

**Finance and General Purposes Committee**  
29<sup>th</sup> March 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 Macdonald (sub for Cllr A Sandiford)

**Officer:** Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk  
Mrs T Tye (Minutes)

**Also present:**

Cllr E Hards (Mayor), Stephanie Nutt and one member of the public.

**165. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Sandiford (Cllr A Macdonald subbing) and Cllr A Thompson.

**166. Declarations of interests**

None declared.

**167. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021**

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

Cllr V Haval wished to amend minute 160 paragraph to Cllr P Davies regarding the external changing rooms at Willowbrook. In the second paragraph she wished to

change the word “results” to “engagement” to read: “...asking people to number in importance an online consultation may not produce the engagement we want ...”

**168. Questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item**

Cllr V Havel requested an up-date on the consultation for Willowbrook. The Town Clerk advised receipt of over 200 responses so far. Early indications seem to be that residents want the building to re-open as a gym and leisure centre in a similar capacity. The consultation will be publicised again over Easter and responses collated for the next 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.

Stephanie Nuth of Laser Energy was attending the meeting to answer questions on the energy options covered in the confidential part of the meeting. Both this Committee and the Civic Hall Management Committee had been looking at quotes for gas and electric for the Civic Hall. Cllr J Moody asked about the Feed in Tariff (FiT). It was confirmed that all suppliers must include the FiT in their unit rates but SSE show the rate separately in their electricity bills. The FiT is a Government scheme designed to promote renewable and low carbon electricity generation.

The FiT for solar energy would be a separate contract with a separate meter which would calculate the amount of kilowatt hours put onto the grid. The contract would state the amount the customer would be paid for the generation of solar energy. The terms of the contract would be fixed for twenty years which is the life of the solar panels. The advantage of this arrangement is that the customers would know exactly how much they would receive. It would be possible to vary the length of the contract but generally the fixed tariff is for the life of the solar panels.

The set-up of the scheme was discussed and it was now possible to have the option of using the excess energy generated on site rather than exporting all the excess to the grid. The capital cost of the scheme would be a contract between the customer and the supplier. The purchase of excess electricity and the FiT would be a separate contract between the customer and the energy provider. It was noted however that there are deals where the provider fits the solar panels but the customer is then tied into their energy scheme.

Laser energy is able to provide a range of services to help the Council plan their journey to becoming carbon neutral. A projection of costs and timings can be provided along with assistance with grants and RIGA certification that all energy provided is 100% renewable. These services would be chargeable.

Cllr Moody thanked Stephanie for attending the meeting.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

**169. To note a three grant reports from Home-start, Be Free Young Carers and Didcot Library**

The reports were circulated with the agenda and noted by the Councillors.

**170. To review the accounts and payments for February 2021.**

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the accounts and payments for February 2021. The Chair paged through the accounts for comments.

Cllr V Haval queried cost centre 9056 – Cllr J Moody confirmed that several cost centres had been ear-marked for the aerator project at the Ladygrove Lakes which is being paid in instalments. The Town Clerk confirmed that one instalment of £6000 has already been paid.

The Town Clerk confirmed that PCN stands for Primary Care Network (NHS).

### **171. To note the request for transferring unspent cost centres to ear-marked reserves**

The Environment and Climate Committee requested following excess funds to be transferred to ear-marked reserves:

3150 Plants	£3,464
To allow for wider variety of planting material the year – spring into summer	
3158 Trees	£6,989 – for emergency works and re-planting
3162 Football pitches	£4,000 – to repair and give better drainage
32520 Cemetery improvements	- £2,000
32521 Ladygrove Park	£2,000 – ongoing tree works for next winter

NB £200,000 Splashpark will roll over as an ear-marked reserve and the Stubbings Land pathway will be completed in this financial year.

