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Minutes of the **Full Council Extraordinary** meeting of Shepton Mallet Town Council that took place in the Council Chamber of Mendip District Council, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet on **Tuesday 6th August 2019 at 7pm.**

Present: Councillors T Faith, W Frapple, S Hale, B Height, E Hobbs, C Inchley (Chairman), B Manley, G Mayall, N Shearn, N Tolson

In Attendance: Charlotte Starkie, Town Clerk. Lesley Rowan, Friends of Shepton Mallet Library, Cllr John Parham, Somerset County Councillor.

Public and Press: There were 66 members of the public present.

04.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Harrison, Kennedy, Lovell, McGuire and Jones.

04.2 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced that the Dementia Alliance were holding their first awards evening on Thursday 8th August at 4.30 and local businesses were being awarded for being Dementia friendly.

04.3 Declaration of interest of matters related to this agenda

No declaration of interest was received.

04.4 a. To receive and consider the Business Case and Options Appraisal from the Friends of Shepton Mallet Library

a. The Chairman introduced the item and explained that whilst the County Council had a responsibility to supply a library, the town council supported the retention of businesses and enterprises in the town centre to encourage regeneration. The council had been in discussion with the County Council and the friends of the library for many years and had already placed funds aside for the provision of support. Therefore, if a decision was made to support the retention of the library in the town centre, it would not have an immediate effect on the precept. However, the council had to be responsible and transparent with tax payer's money and as such was considering a 5-year plan that would lead to a long term solution.

b. The Chairman invited a representative to speak on behalf of the public who had attended the meeting, who stated that libraries were so much more about books and that they incorporated cultural heritage and education as well as being a physical space and community hub that brought people together. At their heart was a space for society to better themselves and the council were encouraged to seek to support the library remaining in its current location.

c. The Chairman invited Lesley Rowan to make the presentation on behalf of the Friends of Shepton Mallet Library which covered the following points:

- The current usage of the library and the intended usage after investment
- The desire to consider environmental sustainability and stay in the current building
- To utilise volunteers with activities in the library
- A change to opening hours to reflect local requirements
- The opportunity to invest in the infrastructure of the building
- That funding had also been offered from 2 generous local stakeholders
- To provide a community space for events, with a full capacity of over 120 attendees
- To create a social enterprise to manage a community hub, to engage with local talent
- A request for an annual grant of £15,000 for a period of 5 years which will ensure that the library remains in its current location, with investment from the county council into the infrastructure, and with the community enterprise managing the community hub for letting of the space to community groups

d. The Chairman invited councillors to comment on the proposal and the following issues were raised:

- That library services were already funded by tax payer's contributions via the County Council
- That the investment into this venture must not be seen as competition against any private business
- What happens at the 5-year point if County Council withdraws its support?
- That there was an opportunity to consider other services being moved into the library space: Tourist Information Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau, Town Council

e. The Chairman concluded the discussion and made the following proposal:

- To make a grant of £15,000 per annum for a period of 5 years towards the running costs of the Shepton Mallet Community Library Hub

The proposal was seconded by Cllr Mayall and all councillors supported the proposal.

Resolved that:

Shepton Mallet Town Council contribute £15,000 per annum for a period of 5 years towards the running costs of the Shepton Mallet Community Library Hub

04.5 Press Release

A press release would be made on this joint venture

04.6 Date of next council meeting

The next meeting of the council will be held on Tuesday 10th September 2019.

The meeting closed at 19:55 hrs.