

Finance and General Purposes Committee
24th June 2019 at 7.30pm
All Saints Room, Civic Hall, Didcot



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this Committee.

Present:

Councillor J Moody (Chairman)
Councillor P Siggers (Vice Chairman)
Councillor A Sandiford
Councillor M Walsh
Councilor V Haval
Councillor M McNeill
Councillor A Thompson

Officer:

Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk
Mr Tom Hudson, Deputy Town Clerk

Three members of the public
Five Councillors

20. Apologies

None.

21. Declarations of interests

None.

22. Meeting suspended to allow audience and Councillors to address the Committee (Standing Order 97)

Margaret Abbott from the Didcot Volunteer Centre spoke about their application for £1800 to pay an organiser to transport people who are unable to use public transport. The Centre had benefitted from the grant for the last seven years. The money would pay for around 4 hours of paid help per week.

Amy Scott from the Gobo Theatre spoke to their application for £850 towards buying portable tiered staging in partnership with Harwell School. The Theatre used the Harwell Village Hall for their productions. The staging would help more children to be seen in performances. The cost of the staging in total is around £4k for which much of the money would be raised by fund-raising.

Questions followed for both presentations from the Councillors.

Councillor P Davies then gave his views on the accuracy of the Minutes from the meeting held on 20 May 2019 – he felt they were too brief as to convey the items discussed at the meeting. He gave some proposals for the Strategic Risk Assessment; and was concerned that the internal audit details four Standing Committees rather than five. The Town Clerk clarified that the role of the internal auditor was to review processes – so it is easy to miss the new Standing Committee as it met just once in February 2019. Nevertheless this was also missed by the Town Clerk and will be amended for the next report in the autumn.

Standing Orders reinstated.

23. Minutes of the meeting held 20th May 2019

Proposed by Councillor Moody seconded by Councillor Siggers, it was **RESOLVED** to agree the minutes held on 20 May 2019 as a correct record with one amendment, and to sign them as such. The amendment was to insert Councillor Haval as another Councillor who addressed the meeting following the recent Annual Meeting.

24. Questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item

None.

25. Financial statements and budgets as at 31st May 2019

The Committee considered and **NOTED** the financial statements and budgets as at 31st May 2019 along with a bank reconciliation report. There were several questions such as why we keep £3.81 in a Santander bank account and queries on specific cost centres. The Town Clerk would give the Councillor a full answer on those queries. There was also a query on the bar takings at the Civic Centre which the Town Clerk would report back.

26. Strategic Risk Assessment review 2018-2019

It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor P Siggers to note the Strategic Risk assessment as a starting point– and the need to review and amend this document throughout the year.

26. Asset Register 2018 – 2019

The Councillors noted that the Asset Register was unfinished. The turnover of personnel was discussed as a major reason why this task was incomplete. The current copy was approved for sending to the auditor and the Town Clerk is hoping to further improve this register before the conclusion of the audit in September.

There was a query on Fleet Meadow Community Hall which was thought to be in Town Council ownership – the Town Clerk would make enquiries.

27. Internal Audit Report 2018 – 2019

The report and the actions were noted by the Chairman. The Town Clerk resolved to clear as many of these actions as possible before the interim internal audit in the autumn. It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Siggers to approve this report for sending to the external auditor.

28. To review the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control

The Committee noted the report from the Town Clerk which reviewed the scope of the internal audit and other measures in place to ensure compliance and transparency. The aim is to provide good quality governance and management of the Council along with managing the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner. Further improvements will be implemented throughout the financial year – but the Committee were happy to approve this report.

29. To review the completion and submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor P Siggers to sign and approve the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the 2018-2019 financial year. It was noted that the Town Clerk had ticked the box 7 “no” on the Annual Governance Statement and the explanation that would be sent to the external auditor.

30. Grant aid applications

The Committee considered four grant aid applications:

- a) Dementia Tea Dance**
Application amount £1,500

To help pay for a charity tea dance in aid of the Alzheimer's Association.

Members of the Committee felt that the application was lacking in information and did not contain any bank accounts. It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Cllr Ms Siggers:

RESOLVED to REFUSE this application until further information and bank accounts were provided.

- b) Harwell School Association and Gobo Theatre Foundation**
Application amount £826

To provide funds towards the purchase of a portable multi-level staging to help more children to be seen by their families during shows and productions.

Members of the Committee discussed this application and noted that around 20% of pupils will be from Didcot. Parents did not always get their first choice of schools for

their children. Proposed by Councillor P Siggers, seconded by Cllr A Thompson it was

RESOLVED to make a grant award of £826

c) Didcot Volunteer Centre

Application amount £1,800

To continue to fund the salary of the Deputy Organiser for 4 hours per week for 50 weeks.

Members of the Committee felt that Margaret Abbott gave an excellent presentation in support of the application. Unfortunately the guidelines of the grants has been changed and salaries are no longer applicable for a grant. It was reluctantly:

RESOLVED to REFUSE this application.

d) Emergency Service and Family Fun day

Application amount £1,500

To provide funds towards the organisation of a free Emergency Services open day along with a day of activities for all the family.

Members of the Committee noted that the event would be held in Boundary Park which is in Harwell parish. It was also noted that the publicity made it seem a commercial venture with live music in the evening and a bar. Proposed by the Chairman; seconded by Cllr A Thompson it was

RESOLVED to REFUSE this application. Councillor Harval abstained from the vote.

31. Grant aid reports

Grant aid reports provided by Be Free Young Carers and Revitalise was **NOTED**.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____