

Finance and General Purposes Committee
22nd June 2020 at 7.30pm
Meeting held online at zoom



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 P Davies
Councillor V Haval
Councillor M McNeill
Councillor A Sandiford
Councillor A Thompson

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk
Sharon Hickman, Finance Manager

17. Apologies

There were no apologies.

18. Declarations of interests

None declared.

19. To approve the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 20th May 2020

It was proposed by Councillor J. Moody; seconded by Councillor P Siggers and **RESOLVED** to agree the minutes held on 20th May 2020 as a correct record.

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

The Chair paged through for questions – none were raised.

21. To note a grant report from Be Free Young Carers

The Committee noted the report.

22. To review any grant applications

There were no grant applications received in time for this meeting.

23. To note the monthly accounts and payments made in April 2020

The Chair paged through the papers and took questions. The payments to MFG were explained – the one-off equipment costs had been delayed and the delivery had been right at the end of the financial year. The job was not complete as we still had our old computers on our desks in the office. This meant that the equipment costs would make this year's budget look as if it was over-spent. Also the Councillor mail box costs were billed along with the staff mail box costs – whereas this sum should be coming out of contingency because it had not been budgeted for. It was AGREED that the Town Clerk would provide a further break down for the next meeting.

Further information regarding the over-spend or under-spend on cost centres had been sent out with the agenda for this meeting and was discussed in detail.

The Chair queried the monies being paid to the Civic Hall cleaners. It was confirmed that ESL were our old cleaners and Rapidclean were our new cleaners. The Finance Manager would confirm that the £1800 a month covers use of their own equipment. The Chair then queried other cleaning purchases which would be for cleaning materials for other areas of Town Council business such as litter bins; cleaning the Depot and play areas.

24. To appoint a member of F&GP to formally sign off bank reconciliations

The current NALC Model Financial Regulations encourage a regular review, independent sign off and filing of the Council's bank reconciliations. It is considered best practice and is an action in the pending final report from the internal auditor.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to appoint Cllr V Haval to sign off the bank reconciliations every quarter and at the end of the financial year.

25. To review the report on debtors and creditors

A confidential table of action was noted by Councillors. The Finance Manager reported that £1708.88 had been received in June and the outstanding balance was now £10,396.51. The Committee noted the information and requested an up-date at the next meeting.

26. To review the Asset Register 2020-2021

There was a discussion on how these values were arrived at. The Town Clerk said that the values were often checked when the Council insurance was renewed. Our insurance was due to be renewed in November 2020 and the Council would go to tender on this contract. The re-valuations would follow for the new insurance policy. Cllr Davies requested that the Town Clerk review the list of Council-owned land and buildings on the website. The Chair felt that the £3.5m on our insurance was not high enough.

Cllr V Haval leaves the meeting for a short time due to poor connection.

27. To note the half-yearly CCTV performance report

This report was normally tabled as part of a meeting with the other towns on the CCTV scheme – Thame; Henley and Wallingford. However due to Covid – 19 – the meetings were cancelled. The CCTV performance report was noted.

28. To note the investment fact sheet from CCLA

This report was noted and the income of 0.3%.

29. To note the progress report

The Chair wanted a full fire risk assessment carried out at Willowbrook including the tractor shed. The Outside Services Manager was in the process of getting quotes. The football pitches at Ladygrove would cost around £3k to prepare for two junior clubs to play. This would help rest the pitches at Edmonds Park from over-use. The progress report was noted and would be up-dated for every meeting.

30. 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.

Cllr Haval re-joins the meeting.

31. To review the minutes and reports from the last meeting of the CCTV group

The information was discussed and questions were asked. Cllr Davies wanted to know why the reports were confidential I- the Town Clerk had specifically spoken to SODC about this and shared what she knew. Cllr Haval wanted to know if any Councillor could attend the CCTV meetings. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was normally the Town Clerk and the Mayor but any other Councillor could attend. Sites for a possible additional CCTV camera were discussed and the Town Clerk would clarify what we would need to do to make a case for an additional camera and which sites were already covered.

32. To review two major contracts

It was proposed by Cllr P Davies and seconded by Cllr J Moody for a brief to be prepared for the next meeting to tender for servicing of our boilers at the Civic Hall – and for a possible up-grade. The current contractor would need to be informed by September 2020. There was a query on the annual maintenance of the boilers and the bi-yearly maintenance of the toilet extraction fan in the gents at the Civic Hall. A review of the system may be needed and possibly an up-grade but action needs to be taken to control this cost centre.

The second contract would also be reviewed as the next project but this was a rolling contract so not so time sensitive. Some of the work could be done ourselves.

33. To review the VAT payments over the last three financial years

The detailed information had now been received and was discussed. The Committee was confused on the calculations for some items such as the weddings. Cllr Haval has started looking at the information on the HMRC website regarding the partial exemption process. She felt that the spread sheet gave little reference to the

technical terms suggested on the website. Perhaps the spread sheet needs to be set up in a different way. The Finance Manager said that she had limited involvement in how the VAT was calculated – it was the contractor who had the expert knowledge in this matter. The Councillors wanted to know how the 25/75 split was arrived at? What impact would this have if we revised this and made it more realistic? The Town Clerk would send over the letter from our agent regarding his views. Cllr Haval would do some further work and report back to the Committee on what questions to ask; what assumptions have been taken and the methods used. The Town Clerk and the Finance Manager would work with Cllr Haval on this.

17. To review a recommendation from the Personnel and Administration Committee regarding home working

This seemed to be more of a tax allowance rather than a payment- which would be made by the Government if the staff could only do their work at home. The administration of the tax relief was also discussed and it would seem that staff could go on the HMRC portal and see if they were eligible. However the advice from OALC seemed to suggest that the Council would administrate this matter. It was AGREED that more investigation was needed as to who qualifies; how this is administered and whether the staff could individually claim the tax relief through the portal.

Meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____