

Finance and General Purposes Committee
24th February 2020 at 7.30pm
All Saints Room, Civic Hall, Didcot



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 Sandiford
Councillor M Walsh
Councilor V Haval
Councillor M McNeill
Councillor A Thompson

Officer:

Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk
Councillor A Hudson
Three members of the public
Two PCSO's

130. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs S Hickman (Finance Manager).

131. Declarations of interests

Cllr V Haval stated that her son is a member of the Park/Soll Club. Cllr A Sandiford declared that she is on the Executive Committee of the 15th Didcot Scouts Group on which there is a grant report.

132. Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 27th January 2020

It was proposed by Councillor J. Moody; seconded by Councillor P Siggers and

RESOLVED to agree the minutes held on 27th January 2020 as a correct record.

Cllr P Siggers named a typographical error at minute 123 which should say “month” and not “money”. Cllr V Haval stated that at minute 125 it should be “Sox N Stars”. Cllr P Siggers wanted some extra wording on the section at the end of the minutes regarding the free of charge use for Sustainable Didcot. There was a correction to Cllr McNeill’s name at minute 117.

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

The Chair paged through but there were no questions.

134. To receive grant reports

Grant reports had been received from the Didcot Food Festival; The Grub Hub; 15th Didcot Scouts; Ron Sykes Tea Dances and Didcot TRAIN. The reports were noted.

Standing orders were suspended to allow the grant applicants to speak.

The first presentation was from Brian Proctor of Jigsaw Theatre Group speaking about their next production at Cornerstone – the Sound of Music.

The second presentation was from the Kathryn Goldsby-West representing Didcot Attached Parenting UK. Her group run Didcot Baby Mondays for new mums and young babies.

The third presentation was from Andrew Baker of Play3Give regarding the application to run the Didcot Town Fayre again in the summer. Andy gave a brief overview of the plans for the event this summer.

The speakers answered question and were thanked for coming to speak.

Public Participation

The Chair invited the PCSO’s to speak. They gave a brief overview of the situation regarding the utilisation of PCSO’s in the Didcot area and the challenges to policing in general after years of recruitment freeze. The Councillors asked questions.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

135. To consider the grant applications

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to award the following:

- £1100 to Didcot Baby Mondays (Didcot Attached Parenting UK)
- £344 to Jigsaw Theatre – this being the remainder of the grant budget for this civic year
- £4000 to Play2give to run the Town Fayre – this comes from a dedicated cost centre at 2187

136. To note the financial statements and budgets as at 31st December 2019

The Chair paged through the papers and took questions. Cllr V Haval asked if the fees for the election had been received – cost centre 1268. The Town Clerk confirmed that the May elections had now been paid and she would circulate the costs ward by ward to all Councillors. We had not yet received the invoice for the by-

election in September. Cllr A Thompson queried why we should pay bank charges – cost centre 1152 – it was agreed that we cannot refuse. Cllr V Haval questioned by the cost centre 3150 Plants had not yet been spent. The Committee was informed that the summer bedding was no longer due to be planted and shrubs would be planted once the weather gets warmer and dryer. It was noted that cost centre 1008 shows that “children’s parties” income at £1738 with a budget of just £600. Cllr V Haval queried the cost centre 1005 “Weddings” which was currently at just £564. The Town Clerk did not have the information to be able to provide a definitive answer at this meeting. The Councillors also wanted to know what bookings were for the ceremony and what included the reception. Cllr V Haval wanted to know if there would be projection for the end of year on the figures. Cllr Moody asked if any other costs such as professional fees associated with the Outside Services Depot could also be defined.

137. To review the response from HMRC regarding the VAT status of the Civic Hall

A response has now been received and it was agreed to discuss this in the confidential part of the meeting.

138. To agree a recommendation to send to full Council regarding the new name for the existing Environment Committee and revised terms of reference

The original terms of reference for the current Environment Committee were circulated with the agenda. There was much discussion on the detail but it was AGREED to recommend to change the name of the Standing Committee to **Environment and Climate Committee**. It was also AGREED to amend the terms of reference on item 10 to include: *To take a lead on measures to address the Climate Emergency for the Council and to assist other Committees in dis-charging their responsibilities towards tackling the emergency in all projects.*

NB: The above may be altered via email amongst the F&GP members.

It was AGREED that the new Committee would want to set their own terms of reference which would be approved at the Annual Meeting. It was AGREED that the climate change element should be part of normal business of every Committee.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr P Siggers to follow the Motion submitted to the Full Council meeting of 13th January proposed by Cllr D Macdonald and seconded by Cllr M Khan as the basis for the new standing Committee.

Cllr A Thompson left the meeting.

139. To note the quarterly report from Willowbrook

The report was noted and the success of the venue in holding children’s parties. Numbers wanting to use the gym or sporting activities seems to have dropped.

140. To note the report on the final cost of the Outside Services Depot

This item was deferred to the Environment Committee.

141. To consider the case for Councillor mailboxes

This item has been referred from a recommendation from the Personnel and Administration Committee meeting held on 18th February 2020. It was clarified that the cost would be:

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|---|--------|
| 21 x Exchange Boxes Online (mailboxes) @ £3 | £63.00 |
| 21 x Office 365 Advanced Threat Protection @£1.50 | £31.50 |
| 21 x Exclaimer Cloud @ £0.97 | £20.37 |
| 21 x Office 365 Backup @ £3 | £63.00 |

TOTAL COST: £177.87 per month (£2134.44 per annum)

- * Exclaimer cloud is for the creation of signatures.
- * Advance Threat Protection is an email filtering service that helps protect against unknown malware and viruses.
- * Back Up email is automatic for data availability – Microsoft do not offer this service as part of the package.

There was a view that this would make communications from Didcot Town Council more professional and official. It was also AGREED that staff would only communicate using these official mailboxes.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the cost of individual Councillor mailboxes.

This item will be included on the Full Council agenda on 2nd March 2020.

142. To consider the revised Emergency Plan

The Town Clerk had suggested a few amendments to the current plan and the Chair had noticed a few typos. It was AGREED that we could now include the building at Fleet Meadow as a further venue in an emergency. It was also AGREED that Didcot Town Council would have a final say on the emergency use of its properties and in particular the Civic Hall. The map would also be amended.

143. To consider the recommendation from the Civic Hall Management Committee

Cllr P Siggers introduced the proposed discounts and the wish of the Committee to normalise the discounts to be fair to everyone. It was also confirmed that the hall hire rates would need to increase by around 8%. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr A Sandiford and RESOLVED to approve the recommendations.

144. 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.

145. To review the response from HMRC regarding the VAT status of the Civic Hall

Correspondence was received today to state that the Preferred VAT assessment has calculated that Didcot Town Council owes £5,028. This covers the VAT return for the periods 03/18 and 03/19. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr P

Siggers to accept this assessment and make the payment as soon as possible. The Town Clerk was asked to thank the Council's adviser, Parkinson Partnership.

146. Staff items deferred from the Personnel Committee

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr P Siggers and AGREED to approve the recommendations in the confidential report.

147. To approve the guide to the precept request

The Council tax leaflet draft was before the Committee. It was AGREED that amendments would need to be with the Town Clerk by Friday morning to allow time to get this over to SODC.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____