

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

**Held on Monday 10 November 2015
at 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

Present

Councillor: Cllr C K Woodward (Chairman)

Councillors: H W Chirgwin C Holliday
D S Enright D Temple

Non-Committee Members: C Brown (sub for Dr S E Bartington)
Mrs B J Churchill (sub for Mrs J M Doughty)

Officers: Town Clerk Democratic Services Officer
RFO Events and Communications Officer
Works and Contracts Supervisor

Also present: 1 member of the public

C534 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs DR S E Bartington, Mrs J M Doughty and J S King.

C535 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

C536 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman
- b) there were no matters arising from the Minutes.

C537 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The member of the public present did not wish to speak.

C538 FINANCIAL REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer. A member noted that the Committee was under budget currently and as there was no budget for dog bins and benches, he wondered if some of the underspend could be put into a dog bin/bench budget.

The Responsible Financial Officer explained that although there appeared to be underspends at the moment, these would be spent during the remaining part of the year. However, she informed the Committee that she had been in dialogue with the District Council about dog and waste bins, who had said that any extra required would have to be paid for by the Town Council, in addition to paying the revenue costs for emptying them. WODC also informed her that it would have to give permission for the siting of any new bins.

Members were keen to see the figures for the capital and revenue costs associated with this and the Responsible Financial Officer promised to obtain these. A member wondered if community groups or businesses might fund some bins, although there were still revenue costs to consider.

A member expressed concern about the flood lighting at the church as it kept breaking down. The Works and Contracts Supervisor said that this had now been mended and he thought it would not fail again for some time. The Chairman suggested that a small budget of £100 should be set aside.

Another member said that he supported installing more benches but that the Council needed to be mindful of the costs for upkeep. He felt there should be a budget for this and also that benches should be on the inspection plan. The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Council had recently introduced a memorial bench policy whereby a plaque was added to an existing bench with a record made in a memorial book in the Town Hall.

The Town Clerk highlighted the provision of CCTV in the town. Currently the Council paid £10,000 per annum towards this and the Town Council had strongly supported it staying a local service. This could mean additional charges. The Town Clerk also informed the Committee that winter gritting was a service that OCC was being keen to devolve to Parish and Town Councils. As part of the Oxfordshire Together programme OCC may be looking to devolve other services also.

A member said that he would like to see a refurbishment of bus shelters, possibly with another agency involved. It would be good to have a budget for this. Another member wondered if bus shelter advertising could be a way forward as it had in Oxford. The Town Clerk explained that the District Council had previously not allowed this in the town centre as it was a conservation area and also the advertising companies were only interested in the stops in the town centre.

The Chairman asked that members e-mail the Responsible Financial Officer with any other budget ideas before the end of the week.

The Responsible Financial Officer asked if members would like a list of all the ideas for the budget in order that it could be reviewed from time to time to keep track of ideas. Members thought this was an excellent idea.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted

- 2) that waste and dog bins, bus shelters, church flood lighting and benches be put forward for the forthcoming year's budget.

C539 FLORAL DISPLAYS AND TREE PLANTING

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager. A member noted the request from a Church Green resident to remove the flower beds. As the Facilities Manager had changed the planting scheme the Member suggested they remain for at least another 12 months. Another member pointed out that the beds were supposed to be a kind of living war memorial and he too would like to see how the beds settled in. The Committee asked for a reply to be sent to the resident along those lines. Another member commented that the beds stopped cars from completely parking on the grass.

The Town Clerk informed members that the hanging baskets were to be removed from the Corn Exchange. Members felt it would look bare and that as a Town Council building they should remain, the total cost being £190.

Members were asked to consider a second planting option for the flower bed at the Langdale Hall. The Town Clerk explained that the bed was used to celebrate local anniversaries primarily of local organisations in the town. The Chairman asked for a press release to be issued regarding this.

A member explained that the colours chosen for the year were red, white and blue to reflect the Queen's 90th Birthday and orange had been chosen for outside the Corn Exchange. Members had been circulated with pictures of the plants chosen.

Members liked the idea put forward to have a Mayoral Tree to be planted annually, but wanted to see them spread throughout the wards.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the memorial beds on Church Green should remain for at least another year;
- 3) that the plant choices as presented be agreed, including the floral display outside the Corn Exchange;
- 4) that the bed at Langdale Hall is offered to local groups to celebrate a special occasion such as an anniversary of their existence and a press release issued to this effect.

C540 STREET FURNITURE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager, in which residents had asked for a litter bin and a bench in areas around Cogges. A member pointed out that a bench at the Oxlease Park would be included in the Meadow Park project.

Members asked for these items to be put into the forthcoming budget.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the correspondence be noted;
2. that provision for a bench and a refuse bin in the requested locations be put into the budget for the forthcoming year.

C541 WITNEY FEAST – RENEWAL OF AGREEMENT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the renewal of the Witney Feast agreement be renewed for a period of three years commencing 2016, with an annual rent of £7,700.

C542 WITNEY CARNIVAL – REQUEST FOR GRANT

The Committee considered the e-mail correspondence from the Chair of the Witney Carnival 2016 as circulated with the agenda. He requested that the Town Council give consideration to the level of cash grant to be awarded in 2016 as well as the Council's support in kind via free use of the Leys Recreation Ground again and use of equipment/staff etc.

The Town Clerk highlighted the situation which occurred earlier in the year surrounding insurance and the use of a Council vehicle on the day of the Carnival to deliver road barriers. To overcome this situation arising again the Communications Officer suggested that the Council could have a float at the carnival which could then double as the driver and vehicle to collect road signs afterwards. Members liked this idea.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the correspondence be noted;
2. that the Council awards a cash grant of £800 towards Witney Carnival 2016 and that the logistics of the additional requests be delegated to Officers as it was an operational matter.

C543 COMMUNICATIONS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer. Members were impressed with the newsletter and also the new website.

The Chairman wanted to see a Communications Steering Party introduced, to build bridges with website users. This should include people from outside bodies.

It was acknowledged that the website was still work in progress but the structure was there to build on.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council considers the formation of a ‘Communications Steering Party’ at the meeting on 25 November 2015.

C544 UPDATE ON CIVIC EVENTS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer. There was a discussion on catering at Civic Events and the lack of budget to support outside caterers. It was suggested that most events should just have drinks and nibbles and not a full buffet – the annual Civic Reception being the exception.

A member asked about Commonwealth Day and asked if we could link with the District Council to celebrate. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council already flew a flag on Commonwealth Day and the Pageant Master had asked for schools to be included next year. The Communications and Events Officer noted that arrangements for this would need to start soon.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their work on Remembrance Sunday. He also thanked the ATC for their ideas to fundraise to replace the memorial tree that had been vandalised.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

C545 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY

The Chairman gave a verbal update on the Christmas Lights Working Party that had been held earlier that evening. There would be no animals at the advent fayre this year, although it was hoped that they would return for next year. The list of Councillors helping out had been circulated and would be e-mailed round.

There had been an appeal for volunteers to help at the Switch On event.

The Christmas Market should be visiting Witney, subject to the appropriate permissions being sought from the District Council Licensing Department.

RECOMMENDED: that the verbal report from the meeting held earlier in the evening be noted and recommendations contained there in agreed.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm.

Chairman

