

Finance and General Purposes Committee
22nd February 2021 7.30pm
Meeting held online at zoom



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

Also present:

Councillor M Khan (part) and one member of the public.

151. Apologies

There were no apologies as everyone was present.

152. Declarations of interests

None declared.

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

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers to approve the minutes as an accurate record with the following amendments:

Cllr V Haval wished to clarify at minute 137 that burials could still take place in the churchyard but there were no new graves would be created in the proposed "closed" section.

Cllr V Haval wished to amend minute 143 to “account” for VAT not “pay for it”.
Cllr A Sandiford wish to amend minute 142 to give a capital M to “Muslim”.

There were no questions.

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

There were no further questions or comments.

155. To note a grant report from Didcot Foodbank

The report was circulated with the agenda and noted by the Councillors.

Cllr A Thompson entered the meeting.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and AGREED to suspend Standing Orders to allow for public participation.

Margaret Davies of the Didcot Volunteer Drivers group spoke about the work they do and how busy they have been over the last year. They have kept open every day during the pandemic and have helped with picking up prescriptions and shopping as well as transporting patients to their appointments. They have over five hundred clients on their books.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

156. To consider a grant aid application

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to award a grant of £1669.25 to Didcot Volunteer Drivers.

157. To review the monthly accounts for December 2020 and January 2021.

The Chair paged through the accounts for comments and the detail was noted. The Clerk’s report detailed the various items of note for the two months. Income on cemeteries and allotments slightly above budget indicates received more income. Edmonds Park maintenance was higher due to the new security gate to stop unwanted visitors in the park. There was also expenditure due on recruitment.

Cllr P Davies queried why we did not just deduct outstanding debts but this would not be an easy way to show our accounts within the software package. Cllr V Haval queried who was chasing the overdue debts – the Town Clerk confirmed that this was done along with DCK when time allows but there was no formal procedure due to staff shortage.

Cllr J Moody had a query relating to a transaction for black ties.

Cllr V Haval queried the annual grant payment to Ladygrove Community Centre - the Town Clerk advised that this will happen in the next week or two.

The Town Clerk would clarify some aged debts that have arisen in December 2020.

Cllr M Khan joins the meeting.

158. To note the sums written off – Willowbrook and the recommendations from the Civic Hall Management Committee

The smaller amounts had already been discussed at a previous meeting. Due to the Council accepting the CVA proposal for the Willowbrook building at their Extra Ordinary meeting in December 2020 the sum due is £48,000 which is to be formally written off.

Cllr V Haval said that the staff need to ensure that we have complete contact details to ensure we do not have bad debts. The Chair confirmed that all new bookings will have to pay upfront for the use of the facilities – payment on booking. However, bigger entities will be on account and will be invoiced periodically.

Cllr P Davies pointed out that there was an 80p discrepancy on one of the accounts it was noted that this was an administrative error.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED that the list is approved.

159. The note the cost of the Ladygrove Lakes bespoke aeration and the viring of several cost centres to pay for the scheme.

The pump is essential for the lakes and the Outdoor Services Manager and Town Clerk suggested paying for the aeration until in instalments of £6000.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Thompson and RESOLVED to purchase the aerator and pay for it in instalments.

160. To review the draft consultation papers for the Willowbrook building

Various comments were made to the consultation questions and suggestions to improve the document. Cllr V Haval queried the use of the external changing rooms. It was noted that toilets have not been maintained and no-one is taking responsibility for them.

Cllr V Haval wished to amend point 4 to read: “Are there any activities which you feel the building would also be suited” rather than “better”. She felt that the questionnaire needed to give residents a chance to say what they liked about visiting and using Willowbrook. In point five she felt that asking people to number in importance an online consultation may not produce the results we want – she advised that we should be mindful of the responses.

Cllr P Davies requested brackets for people to tick.

Cllr A Sandiford was concerned about getting inaccurate results. She suggested changing the wording to “What do you think the most important activity for the community at large?” She also said that how to return is repetitive and not identical. The Town Clerk would refine the consultation with these points and look to identify age demographics by asking if they are using the facility as a family.

It was agreed to promote the consultation at the Annual Town Meeting on 22nd March 2021 and via social media. The final version would be shared with Councillors on email prior to publication.

161. To consider the draft letter concerning the request for a Muslim burial ground

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the letter and for the Town Clerk to proceed to send the letter out.

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

Cllr J Moody requested that the Outdoor Services Manager gets some external advice on work that may be needed on the football pitches on Ladygrove park to include costings, timescale etc.

The Fleet Meadow Community Centre would be asked if it could be used as an Emergency Reception Centre to complete the Emergency Plan. An alternative would be using Willowbrook as an Emergency Reception Centre since the Council have the keys. Cllr J Moody agreed this could be an alternative solution.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the improvements to the broadband would be done during March 2021.

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. To review the tender documents for the path at Stubbings land and the recommendation from the Outside Services Manager

The project had been advertised on the Contracts Finder website and good number of responses have been received. The Town Clerk and the Outdoor Services Manager opened the tenders and recorded the details of each application. A contractor was chosen the work will commence during March and April 2021.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the work to be carried out.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

Signed _____ Chairman Date _____