In addition, Cllr J Moody proposed to move the following unspent cost centres into a new ear-marked reserve called “Groundskeeping Equipment”:

3145 Machinery costs	£3,129
1108 Training and Conference	£5,855
1112 Utilities Admin Offices	£9,373
1171 Contingency	£6,535
1243 PCSO Funding	£18,500
1235 Civic Functions	£1,837
1944 Christmas lights	£5,809
3104 Agency staff	£2,200
3103 Event staff	£1,000
3149 Bark Top-up	£3,000
3162 Football pitch maintenance	£4,000
4024 Event costs	£8,956
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£70,194</b>

The Chair answered questions on the new ear-marked reserve detailed above. It was confirmed that the reserve would be used to equip the outside team with environmentally friendly tools which are more expensive than petrol power.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to accept these transfers. The vote was five in favour; Cllr V Haval abstained.

**172. To consider the advantages of Green Tech membership**

The advantage of joining Green Tech membership was discussed however it was felt that at this time it would not be beneficial for Didcot Town Council to become a member. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr A Macdonald AND RESOLVED not to progress membership of this body.

**173. To review the amended Emergency Plan**

It was AGREED to add Fleet Meadow Community Centre to the plan with a short description and a map showing its location. Road names would also be added. Private mobile numbers could be made available to the police and emergency planners to allow for key personnel to be contacted at any time.

It was also AGREED that Willowbrook Leisure Centre should be added even though the building is currently not in use. This was a long term plan and the building should be utilised in an emergency.

The amendments would be made to the plan.

**174. To note the website and social media review**

The Committee felt that the report was useful and informative. The staff member was congratulated on her efforts. It was noted that some improvements may have cost implications. Cllr V Haval wanted to ensure that there was clarity between online petitions being run by third parties and the Council running a petition themselves.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and AGREED that a timetable should be produced to detail how long the improvements would take along with costings for consideration by this Committee and the new Property and Facilities Committee.

**175. Questions on the re-opening of the Willowbrook Leisure Centre**

Cllr P Davies posed four questions to the Committee. The first three had been asked by a resident in January and he had not received an answer. The last one was from Cllr Davies in a bid to keep up with the progress.

*Q1. Could DTC postpone and/or potentially re-allocate the funding of planned projects to the re-opening of Willowbrook?*

A. It is not funding that is delaying the opening of Willowbrook. There are essential repairs to the roof along with general decoration and maintenance works that are in progress.

*Q2. Have DTC approached SODC for some of the £53 million funding for community projects that SODC communicated in December?*

A. SODC not been approached yet as we only got the keys for Willowbrook on 19th December. The Town Clerk confirmed that there should be some S106 funding which could be used for improvements.

*Q3. Have DTC sought lottery funding?*

A. When the staffing situation improves we may have the capacity to apply for other grants however lottery funding has its own criteria and work would need to be done to see whether Willowbrook is an appropriate project.

Q4. *What is the current status of the remedial works?*

A: Repairs to the roof will be carried out in April. The Town Clerk has one quote for decoration and is seeking more. We also have one quote for replacement of some of the flooring and carpets which are worn. This quote has been itemised so we can choose which parts of the building to cover. The fire risk assessment was carried out in November and shared with the Finance Committee. The Town Clerk is working through the urgent actions and now has a constructive relationship with the Football Club regarding the safety of the tractor shed.

Cllr P Davis expressed his concern that the clubs and organisations in the community had no where to meet.

**176. To note the progress report on items not on this agenda**

Cllr V Havel stated that the residents might get restless over how long the process is taking on the re-opening of Willowbrook. She expressed worry about timescales and she felt that the things were moving too slowly.

The Chair reminded the Committee that it was not the fault of the Town Council that the lease holder left the building with no notice. The future of Willowbrook is a substantial commercial arrangement. The Town Clerk was asked to include the Willowbrook building on the progress report.

**177. 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.

**178. To review the energy tariff recommendations from the Civic Hall Management Committee**

The Town Clerk up-dated the Committee as to how the Civic Hall became available for a new contract. Now that the Civic Hall was no longer a separate entity but part of the Town Council this renders the existing contracts void.

The Committee considered the table of different quotes for the supply of gas and electricity for the Civic Hall. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Davies and **RESOLVED** to appoint Laser Energy as the new broker and the Corona Energy as the new supplier. The Committee agreed to renew the contract for twenty-four months for both gas and electric. This would give the Council time to fully explore the option of solar energy.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chairman      Date \_\_\_\_\_