

Didcot Town Council

Finance and General Purposes Committee 27th September 2021 7.00pm All Saints Room, Didcot Civic Hall



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 P Siggers (Vice Chair)
Councillor A Dearlove
Councillor V Haval
Councillor D Chandran
Councillor A Thompson
Cllr E Hards (sub for Cllr A Sandiford)

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk
Callum Stacey – Committee Clerk

Also present:

Councillor M Walsh and one member of the public. Cllr P Davies joined the presentation on Zoom but did not attend the meeting.

The meeting started early and in confidential session for the Committee to receive a presentation from Craig Mulhall of MLC regarding the options for opening the Willowbrook building.

68. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Sandiford (Cllr E Hards subbing).

69. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

70. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 23rd August 2021

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the minutes as an accurate record.

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

Cllr E Hards clarified that the report from Didcot Library was in relation to the grant awarded in September 2020.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to suspend standing orders.

Public participation

Nikki Hargreaves from Didcot Library spoke to the Committee regarding their current Grant Aid application.

Nikki thanked the Committee for their support in the past and introduced the library's upcoming projects. The library is now looking at re-starting events and lots of preliminary work has been done in terms of risk assessments and capacities to ensure everyone feels safe. The library is looking to restart rhyme time which has a wide outreach to families who may not usually use the library.

The library is also looking at starting yoga in the library and will need resources to ensure this is done properly. It was explained that this would be yoga for children and families and would make use of upstairs space in the library.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

72. To note a grant report

A report was received from Sue Ryder Palliative Care Hub South Oxfordshire and was noted by the Councillors.

73. To consider a grant application from Didcot Library

It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove and RESOLVED to award the grant of £350 to Didcot Library.

74. To review the financial reports for August 2021

The accounts and payments for August 2021 were noted by the Councillors.

75. To consider the 2022-2023 budget for macro projects

Several Councillors commented on the report. Areas that needed to be considered include future budget for the maintenance and operation of Willowbrook; progressing the new pavilion at Edmonds Park and the splash park; the option to tax our buildings and in particular the Civic Hall; the new CCTV cameras; the choice of continuing to use DCK or employing a Finance Officer and the grant to Ladygrove Community Centre which was likely to end.

The report was noted by the Councillors.

76. To note the partial exemption calculations for 2020-2021

The partial exemption calculations were noted by the Councillors. The option to tax needs to be considered carefully throughout the latter end of this financial year.

77. To note the appointment of DCK to carry out quarterly partial exemption calculations for 2021-2022 financial year at a cost of £120 per quarter plus VAT.

78. To consider items referred from the Property and Facilities Management Committee for financial approval

There were three items were referred from the inquorate Property and Facilities Committee for approval. All three items referred to repair and upgrade works to be carried out at the Civic Hall. The first item was an upgrade and repair to the access control system at a cost of £2522.95. The second item was audio and lighting repair works at a cost of £1658.00 and the final item was window repairs at a cost of £2500.

It was proposed by Cllr A Thompson and seconded by Cllr J Moody and RESOLVED to approve the three items of repair and upgrade works to be carried out at the Civic Hall.

79. To note the update on additional CCTV cameras

It was AGREED that the Officers would again present information as requested by SODC. The Finance Administrator would contact the other Town Councils in the group to find out what they pay and would contact the Police for the latest crime statistics. We will ask again for SODC to give us a cost for new cameras in addition to the camera which was taken away

80. To consider a budget for events to mark the Platinum Jubilee in 2022

The ideas put forward by staff on the report was noted. It was AGREED to form a working group to finalise ideas to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee and agree a budget by Christmas. This was a historic occasion which should be marked in some way. The Finance Officer would put out a memo inviting members for their ideas and to join the working group.

81. To consider a report from the Outside Team regarding communications

Concerns were raised regarding the cost of the radios and the lack of ability to take photos (used by the Outside Team to report damaged equipment). The Councillors also felt mobile phones would better ensure the safety of staff than radios.

It was AGREED to investigate options and costings for a set of mobile phones for the Outside Team as a cost-effective alternative to radios.

82. To review the report on a photographic Asset Register and choice of software

There were concerns raised around whether Rialtas had all the required features and the user friendliness of the software. Comments were also made on the time that would be needed to set up the asset register on Microsoft Access.

It was AGREED to explore other options for the asset register.

83. To note the progress report on items not on this agenda.

The progress report was noted by the Councillors.

The Town Clerk highlighted an action for the Committee and encouraged them to have a look at the updated Council website and give their feedback.

84. 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.

85. To consider a report from MLC Consultants on the options regarding Willowbrook Leisure Centre Building

The detail of the discussion is noted in the confidential appendix A.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr D Chandran and **RESOLVED** to carry out a “soft” opening of the Willowbrook building using new staff employed by the Town Council. The opening would take place as soon as the building was equipped in terms of internet and wifi and the facilities necessary to ensure the safe opening and running of a public building.

The consultants would continue to assist the Town Council in finding a long term solution. A press release would be prepared to inform the public of this decision.

Meeting closed at 8.47pm

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____