

**Finance and General Purposes Committee**  
26<sup>th</sup> April 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 A Sandiford  
Councillor V Haval  
Councillor M McNeill  
Councillor A Thompson

**Officer:** Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk

**Also present:**

Cllr E Hards (Mayor) and two members of the public.

**179. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**180. Declarations of interests**

None declared.

**181. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

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

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

Cllr P Davies asked for an up-date on Willowbrook. The Town Clerk spoke to confirm the current work being carried out to get the building ready to operate as a polling station. Cllr V Haval deferred her questions regarding Willowbrook to the agenda item.

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

Christine Wallace of Didcot Events spoke to provide additional information on the grant application for the Didcot Food Festival. She spoke of the history of the event which started in 2016 and the challenges that is facing the Food Festival following the pandemic. There has been a good up-take on stalls and the grant would be used to build a demo kitchen in the Ladygrove Room which can be taken apart and stored every year. She spoke of the chefs due to take part and the other celebrities that will be involved.

The Councillors then asked questions regarding the grant application.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

### **183. To review the grant application**

There was concern over the commercial element of the event and in particular paying the appearance fees of the chefs using grant aid. It was a paid ticket event and any profits would go into the Christmas Street fair event in Didcot.

It was noted that the chef's fees were a grey area but not an on-going cost such as a salary would be. The Town Clerk said that it would be a correct use of grant money to pay for equipment such as the kitchen. Cllr V Haval felt that the Food Festival would be a good event for the town and should be supported.

There followed a discussion on removing the chef's fees from the grant application and awarding the remainder.

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Davies to further suspend standing orders to allow Christine Wallace to clarify.

It was clarified that following costs:

Kitchen	£1,000
Chef's fees	£1,100
Electrics	£800
Incidentals	£300
TOTAL	£3,200

Standing Orders were reinstated.

It was proposed by Cllr P Davies and seconded by Cllr V Haval to award £2,100 to the Food Festival to pay for the kitchen, electrics and incidentals. The Vote was: IN FAVOUR = 2; AGAINST = 4; ABSENTION = 1. There were no further proposals and the grant application was rejected.

### **184. To review the accounts and payments for March 2021.**

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to note the accounts and payments for March 2021. The Chair paged through the accounts but there were no questions.

**185. To note the Town Council CIL share and where the monies should go**

The CIL monies were noted and would be paid into the Town Council's bank account.

**186. To consider a replacement computer for the Events and Communications Officer**

This colleague was operating on an old laptop which was not part of the new consignment delivered to other staff a year ago. By the nature of her job, it was requested that the Officer has a new laptop for improved performance. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to approve the quotation for the new laptop. The cost was £1,099.57 + vat.

**187. To review the response to the consultation on the future of Willowbrook**

The Town Clerk gave a brief overview of the consultation results which confirmed that sport and exercise was the most popular purpose for the building. Cllr J Moody summed up that there seemed to be no appetite to re-purpose the building.

Cllr V Haval stated the following:

*“As the intention is to share the consultation information with those invited to tender, I think that we need to expand the “most popular reasons to visit Willowbrook” list to indicate the age range of the groups.*

- *Sports/Exercise class: A variety of ages ie*
- *Zumba: adults,*
- *Gymnastics: children*
- *Gym: Adults*
- *Children's Parties: Generally primary school age*
- *Soft Play: Toddlers and pre-school age*
- *Pickleball and short tennis: over 60's*

*The report says that in total 407 responses were received. However 514 responses were received in answer to the question “how often did you use the centre?” It was suggested at the committee meeting that people were giving more than one answer to the question. The questions doesn't seem to lend itself to multiple answers so I think these numbers need to be re-visited.*

*In the “other” column, 248 responses were recorded. A pie chart is then found below breaking this down to 44 responding “few times a year or infrequently” and 49 responding “3-5 times a week”.*

*It's not clear if this represents 44 and 49 respondents or 44% and 49% of “Other” respondents. If it is a percentage the numbers on the pie chart do not add up to 100. I don't think that we should be including rather negative statements such as “a large number of respondents were unable to commit to regular use of the centre but would use the centre for a few times a year or infrequently”, if we are unable to accurately quantify the number.*

*I am pleased to hear that Councillors will receive detail of the expressions of interest (confidentially) and look forward to seeing these.”*

Cllr P Davies wanted more guidance on the TUPE process. The Town Clerk said that it was a complex and specialist area which was difficult to summarise and give accurate information. She reminded the Committee of the advice from the solicitor and said that there was no clear time when TUPE would not apply. The advice of one consultant was that the risk of TUPE was heightened due to the effect of the pandemic and it would apply for a very long time. There could even be a risk of staff employed at the other site which continues to trade. She advised extreme caution.

Cllr A Thompson wanted to know whether it would be possible to let out the whole building at some stage.

The Chair reminded the Committee that the tender process would take quite a few weeks and months from the start of the tender papers. He endorsed the comments of the Town Clerk on the risks of TUPE.

**188. To consider the quotes for assistance with procurement of tenders for Willowbrook**

This was still being worked on by the Town Clerk.

**189. To approve a budget for two staff mobile phones**

The report had requested a budget of £800 each for the Property and Facilities Manager and the Outside Services Manager (who was currently using his personal phone). The £800 was to cover the cost of the phone and a twenty-four month tariff. The Committee felt that this was too high. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody and seconded by Cllr P Davies and RESOLVED to allow a budget of £400 per employee for the phone and twenty-four month tariff.

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

The Progress Report was noted. Cllr A Thompson was concerned that the cost of the Ladygrove football pitches will be too expensive. The Outside Services Manager was talking to a consultant on this. Cllr V Haval wanted an up-date on the CCTV cameras.

**191. 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.

**192. To consider a letter received on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

The Town Clerk was asked to write to decline the offer to build on our allotment land.

**193. To consider the quotes for HR support – referred by the Personnel and Administration Committee**

The previous three year contract had come to an end and the Personnel and Administration Committee did not wish to renew. The remaining proposals were considered for HR Support for the Town Council. It was proposed by Cllr P Davies and seconded by Cllr P Siggers to appoint South East Employers on an Associate

Membership at a cost of £349 plus VAT per annum on a trial basis for one year. This would be for HR support only and the H&S element would be separately considered.

Meeting closed at 8.53pm

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