

## Finance and General Purposes Committee

27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at 7.30pm

All Saints Room, Civic Hall, Didcot



## 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 A Sandiford**  
**Councillor M Walsh**  
**Councilor V Haval**  
**Councillor M McNeill**  
**Councillor A Thompson**

### Officer:

Mrs J Wheeler, Town Clerk  
Councillor P Davies

### 111. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs S Hickman (Finance Manager).

### 112. Declarations of interests

Cllr P Siggers; Cllr M McNeil and Cllr A Sandiford declared a personal interest as members of the Park/Soll Club at Willowbrook.

### 113. Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019

It was proposed by Councillor J. Moody; seconded by Councillor P Siggers and

**RESOLVED** to agree the minutes held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019 as a correct record.

There were corrections to Cllr McNeill's name and minute 106 to include "Club" after Park and to amend the following: "The report was noted and Park Club would be asked to include the words, "Didcot Town Council" under our crest on all future Club branding. "

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

The Chair paged through but there were no questions.

Standing orders were suspended to allow the grant applicants to speak.

The first presentation was from Martin Gillett from the Oxfordshire Play Association representing the Didcot/Vauxhall Barracks Play and Activity Day 2020.

The second presentation was from the Bernadine Soul School of Dance who had been selected to represent England in the Dance World Cup in June in Rome.

The speakers were thanked for coming to speak.

#### **Public Participation**

Cllr P Davies asked if he could speak under Standing Order 95 but the Chair refused as the Full Council meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 had deferred an agenda item to the Finance Committee. Cllr P Davies spoke on several items including reserves and operating costs. He felt that the Council was holding too much in their reserves.

He also spoke on the climate emergency item which had been deferred to the Finance Committee – he felt that any decision should be referred back to Council.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

It was AGREED to bring item 11 forward on the agenda.

#### **115. To consider the creation of a Climate Change Committee or the re-positioning of a new Environment and Climate Committee**

The debate saw several concerns over the practicalities of having a new standing Committee:

- \* The capacity of Councillors to commit to another cycle of meetings.
- \* The availability of meeting rooms with the Civic Hall becoming busier than ever.
- \* The cost and availability of Officer time.
- \* The practical cost of servicing another standing committee in terms of issuing agendas; minutes; postage and stationery.

The consensus was that climate change should be embedded across all current standing committees; those who come to speak to the Committees should be limited to five minutes each to allow for as much working committee time as possible. Specific projects can be tackled by task and finish working groups alongside the Committee meetings to speed up the work.

It was AGREED to work up a statement to reflect these thoughts via email for approval at the next Finance Committee meeting and to forward a recommendation to the next Full Council meeting in March.

#### **116. To receive three grant reports from previous recipients**

The reports were noted. The Town Clerk would find out which grant recipients have not given the Town Council a report on how they have spent the money.

**117. To consider the grant applications**

The Chair noted that we had £2,455 available in this financial year. It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr P Siggers and RESOLVED to give £500 to Oxford Play.

It was proposed by Cllr A Sandiford; seconded by Cllr M MacNeill and RESOLVED to give £500 to the Bernadine Soul Dance School for the expenses of competing at the Dance World Cup.

**118. To note the financial statements and budgets as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

The Committee **NOTED** the income and expenditure as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019. It was confirmed to Cllr V Haval that cost centre 1268 was still awaiting the cost of the September by-election.

**119. To review the response from HMRC regarding the VAT status of the Civic Hall**

The Town Clerk confirmed that we were still awaiting confirmation of the sums owed.

**120. To review the applications for a grant to run the Town Fayre 2020**

It was AGREED that Play to Give had applied to run the Town Fayre on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020. The grant would be considered at the next meeting.

**121. To review the two quotes for improving the wifi connectivity at the Civic Hall**

The Committee considered the two quotes. Company A had given less information. Company B had given more detail and diagrams of where the access points would be located to improve connectivity. The Chair wanted clarification of the use of the cat 6 cabling as we already have existing cabling – and if they need to replace cabling will they dispose of the existing. It was also noted that an application would be made for this project to be paid for using S106.

