

Didcot Town Council

Finance and General Purposes Committee 29th November 2021 7.30pm 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 P Giesberg (sub for Councillor D Chandran)
Councillor A Thompson
Councillor E Hards (sub for Councillor A Sandiford)

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk

Also present:

Two members of the public via Zoom.

104. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Sandiford (Cllr E Hards subbing) and Cllr D Chandran (Cllr P Giesberg subbing).

105. Declarations of interests

Cllr E Hards declared disclosable pecuniary interest in item 6 – grant applications for Citizens Advice. She left the room while this application was discussed. Cllr A Dearlove and Cllr P Giesberg declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item 6 for the Be Free Young Carers application – they both left the room while this application was discussed.

106. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25th October 2021

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

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

Cllr Haval wanted more information regarding the Ladygrove Community Hall. The Town Clerk was in discussion with the solicitor regarding the future management of this building. The Property & Facilities Manager was engaged with Fleet Meadow Community Hall.

Public participation

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to suspend standing orders to allow for public participation.

Mr John Bright and Joseph Mailler joined the meeting remotely to speak about their application on behalf of Citizen's Advice. Mr Bright spoke of the scale of the service and how it has expanded over the last few years. Currently between 8.5k – 10k of people use the service for advice. In Didcot around 1,150 residents have spoken to Citizens Advice over the last year. The service needs more advisers and the grant from the Town and Parish Councils is vital to fund this activity.

There were no questions so it was RESOLVED to return to standing orders.

Cllr E Hards left the room while the grant application for Citizens Advice was discussed. Cllr A Dearlove and Cllr P Giesberg left the room whilst the grant application for Be Free Young Carers was discussed.

108. To consider three grant applications: Citizens Advice; Be Free Young Carers and Free Christmas Lunch

It was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to award the grant of £10,000 to Citizens Advice.

For the next grant it was noted that there was no one present to support a substantial grant application. It was proposed by Cllr E Hards and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to award the sum of £10,000 as long as it was spent on Didcot residents and not used to expand their services into Oxford.

It was proposed by Cllr P Siggers and seconded by Cllr A Dearlove and RESOLVED to award the grant of £500 to Anna Gattrell for her Christmas Day lunches.

109. To note a Grant Aid report

The report from the King Alfred Drive Community Centre was noted by the Committee.

110. To review the financial reports for October 2021

The accounts and payments for October 2021 were noted by the Committee. Cllr J Moody requested that the transfer of monies to purchase the electrical vehicle is shown as a transfer cost centre.

111. To review and consider the two budget reports for 2022-2023 financial year

The reports were noted and a comment that a repair fund for Fleet Meadow Community Centre would need to be included in the budget. Cllr A Thompson made a general comment that he would like to see figures for both Fleet Meadow and

Willowbrook. Cllr V Haval was advised that a business plan for Willowbrook that has been put together by the consultants and is currently still being finalised.

Cllr V Haval suggested that the Council accrues the appropriate cost centres where a budget has been unspent but is likely to be spent in the coming year – such as the table tennis tables where invoices have been requested but not issued and the sandpit and train project which has been delayed by the pandemic.

Cllr V Haval wanted to see the budget for trees being used including the ones planted in Edmonds Park which commemorated the WW1 and were now missing.

Cllr V Haval commented that a provisional budget for events would be needed if the intention was to hold events next summer. Cllr V Haval also wanted more explanation on the cost centres for the bar.

112. To note the up-dated report on additional CCTV cameras

A report was attached to confirm the prices paid by the other towns in the partnership. The Police have confirmed that they cannot give any further information other than what is available on the website. The Town Clerk will ask how the Town Council can build a case for two more cameras. There is a meeting in December where this could be raised. We would also need to get an idea of cost to put a sum in the budget assuming that SODC will pay for the camera taken down.

113. To consider the report on the provision of storage and toilets for the Football Club

The Outside Services Manager prepared a report of the costs of various containers that could provide a solution for the football club who currently had no toilet or changing facilities at Edmonds Park. The Committee felt that this report should go to the Environment and Climate Committee. The Town Clerk said that the Football Club were considering paying for their own container to go on the concrete plinth if this was agreed by the Council. It was AGREED for a report to go to the next Environment and Climate Committee meeting.

114. To consider changing the Town Council's banking arrangements

A report was presented on the problems with the current banking arrangements. The issues have been exacerbated by the closure of the high street branch and the change of our relationship manager which was not communicated to the Town Clerk. In addition the difficulty of asking Members to sign up and physically go online to approve payment schedules has been made more difficult without the local branch which used to be used for security.

After a careful review of the various banking options available to the Town Council it was proposed by Cllr A Dearlove and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND that the new bank should be Unity Bank subject to terms and conditions.

115. To approve the change of signatory for CCLA investment account

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the change of signatory from the previous Town Clerk to the current Town Clerk.

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

The progress report was noted by the Committee. The concerns over the future running of Ladygrove Community Centre were mentioned along with a request for an up-date for the Ladygrove North building.

117. 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.

118. To note the confidential salary report

The report was noted by the Committee along with the recommended increments for staff which will go to the Personnel & Administration Committee on 6th December 2021.

119. To consider a request for a loan

The extenuating circumstances leading to this request were considered. It was proposed by Cllr A Thompson and seconded by Cllr V Haval and **RESOLVED** to make a loan of £350 which would be re-paid in instalments starting with the December 2021 salary – and continuing until the June 2022 salary after which the loan would be re-paid in full.

The employee would sign an agreement to cover the terms and conditions of this loan.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm

Signed _____ Chair Date _____