

Didcot Town Council

Finance and General Purposes Committee

22nd August 2022 at 7.30pm
All Saints Room, Didcot Civic Hall



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 (Chair)
Councillor M Khan (Deputy Chair)
Councillor V Haval
Councillor A Thompson
Councillor D Chandran

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk

Two members of the public.

50. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Dearlove. Cllr M Walsh was absent.

51. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

52. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25th July 2022

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to approve the minutes as an accurate record. There were no amendments.

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

There were no questions.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan to suspend standing orders to allow for public participation.

Geoff and Jackie Bushell spoke in support of their grant application for £2580 to assist with the shortfall of ticket income on their programme of local concerts. The

Didcot Concert Orchestra give Didcot residents a unique opportunity to enjoy classical music played to a high standard without having to travel to Oxford or London. The recent pandemic has reduced audiences and crucial income but it was hoped that the numbers would rise again. In addition the costs of the box office service from Cornerstone had also risen making it even more difficult to cover the costs of these concerts.

After some discussion and questions from Councillors the standing orders were reinstated.

54. To note a grant report from Sustainable Didcot

A report on the recent Wild Café event held at the Civic Hall was noted.

55. To consider a grant application

There was one grant application from the Didcot Concert Orchestra (DCO). The sum of £2580 was requested to help the Orchestra break even on their concert programme. It was difficult to get grants from other sources as the orchestra was not a charitable organisation. It was hoped that further grants would not be required and the organisers were actively trying to get more sponsorship.

It was proposed by Cllr D Chandran and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to award the full sum of £2,580 with one caveat. The Town Clerk was asked to check if the grant could be paid into a private bank account.

56. To approve the amended AGAR section for the 2021 – 2022 financial year

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr V Haval and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to approve the two re-stated figures in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021-2022.

The amended figures were in box 2 – the precept was corrected from £1,114,053 to the current precept figure of £1,144,053. The second amendment was in box 3 where the total other receipts were amended from £338,946 to £308,946. The balances in box 7 were not affected by these amendments.

57. To review the draft monthly accounts for July 2022

The Committee considered the draft accounts for July 2022 which – although not the final figures – were a good view of the accounts with only a couple of non-material changes to be made before the month was finalized. The Committee noted the figures and requested clarity on the numbers of dog bins and trash bins.

58. To review the quotes for a business plan to support the application for a loan from the Public Works Loans Board

The Committee considered two quotes to provide a business plan and a medium term finance plan. The business plan was to support the application from the PWLB for a loan of £2.7m to build the new sports and community pavilion at Edmonds Park. It was proposed by Cllr A Thompson and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Pete Cooper working with DCK Accounting Solutions be appointed at a cost of £6,050 + expenses + vat. The vote was unanimous.

59. To formally request payment of CIL contributions

It was AGREED to request that any CIL contributions be paid directly into the DTC bank account.

60. To review the grass cutting contract with OCC

The Council is currently operating under a service level agreement with OCC to cut grass verges in a mix of B roads and residential roads in Didcot. The current contribution amounts to just £13,424 whereas the total budget for the grass cutting is £25,000 and last year we spent an actual sum of £30,438. The contract is up for renewal in February 2023 and the current company we are using have suggested that the quote will go up by around 7%.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr D Chandran and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Council write to OCC with the intention of not renewing the service level agreement. This would mean that the grass cutting contract will also not be renewed.

Cllr A Thompson left the meeting.

61. To note the performance of the Public Sector Deposit Fund from CCLA

The Committee noted the figures as at July 2022.

62. To approve a quote for the fixed electrical test remedials report

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr V Haval and RESOLVED to approve the quote for the fixed electrical test remedials for the Civic Hall at a cost of £5,405.94 plus VAT.

63. Progress report

The Committee went through the progress report. It was noted that the site meeting with SODC for the additional CCTV cameras would take place on the morning of 26th September. A report from this meeting will be brought to the Committee meeting later that day. Other items would be added to the progress report including an update on the new Restore building and their allotment agreement. It was also agreed to invite Derek Kemp to the September meeting to go through the partial exemption calculations.

64. Exclusion of the press and public

RESOLVED: pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

65. To consider a claim for tree damage to a resident's car

It was AGREED to delegate the responsibility to the Town Clerk to work with the resident to cover the repairs subject to fresh quotes.

66. To review the response to stage one of the new pavilion at Edmonds Park

The appointed consultants, Ridge & Partners, have conducted a thorough review of first stage tender responses. The report is detailed and commercially sensitive. It was AGREED to invite Ridge for a meeting to better understand the findings and agree a way forward. This would be the week commencing Monday 5th September 2022.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____