

Didcot Town Council

Finance and General Purposes Committee

25th July 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 M Walsh

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk

33. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Dearlove and Cllr D Chandran.

34. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.

35. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 20th June 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.

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

The Chair noted that there were no “live” finance reports available for this meeting.

37. To consider a grant application

There was one grant application from the charity “Wynter’s Wish”. They were requesting the sum of £1,036 to assist them with the costs of their community event. There was concern because there was little detail and no real description as to how this event will help their charity. There was no proper business plan for the event, only four stall holders and a profit share with the funfair. After much discussion it was proposed by Cllr M Khan and seconded by Cllr V Haval to award the full sum

requested on this occasion. Any further applications from this charity would need to see much more detail and improvements on their grant application.

38. To note the partial exemption calculations for the 2021 – 2022 financial year

It was noted that our expenditure on which VAT has been reclaimed is at £6,652.51 – which is below the £7,500 threshold – however it is likely that this will be breached this year if expenditure continues to increase. The advice from DCK was to allow for opting to tax in the budget but Councillors need to be aware that this would add VAT to room hire which the Council would need to choose whether to pass this on.

It was agreed to invite Derek Kemp to attend the September F&GP meeting to further explain the options open to us. Cllr V Haval also requested a spread sheet with the calculations from DCK.

39. To review the monthly accounts for May and June 2022

The Committee considered the explanations to the cost centres queried at the last meeting. Cllr M Walsh wanted to know the reasons for the expenditure being over budget in those cost centres. Cllr V Haval wanted to know the mileage rate which is either 45p per mile or 50p per mile at which tax would need to be paid. Cllr A Thompson wanted more clarification on 401/4001 Civic Hall salaries. The Town Clerk said that the Property & Facilities Manager's salary was recorded here along with the Projects Officer. It was noted that the casual staff would add to the salaries. The Committee requested a break down of permanent and casual staff salaries and hours. Cllr J Moody was not aware that we had two photocopiers. 310/3157 cost centre for dog fouling needed further investigation. The Town Clerk was asked to clarify the waste and add to the progress report.

The accounts for May were noted and June accounts were scrutinized.

The Committee requested a break down of 101/1108 training and conferences; 101/1124 subscriptions and 101/1129 miscellaneous admin costs. It was clarified that the -£2000 in brackets is because the audit invoice will be for the last financial year. We will receive this invoice once the audit is complete which will be the end of September. The cost centre will then go to £2,000 in the budget for the current financial year. The Town Clerk pointed out that the £2,000 is the basic cost and if there are lots of queries it could be more. Cllr M Walsh pointed out that the cost centre 402/3010 covered bar staff but there was no expenditure recorded here. The Town Clerk explained that this was an historic cost centre when the Civic Hall hired agency staff to cover the bar for events. The Committee also noted the better than budget income on room hire.

40. To review the report on the handling of the petty cash and bar floats

The Committee AGREED to formally write off the £175.74 unless the receipts are found. Cllr V Haval suggested that the staff sign the bar and reception floats at the start and end of the day. There was a discussion about the process of logging into a till and whether we can initialize every transaction. The Town Clerk would need to clarify the process of taking cash and card payments. Cllr V Haval wanted to raise the culture of taking responsibility. The Property & Facilities Manager wants to revise the float forms to make them less cumbersome.

It was agreed to take the new forms to either the F&GP or Property & Facilities Committee when they are ready. The Town Clerk also pointed out that the change to Unity Bank may also affect the forms in terms of banking cash. A secure drop safe for holding cash was also being investigated for a future meeting.

41. To note the report on the CCTV performance up-date

The half yearly report was noted and in particular the number of incidents recorded on the cameras. Cllr Haval said that the figures could be used to support the need for more cameras. The Town Clerk informed the Committee that there was a vacancy for a CCTV operator at SODC but the new Manager was doing this work alongside his new position until another person can be appointed.

42. To note the budget timetable for the 2023 – 2024 financial year

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND this budget timetable to full Council in September.

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

The Committee noted the figures as at June 2022.

44. To approve the play area repairs deferred from the Extra Ordinary Council meeting on 18th July 2022

There were several items of expenditure to increase the safety within our playgrounds. A quote was awaited to re-hang the swings with new fixings and for an independent contractor to carry out cable inspections to mitigate against catastrophic failure. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Walsh to approve the following requests:

- Servicing of the group swing at Ladygrove at a cost of £2,118
- Extra bark chip at a cost of £1622 for each load – two loads @ £3,244
- Repairs to the cable way tests and the clamber stacks from either 309/3153 or the ear marked reserve 338.

The vote was unanimous.

45. To approve the charity trustee for Fleet Meadow Community Centre

It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the Leader of the Council, Cllr M Khan, be the initial signatory for the application to go to the Charity Committee. This would be noted at the September full Council but the application would be sent off before this meeting.

46. Progress report

The Committee went through the progress report. The Town Clerk was asked to remove the item on EV charging points.

47. 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.

48. To note the minutes from the CCTV meeting

The Committee noted these confidential minutes.

49. To approve a nominal sum to be made available for the new tenants of Willowbrook Leisure Centre

This item was deferred from the Extra Ordinary Council meeting on the 18th July 2022. Cllr J Moody was unhappy that the papers had been circulated to future tenants without going through Council although the papers had been circulated to all Councillors on 6th July 2022. The papers are not heads of terms but does float the idea with future tenants that we are considering a loan for the bidders.

The Town Clerk had been through the paperwork and pulled out these items for the Committee. Even though there is nothing binding, in future all paperwork will come to the Committee for scrutiny even if it holds up the appointment of a future tenant for Willowbrook.

After a long discussion it was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Khan and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** a one-off loan of £10,000 should the Council find a suitable tenant with a viable business plan. There would have to be credit checks on any company that we loan to.

Cllr V Haval raised questions on the transparency of the process. After further long discussion the actions were:

- To confirm that the list of expressions of interest had been approached by the consultant
- Cllr V Haval to share the name of the company that she knew had not been approached
- To confirm that other businesses in other leisure areas had been approached by the consultant
- To announce that this is happening on the DTC website where contracts and opportunities are recorded in case any other companies want to bid
- To clarify and publish the time line of the procurement process
- To circulate again the copy of the services specification document to all Councillors

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr M Walsh and **RESOLVED** to remove the item @ 2.7.2 and item 6 relating to the utilities in the pre-bidders specification as it was included in error. DTC had made a significant investment in Willowbrook including the low energy lighting and solar panels with battery storage. It was also pointed out that we were only likely to charge a peppercorn rent.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____