It was proposed by Cllr A Thompson; seconded by Cllr P Siggers to approve quote B in principle pending clarification of the cabling. It was noted that once this was done the Civic Hall would have full wifi coverage and a guest network for conferences and visitors.

**122. To approve or amend the meeting dates for 2020-2021 civic year**

It was AGREED that the Annual meeting would be on the 6<sup>th</sup> May; the Civic Hall Management Committee would remain on 27<sup>th</sup> May. The F&GP Committee would move to 22<sup>nd</sup> June and Full Council will move to 29<sup>th</sup> June to allow time for the Annual Return to be signed off, ratified and sent to the auditors. It was AGREED to keep the December F&GP Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020. These recommendations would be sent back to Full Council in March.

Cllr A Thompson suggested considering an earlier start for the meetings at 7.00pm.

**123. To note the interim report from the internal auditor**

The report was noted. The auditor will next visit at the beginning of March and the Chair invited the Committee to put forward any questions for the next visit. The recommendations from the report were discussed and it was agreed that if we chose not to follow any – we needed to note the reasons why. The procedures concerning

the bar floats needed to be reviewed – in particular the counting of the money before the till opens and at the end of the evening. Bank reconciliations were also discussed and the practice of a Councillor checking these every month was agreed.

**124. To consider the renewal of the PCSO for 2020-2021**

The view of the Committee was that no reports had been forthcoming on what the PCSO service gave to Didcot. The renewal was £18,497. Cllr Sandiford said that the PC's who came to Traffic Advisory Group stated that the three main duties in Didcot was dealing with drug; knife and domestic violence. It was proposed by Cllr M Walsh; seconded by Cllr P Siggers not to renew the agreement but to invite the Police to attend the meeting in February. A recommendation could then be put forward to the March Full Council meeting.

**125. To receive an up-date from the Willowbrook vacant space consultation**

Cllr V Haval stated that there was interest from several groups including Didcot Foodbank; a group called Socks and Stars; 12<sup>th</sup> Didcot Scout Group and the Willowbrook Leisure Centre (Soll/Park Club). Not all of the groups had seen the space and there was more follow-up work and discussions to be had before the Working Group could put forward a recommendation to F&GP. Cllr Haval was interested to see how the competition of companies like Pure Gym had impacted on the business plan of Park Club. Costs were not discussed at this stage and Cllr Haval would bring a further report to the Finance Committee once the follow-up work had been completed.

**126. To consider a request for the Town Clerk to attend the SLCC Practitioners Conference**

It was proposed by Cllr J Moody; seconded by Cllr A Thompson for the Town Clerk to attend and also the Finance Manager if she was available. Notes would be brought from the sessions for Officers and the Councillors to review.

**127. 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.

**128. To note a letter from Soll/Park Leisure**

It was AGREED to ask our solicitor to draft a letter to the tenant regarding the terms and conditions of the lease.

**129. To consider the heads of terms for a temporary home from TRAIN**

The draft heads of terms were discussed and AGREED with an amendment to the utilities charge from £250 to £300 per month. It is difficult to put an exact price on the utilities because the gas and electric are currently shared with the leisure centre. The Clerk would get the solicitor to draw up the paper work from the heads of terms. It was also noted that the space must be clarified with a lockable screen in place that is not a part of the new leased area.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

Sustainable Didcot have been working with the Low Carbon Hub and Oxford Brookes University. They are in the process of applying for a grant of £5,000 to do a Didcot wide energy audit. They have requested support from Didcot Town Council in terms of making the Civic Hall available free of charge for a final public meeting in February to present the results of a survey and decide on follow-up actions. The project would run from April 2020 – April 2021.

It was AGREED to make the Civic Hall available at a mutually convenient time.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm.

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