

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of  
the COMMUNITY COMMITTEE  
15th March 2021 at 7.30pm  
Online meeting via Zoom**

**Present**

Cllrs Andrews, Cranston (from item 5), Fenton, Green, Hale and Sage (Chair)

**In attendance**

Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Emily Osler (Community Development Officer), Shila Fletcher (The Long Table) and Hugh Phillimore (Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust)

**Absent**

Cllr Price

**1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

**2. Declarations of Interest or Requests for dispensations**

Cllr Hale declared a personal interest in a grant application from Stroud Preservation Trust to be considered under item 14.

There were no requests for dispensations.

**3. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the Committee meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 were **approved** by the members present and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair at the next possible opportunity.

**4. Questions from members of the public**

None received.

**5. Presentation from The Long Table**

Shila Fletcher provided a detailed report on The Long Table's Freezer of Love network. It was noted that 42,000 frozen meals had been provided during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. The Committee heard how mass production of frozen meals had been supporting local community suppliers, reducing waste and feeding people in financial need.

Cllr Cranston joined the meeting.

Twenty freezers were now in operation in the community, some staffed by volunteers, some open access. The pay as you feel model enables people to have free food if they need it, cover the true cost or pay extra to help support others. The scheme had been very successful and generated a lot of interest nationally, helped by an appearance on the BBC's Countryfile programme.

The Long Table were now adapting their model for the future. Whilst looking forward to returning to people eating together in lunch clubs or cafés, they were also exploring

opportunities to increase local growing and employment, providing training for young people and generally supporting healthy eating.

A variety of questions were raised, including the potential loss of the current operating base at Brimscombe Port. It was noted that alternative accommodation is being sought for both the Long Table and the other organisations based at the site who all work closely together: The Food Bank, Kidstuff and the Furniture Bank.

It was reported that organisationally The Long Table take the view that the current food supply system is broken, but they believe that it is feasible to create a financially sustainable way of feeding people better.

A Friends scheme had been developed which is helping fund community meals.

The profile of freezer users had been very varied, including families, people who may just be having a bad week, parents with new babies, people being discharged from hospital, older people who want to get out to make human contact and people with mental health issues. Some people, for example those who are shielding, are also receiving local deliveries.

The Committee thanked Shila for her detailed and inspiring report.

## **6. Report from Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust**

Hugh Phillimore, volunteer Chair of the Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust provided a report on the Trust's plans for the future and their current situation. The Everything is Light exhibition would be reopening on 17<sup>th</sup> May, subject to the easing of COVID-19 restrictions following the government roadmap, and continue until the end of June. Plans were in place for an exciting autumn programme, including the Waterboys which had sold out within 24 hours.

While the building had been forced to close again, work had continued on developing the new bar in the Kendrick Room, redecorating, and repairing leaking guttering. An inspection of the roof work commissioned by Stroud District Council prior to the transfer of ownership of the building to the Town Council had been arranged. The acoustic treatment in the ballroom had been very successful and the new bar would provide four serving station to allow more customers to be served.

The Council were thanked for providing ongoing fundraising support. The Clerk recommended a temporary change to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Trust to enable the Fundraiser to work on revenue funding as well as capital and this was **approved**.

It was reported that most staff had been furloughed which had helped with finances. The Trust had 3-4 months of running costs in hand and were pursuing additional revenue streams, including for example the Peoples Republic of Stroud shop and a potential joint venture for operating the café.

A measured approach was being taken to planning events. It was hoped to run an outdoor café and welcoming in some festivals later in the year. The Trust were mindful of the potential for a third wave of COVID-19, so would continue to postpone event bookings as

appropriate until the situation becomes clearer. An updated business plan was in development. A new marketing campaign was planned and a Crowdfunder was being designed. The Trust were particularly keen to progress the development of the planned opening up of the piano bridge between the ballroom and the Kendrick Room which would help circulation and access to the bar.

The volunteer coordinator, funded by the Council had spent the period of closure setting up systems and expanding into partnership work with Lansdown Hall and festival organisers.

The Committee thanked Hugh for his detailed report.

## **7. Report from Community Development Officer**

A written report had been circulated with the meeting agenda. The Community Development Officer answered questions from members. It was noted that the Paganhill Community Group had achieved considerable success with their volunteer response to COVID-19. Local people, including some former recipients of support, were contributing lots of new skills and experience. An update on arrangements for use of the Octogen by the group was provided.

