

Didcot Town Council

Finance and General Purposes Committee

28th February 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 P Siggers (Vice Chair)
Councillor A Dearlove
Councillor V Haval
Councillor D Chandran
Councillor A Thompson
Councillor E Hards (sub for Councillor A Sandiford)

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk

Present: Five members of the public

The Chair began the meeting with a minute's silence to remember past Town Council and Mayor – Cllr Des Healy – who sadly passed away.

147. Apologies

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

148. Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

149. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 24th January 2022

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the minutes as an accurate record. There were two amendments – in Minute 136 there was a typo and the word “new” should be “near”. The name Anna Gatrell should be correctly recorded with one “t”.

150. 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 P Siggers to suspend standing orders to allow the members of the public who were attending in support of their grant applications to speak.

Kathryn Goldsby-West spoke of the difficulties that her charity – Didcot Baby Monday – has experienced since the pandemic. They now had a new venue and new volunteers but it has been difficult to get helpers. This grant will help the charity to continue to help new mothers and their new-born babies.

Tatiana Boucard and Jone Ayres from Sustainable Didcot then spoke in support of their grant application for a Wildlife Café event to be held at the Civic Hall.

Standing orders were reinstated.

151. To consider two grant applications

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to approve the grant of £1,265 to Didcot Baby Monday.

It was proposed by Cllr D Chandran and seconded by Cllr E Hards and RESOLVED to approve a grant of £720 to Sustainable Didcot for their Wildlife Café event at the Didcot Civic Hall.

It was also noted that the terms and conditions of the grants will need to be reviewed at the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

152. To review the financial reports for January 2022

The Chair paged through the figures which were noted by the Committee.

153. To consider transfer of funds to ear-marked reserves

The Committee considered a list of suggested reserves which could benefit from the transfer of the remainder of this year's cost centres to enable projects to not lose their allocated budget. It was agreed that many projects had been impacted due to the pandemic this year and work had not progressed in some areas as planned.

The Chair also wished to add to the list with a new cost centre entitled "Community Projects". This would be made up of the remaining funds left in 201/3188 Grant Aid Fund and 101/1171 Contingency. The community projects could be delivered by the Town Council or by a community body.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND the ear-marked reserves on the list and the new cost centre.

154. To consider a recommendation relating to the future ownership of the new Ladygrove North Community Centre

The Committee received a presentation from Ben Yallop from Croudace Homes at the last meeting. The recommendation to full Council was to express interest in taking over the management of the new Community Centre on a freehold basis without the payment of management fees. DTC must be consulted on the interior

layout regarding uni-sex toilets and changing places for adults. DTC would want their legal fees covered by the developer and access to the highway or right of way. It was also agreed that DTC would be interested in ownership of the square garden for outside entertaining space or an agreement for the Community Centre users to have free and unfettered access.

The S106 agreement would result in approx. £60,000 plus (index-linked) of funding to come from the developer to be spent on equipping the new building.

On the terms above, it was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** that the Town Council approve the future ownership of the new Ladygrove north Community Centre.

155. To review the interim report from the internal auditor

This first report had been delayed by the pandemic resulting in two visits during January 2022. The concerns recorded in the physical cash holdings as recorded in the Omega accounts was noted and the Town Clerk was asked to bring together all the information (some of which was not available to the internal auditor at the time of his visit). A full report would be brought to the March meeting of the F&GP Committee.

156. To formally approve the Strategic Risk Register

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers to approve the Strategic Risk Register for 2020-2021. The Town Clerk was asked to bring an up-dated Strategic Risk Register for 2021-2022 to the Committee for the April meeting. There is a generic risk register that is currently being worked on and will be available for review before the next AGAR goes to the auditor.

157. To consider the amendments to the legal documentation for the future running of Ladygrove Community Hall

The revised wording of the variation was considered along with the asset inventory supplied by the solicitor. Cllr V Haval informed the Committee that the inventory was not complete and she had been discussing this list with one of the former trustees.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr V Haval and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND** that the variation is approved but with the proviso that the school and the community group work together to approve a full inventory list including any missing items.

158. To consider the option to rent or purchase a franking machine

After some discussion it was **AGREED** to ask the Town Clerk to investigate the use of PPI envelopes which may be cheaper as it would negate the need for a franking machine. The item would come back to the March Finance meeting.

159. To consider the receipt of any CIL monies

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and **RESOLVED** to request that any CIL monies be paid into the Town Council bank account.

160. To recommend a loan from the Public Works Loans Board

The Committee considered the report from the Town Clerk regarding the process of applying for a loan from the Public Works Loan Board for the building of the new

Community Pavilion at Edmonds Park. Depending on the method of build which was detailed in the notes from the recent meeting of the Pavilion and Splash Park Working Group – the costs would range from £1.5m for an off-site build up to £2.5m for a traditional build.

The Committee wanted to apply for a loan of £1.5M but with the proviso that this sum could be far less if grants were identified to reduce this sum. Our current loans cost the Town Council £122,604 a year and these will remain in place until 2035 – 2037.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove and RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND the following:

1. Approval of the option to appoint a professional company to complete the tender documents for the Community Pavilion on the Contracts Finder website. The cost would be in the region of £2,000.
2. Approval in principle for the Town Clerk to start the Public Works Loan Board application process whilst the tender documents are being prepared. The loan would be for £1.5m for 20 years repayment but this would come back to Council for final approval once more detailed costings are available. The repayment term would be finalised plus a review of the loan required once grant sums are supplied.
3. Approval of a full set of Unaudited Financial Statements from DCK at a cost of £645 + VAT. This would be posted in the finance area of the website to enable residents to review more information about the Town Council finances and in particular the financing of this project.

161. To consider the management of the Fleet Meadow Community Building as a trust and to investigate the formation of a trust for the future new Community Pavilion at Edmonds Park

The Fleet Meadow Community Pavilion is due to come under the management of the Town Council following the difficulties that the trustees have found in getting other residents to become trustees. The Town Clerk has been taking advice on whether the management model of either transfer of the current charity or the creation of a new charitable trust would be possible.

The advantages and disadvantages were detailed in a report and it may be possible to put other Community buildings under the same management model. This would mean that many of the community buildings run by the Town Council would be run as a charitable not for profit body. Charity law is complex and there is more work that needs to be completed.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that:

1. The Town Clerk progresses the future of the Fleet Meadow Community Centre as a charitable trust.
2. The Town Clerk takes the necessary legal advice on the set up of this trust
3. That further investigation is carried out to consider the benefits of a charitable trust for other DTC buildings but not the Civic Hall or the Willowbrook Leisure Centre.

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

The progress report was noted by the Committee. A formal request had been sent to SODC regarding the two CCTV cameras. The effectiveness of the internal audit would be carried out in either the March or April finance meeting.

163. 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.

164. Up-date on the CVA claim for Willowbrook Leisure Centre

The report informed the Committee of the exchanges with the re-structuring team. It had been expected that we would receive resolution in January 2022 but this has so far not been achieved.

165. Recommendation from the P&A Committee

It was proposed by Cllr A Thompson and seconded by Cllr E Hards to approve the recommendation. A letter of thanks to be sent to the staff who have taken over the work of the Outdoor Services Manager until the new member of staff arrives. The work has largely continued without interruption which is due to staff taking on additional duties as part of their everyday workload.

It was also noted that the 1.75% pay award has now been approved by the National Joint Council with the advice to make this award – back-dated to April 2021 – before the end of the financial year.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____