recruit and the successful applicant be in place for the Autumn when hopefully more areas of the building will re-open. Advertising for the position will be via Devon County Council and in the Ivybridge magazine.

It was **RESOLVED** to: note and receive the Town Clerk's report.

The meeting closed at 7.18pm.

Signed: Dated:
Chairman