

Finance and General Purposes Committee
27th July 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 Dearlove (sub for Cllr A Thompson)

Officer: Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk

Also present:

Councillor E Hards (Mayor)

35. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr A Thompson and Sharon Hickman (Finance Manager).

36. Declarations of interests

Cllr A Dearlove declared an interest in item 15 on the agenda.

37. To approve the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 22nd June 2020

It was proposed by Councillor J. Moody; seconded by Councillor P Siggers and **RESOLVED** to agree the minutes held on 22nd June 2020 as a correct record. There was one abstention. Cllr V Haval wished to add a clarification to Minute 25 to state that the outstanding balance was the debtors list of monies owed to the Civic Hall. This was **AGREED**.

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

The Chair paged through for questions. Cllr V Haval queried whether the action to find out where the CCTV cameras were in town had been achieved. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was still outstanding.

Cllr P Davies mentioned a meeting of the Environment Committee in March 2018 concerning additional cameras. The Town Clerk would report back on whether this had been carried out.

On minute 33, the Committee had agreed that Cllr Haval would find out more about the VAT and the partial exemption payments. Discussions with our consultant and the Finance Manager had revealed that the use of VAT notice 706 partial exemption was for the private sector and the use of VAT notice 749 is much more flexible and includes the ability to calculate the VAT based on floor space. Cllr Haval would need further time to scrutinise this notice to see how it was being applied to the Civic Hall.

Cllr Haval also mentioned that the consultant recommends that the Council opt to tax the Civic Hall which means that VAT would be applied to all bookings but would end the need to do the partial exemption calculation. It was AGREED that more work would need to be done to analyse the bookings and invoicing procedure before committing to this. Cllr Haval would follow up with the Finance Manager to see if the end of year adjustment had been made.

Cllr Moody thanked Cllr Haval for her hard work.

39. To note a grant report from Citizens Advice

The Committee noted the report.

40. To review any grant applications

There were no grant applications received in time for this meeting. The Town Clerk was asked to circulate the Grant Policy for scrutiny at the next meeting.

41. To note the monthly accounts and payments made in May 2020

The Chair paged through the papers and took questions. The Chair noted that the Santander account was not yet closed and this remained an outstanding action. It was noted that there was a double entry for the Direct 365 airstream dryers which was a correction. The HMRC VAT fine payment of £190.24 was noted which was likely to be an end of year fine.

It was noted that there was a Traffic Advisory meeting in September which may have a project for the speed survey money queried by Cllr Sandiford. The accounts were noted.

42. To receive an up-date on the debtors and creditors

This report was not available for this meeting.

43. To review the internal auditor's report

The final report from the internal auditor had been circulated with the agenda. The table of actions were considered in detail. The following recommendations were discussed:

R1. Cllr V Haval was now appointed to scrutinise quarterly reconciliations.

R2. Standing Orders had been adopted at the June Full Council meeting.

R3. The Financial Regulations had also been adopted at the June Full Council meeting.

R4. There were some outstanding actions from the 2018-2019 internal audit which required resolution – between July and November 2020.

R5. A stamp for signing off the invoices was now being used.

R6. A payment reference number process was an action for the Finance Manager.

R7. An improved means of filing invoices was an action for the Finance Manager.

R8. A report was being created to link allotment payments with a reference number – this was being addressed by the Allotment Administrator.

R9 and 10. A spread sheet was being set up to record the surplus income when allotments change hands – this was being addressed by the Allotment Administrator.

Recommendations 11- 16 clearly need further improvement relating to the Civic Hall booking forms; the processing of on-line bookings; transparency in the emails concerning understanding of the terms and conditions of hire; the cash float in the till; the procedure which the bar staff follow and who checks the cashing up. Cllr V Haval wanted to know if there was a written procedure which could be reviewed.

R17. The Sales Ledger bad debts was also a concern. The amount of time to resolve the debt indicated that this was taking up too much Officer time and a new system should be considered where the smaller hirers pay up front. The wording of the booking form contract needed to be reviewed and the Civic Hall Management Committee should be involved with this detail.

R18 was noted and a similar review of the VAT in the Petty Cash accounts was noted and would be improved with more robust procedures.

It was agreed that the bar cash in particular was vulnerable and security needed to be tightened up.

44. To review the effectiveness of the internal audit's report

The Town Clerk introduced this report which was a review not only of the effectiveness of the internal auditor's report but also a record of the progress made since the Town Clerk joined this Council a year ago. It was AGREED that the Council was on track but more needed to be done before the interim visit from the internal auditor. The report was noted and would be reviewed in the autumn before the internal auditor's next visit.

45. To further clarify the IT costs for staff and Councillors currently spread between two cost centres

The report from the Town Clerk was noted. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that we vire the sum of £13,415.50 from the contingency cost centre 1171 to the 1160 cost centre to cover the cost of the Councillor mailboxes. This would leave £6584.50 in 1171 for the rest of the financial year. The vote was unanimous.

46. To review the Extra-Ordinary Covid risk assessment relating to staff working at the DTC offices

This item was deferred to the meeting on 24th August 2020 due to the risk assessment being incomplete and not attached with the agenda.

47. To discuss the consultation on the new Code of Conduct

The consultation period runs until the 17th August 2020. It was AGREED that there was not enough time for the Council to respond as a body. It was recommended that individual Councillors respond on a personal basis. The Code of Conduct would be circulated to all members.

48. To note the progress report for items not on the agenda

The progress report was noted and the fire risk assessment for the tractor shed at Willowbrook would be carried out shortly. Cllr Moody wanted the Town Council to commission and have ownership of that risk assessment.

49. 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.

50. To review the draft tender for a contractor to manage the Civic Hall boilers

Councillor A Dearlove declared an interest and did not take part in this item. The draft tender had been prepared by the Town Clerk to cover the work currently being done on the boilers. The Chair wanted the brief to cover all the equipment that would be covered by the current contractor such as the heating system and other key equipment. It was AGREED to defer this item and review the detail at the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____