The Community Development Officer also reported on progress on the development of local food hubs across the town, with some new sites opening up.

It was noted that work with the Top of Town Tots had demonstrated strong demand for family activities and services in the area.

## **8. Allocation of funds from the 2020-2021 Arts and Culture budget**

The Committee considered a report recommending that the remaining budget for the 2020-21 financial year be committed to the Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust to fund the Volunteer Coordinator role. The post had been created with a previous grant to support volunteering at the Subscription Rooms and there was now potential to extend this funding to enable the role to be expanded to include other venues and festivals. It was noted that this would have a much wider impact on the cultural sphere in the town and support the Council's Cultural Strategy. A grant of £10,000 to the Stroud Subscription Rooms Trust to fund the expanded Volunteer Coordinator role was **approved**.

## **9. Work undertaken by Gloucestershire Play Rangers**

A proposal from Gloucestershire Play Rangers to modify the service that they provide to the Council to take into account COVID-19 restrictions was **approved**.

## **10. Annual Reports from organisations in receipt of a Service Level Agreement**

Written reports from Allsorts, Down To Earth, Homestart, Lansdown Hall and Gallery and Marah Trust were noted.

## **11. Renewal of Service Level Agreements**

Agreements with Allsorts, Homestart, Lansdown Hall and Gallery and Marah Trust were **renewed** for period 2021 – 2024.

It was **agreed** to renew an agreement with Down To Earth to provide subsidised gardening for Stroud residents who are in receipt of specified benefits and are unable to manage their gardens, for one year to 2022 and then review again. Members felt that the annual report

submitted did not offer much detail on the service provided and were concerned about value for money, given that the scheme was supporting a relatively small number of residents. It was noted that, whilst demand had probably been suppressed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the whole budget had not been spent in recent years, so wider promotion might be necessary.

### **12. Report on the grants awarded from the COVID-19 fund**

It was noted that grants totalling £6,657.00 had been awarded from the COVID-19 fund and a further £1,000 had been received from other sources and held on behalf of community organisations in the town.

### **13. Funds available in the Grants Funds for 2020-2021**

The amount of funds available in grant funds was noted. An error in the report circulated was corrected – the correct total for the Arts and Culture Fund was £7,500 not £8,000.

### **14. Grant applications**

The following applications were considered:

#### **Community Support Fund**

Paganhill Community Group - an application for support to develop a food hub was discussed at length. The Committee felt that this was an interesting project with good potential to inspire community action, but there were some concerns about: sustainability post COVID-19; the impact on conventional food suppliers; and the long-term availability of operating premises.

It was therefore **agreed** to initially offer funding for a pilot scheme with a grant totalling £1,800 to cover two Band 4 Fareshare memberships at £600 each, plus delivery (£100) and equipment costs (£500). It was further **agreed** to delegate payment of an additional grant of £1,200 for two further Band 4 Fareshare memberships to the Town Clerk with the balance held in reserve until such time as the viability of the scheme is better established. It was noted that the grant award should not be regarded as guaranteeing long term financial support for the project.

#### **Arts and Culture fund**

Wicked Events/Spaniel in the Works – an application for funding to develop a series of training videos and associated online programmes to assist festival organisers and venue managers was **declined**. The Committee felt that insufficient evidence of the need for this service or community support and involvement in the development of the proposal had been provided. It was noted that the Council had already committed significant funding to volunteer support through its Arts and Culture budget. The Committee felt that this project would be more suitable for a business support loan.

#### **Small Grants**

##### Stroud Preservation Trust.

Cllr Hale reported that the Trust had accepted one of three tenders for a feasibility study to assess different options for the Chapels of Rest at Stroud Cemetery and confirmed that this work was an extension of work previously commissioned by the Council and would cover technical aspects in more detail.

Cllr Hale left the meeting.

It was **agreed** to continue the meeting after 10pm to allow the remaining business to be completed.

It was **agreed** to award a grant of £500 to Stroud Preservation Trust.

Cllr Hale rejoined the meeting.

**15. Action Plan 2021-2024**

On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 Council had requested that each of the Committees review their sections of the Council's Action Plan to enable the Clerk to prioritise workload. The Committee felt unable to address this task and requested that the Personnel Committee consider staff capacity.

The meeting ended at 10.10pm.

Chair..... Date.....