
EXTRAORDINARY COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 10 August 2022 from 7.00 pm - 8.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Monique Bonney (Substitute for Councillor Lee McCall), Lloyd Bowen, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Oliver Eakin, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Nicholas Hampshire, Mike Henderson (Substitute for Councillor Hannah Perkin), Elliott Jayes (Vice-Chair), Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington (Substitute for Councillor Cameron Beart), Richard Palmer (Chair) and Ken Rowles.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway and Emma Wiggins.

OFFICERS PRESENT (Virtually): Eva Harris and Kellie MacKenzie.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE (Virtually): Councillor Carole Jackson.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Cameron Beart, Lee McCall and Hannah Perkin.

232 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

233 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

234 **St. Michael's Church Wall, Sittingbourne**

The Business Support Officer introduced the report which summarised the procurement process and results and sought Committee approval to instruct the recommended contractor for the repair and partial reconstruction of St Michael's Church Flint Wall, Sittingbourne. The Business Support Officer said that the recommended contractor scored the highest for quality and cost at, £108,708+VAT, but the quote was £20,708 over budget. The Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods added that the High Street Fund was originally allocated for staff and projects but there was an underspend of £35,000 to accommodate the additional costs of the recommended contractor.

The Chair invited questions from Members.

Members asked questions and raised points including:

- What was the start and end date for the proposed works?;
- how long were the works expected to last?;
- were the Church contributing towards the cost?;
- £20,000 over budget was a lot and questioned whether costs had gone up that much;
- the work to the wall was urgent;
- if the asset list had been better looked after the wall would have been properly maintained;

- understood that the project was important but why did the underspend have to be spent on this project and no other projects on the Capital Projects list?;
- were Historic England going to be contributing to the costs?; and
- worried that if Swale Borough Council (SBC) contributed to the repair of this wall other churches would be asking for funds to repair and this could set a precedent.

The Chair advised that legally it was the responsibility of the Council to fund the repair of St Michael's Church Wall due to legislation that required local authorities to take responsibility of Church walls if the Church in question was no longer taking burials.

The Business Support Officer informed Members that the works would start as soon as a contract for works had been approved. The planned project would take 12-14 weeks, working on ten sections of the wall, one week per section and included time for preparations and clear-ups.

Councillor Mike Henderson proposed an amendment to recommendation two of the report for £20,708 to be allocated to the repair of St Michael's wall from the High Street Fund and the rest of the money to fund Faversham Way-finding project for new signs in Faversham. This was seconded by Councillor Alastair Gould.

The Director of Regeneration reminded Members that it was in the Community Committee's portfolio to deal with Church walls, and the Regeneration and Property Committee were responsible for the High Street Fund. Therefore, the Committee could not make a decision on the allocation of the High Street Funds.

Members debated the amendment and it was agreed that as the amendment did not fall under the remit of the Committee it did not be progressed to a vote.

Members were invited to make comments on the original recommendations and points included:

- The Council had no choice but to repair the wall;
- could a report be made to the Community Committee so they knew what could be spent on the High Street Fund for any future projects?; and
- concerned that inflation is constantly rising and future repairs to walls in the Borough could increase.

The Chair proposed the recommendations in the report, which were seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney.

Resolved:

- (1) That the appointment of Company 'E' for the repair and partial reconstruction of St Michael's Church Wall, Sittingbourne at a value of £108,708 exc. VAT be approved.***
- (2) That the additional costs of the project and that these be drawn from the existing High Street Fund budget be supported.***
- (3) The waiver requested in relation to the works contract and that the Director of Resources be authorised to complete the necessary documentation be agreed.***

Chair

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All minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel