

**POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Held on Monday 23 March 2015**

**At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor: Mrs J C Baker (Chairman)

Councillors:	C Holliday	T J Morris
	A K Beames	J S King
	R F N Curry	H Eaglestone (Sub)
	C K Woodward (Sub)	

Officers:	Town Clerk	RFO
	DSO	Facilities Manager

**F123 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for their absence was received from Councillors Mrs M J C Curry and A D Harvey

**F124 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

**F125 MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- b) There were no matters arising from the minutes.

**F126 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present for this item.

**F127 PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and considered the schedule of the payments of accounts as circulated prior to the meeting.

A Member queried the payment of £10,000 to Madley Park Hall Trust which stated it was the final grant. He commented that this was not correct as the council agreed to support the Trust for 3 years, the remaining grant of £5,000 was left to draw down as and when required. Another Member queried the process of signing off the invoices payable to Knowles & Son in respect of the Corn Exchange. The Town Clerk confirmed that Ridge, who were acting in the Council's interests, valued the work carried out and agreed this with Knowles QS to raise an invoice. She also confirmed that there was a retention being held.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. That the following schedule of accounts be approved:

Cheques 29528 – 566, 29572/3 and DD in the sum of £62,560.91	Imprest a/c
Cheques 100978 – 100979 and DD/Standing Orders in the sum of £44,987.91	General a/c
Cheques 29568/9,74 – 29527, 29627/35 and DD in the sum of £60,215.61	Imprest a/c
Cheques 100980 – 100988 and DD/Standing Orders in the sum of £432,268.41	General a/c

2. That the bank reconciliations as at 31 January 2015 and 28 February 2015 be noted.

**F128 FINANCIAL REPORT**

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

The recommendation from the Recreation Committee regarding the Council retaining the café was discussed at length. Members were concerned that the café would not generate a sufficient income stream to cover the additional staffing costs. The Officers circulated an e-mail from Premier Tennis in light of the decision taken by the Recreation Committee saying that some of the money they were planning to include for the project they were not able to do so if they were not able to run the café. Members considered the confidential report from the RFO on the financial implications and reiterated that they did not consider the project viable for the Council.

The Town Clerk said she thought there had been a misunderstanding by the Committee that Premier didn't really want to run the café. So the third option was for the Council to run the café as a 'tuck shop' in the first year. This would have given the Officers time to carry out research in order to inform a business plan, which could be considered later in the year ready for implementation in 2016. The Chairman of the Recreation Committee concurred with what the Town Clerk said. Premier have now said they would like to run the café, so Members had the opportunity to reconsider and to go with the original proposal.

The Town Clerk pointed out that a grant from the Community Safety Partnership had recently been pledged for the Splash Park which stipulated as a criterion for the grant award that the Council needed a presence on site to reduce anti-social behaviour. This would have to be planned for with Premier running the café as well as the tennis. If the Council lost this grant it was worth £4k.

A Member, who had attended the site meeting at Tower Hill Cemetery recently, to look at the proposed installation of a hand rail, updated the Committee. As the funding was coming from Oxfordshire County Council, the Facilities Manager confirmed that there would be no financial implications for the Council.

**Recommendations:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations from the Amenities Committee be approved;
3. that with regard to the tennis and café facility at the Leys Recreation Ground, it be offered to Premier Tennis based on their original proposal;
4. that the installation of a handrail goes ahead at the Tower Hill Cemetery and that Officers undertake a robust risk assessment of all other access points.

F129 **GRANTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO along with the grant applications, as circulated with the agenda. The applications were a mix of financial grants and requests for subsidised lettings of Council owned halls or recreation grounds.

The RFO also brought to Members attention a late submission which had been received that day from Travelling Lite Productions.

The Committee also considered the correspondence from the Witney & District Twinning Association and the costings for the anniversary celebrations over the weekend of 1 – 4 May 2015.

**RCOMMENDATIONS:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that no grant be awarded to the Witney Rugby Football Under 14 Team as it does not fit the Council's criteria for awarding grants;
3. that the Council supports the Witney Music Festival by waiving the hire charge for the Leys Recreation Ground and only charge for Officer time;
4. that the Council supports DITTO, by subsidising the hall hire of Langdale Hall for 3 months (due to the fact that the Langdale Hall/Corn Exchange will not be under the Council's management from July 2015);
5. that no grant be awarded to ARCH;
6. that the award of the above grants be made under the following powers:
  - a) **Local Government Act 1972. s145** – Provision of Entertainments
  - b) **Local Government Act 1972. S137-** Power of Local authorities to incur expenditure for certain purposes not otherwise authorised
7. that due to late receipt of the application from Travelling Lite, no grant is awarded;
8. that the request from Witney Community Festival for a grant or subsidised use of the Leys Recreation Ground be not agree.
9. that the Witney & District Twinning Association be awarded a grant of £2,500 towards the anniversary events over the week end of 1 – 4 May 2015.

The Town Clerk read out an email regarding the Witney Community Festival at the request of the applicant Mr McEwen. Members noted it.

F130 **DISPOSAL OF CONFIDENTIAL WASTE**

Members received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda.

Cllr Woodward declared an interest as a customer of Shred-it however from a financial point of view on this occasion he recommended PHS.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council engages PHS Datashred to carry out its disposal of confidential waste.

F131 **DIGITAL & PAPER ARCHIVING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. She explained that the archiving of records was currently kept in the attic of the Langdale Hall, including those from the UDC. She had made enquiries with the County Archiving and they would be pleased to take them and store in a suitable environment to retain the information. This also included the burial records, again, storing them properly especially for the very ancient records.

With regard to going forward the RFO explained the proposal from Neopost and how most of the Council's records could be scanned in and kept digitally. Paper copies had to be kept for the legal time with digital back up.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Officers send all the old records to the County Archive;
3. that the Officers enter into a contract for digital archiving with effect from the new financial year.

F132 **COMMITTEE STRUCTURE & CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and the proposed committee structure along with the calendar of meetings. She said she considered that it was the best fit to the Council's accounting as the previous structure had been impossible to split the accounts for the Amenities and Recreation Committees, giving some confusion over responsibilities.

She explained the rationale behind the creation of two sub-committees for the Cemeteries and Closed Church Yards and the Public Halls. With the loss of the Langdale Hall and the Corn Exchange being transferred to a Charity, the Council would only be left with Burwell Hall operationally and responsibilities as a landlord for the Corn Exchange and Madley Park Hall. So she was suggesting this could be a sub-committee of the Amenities Committee and meet quarterly to keep an eye on things. She proposed a new Committee called Community services to cover events such as Remembrance Sunday, Christmas lights, the town floral displays, litter etc.

The Members discussed the proposed Committee Structure, and suggested the following amendments:

- a) that there is a standing agenda item on the Amenities Committee agenda – 'Public Halls' whilst the Burwell Hall remains in the management of the Council;

- b) the Infrastructure WP be renamed the Town Plan WP;
- c) that there is a West Witney Sports Ground Sub-Committee reporting into the Amenities Committee.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1. that the report be noted;
- 2. that the proposed Committee Structure as presented be adopted subject to the amendments detailed above (a – c);
- 3. that the Calendar of Meetings for 2015/16 as presented be adopted, subject to the Town Clerk double checking the dates.

*(7.15pm Cllr Beames left the room and returned at 7.20pm)*

**F133 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

**F134 TOWN HALL – URGENT WORKS & MAINTENANCE**

The Facilities Manager tabled her report at the meeting and explained the current situation to Members.

Councillor Eaglestone declared an interest as he was a Trustee on the Town Hall Charity.

A Member suggested that the Council should consider undertaking a building survey and put aside appropriate funding into a reserve. The Town Clerk explained that in the past the Council had put aside funds and they had started replenishing the reserve recently. The lease still had 21 years to go. Members discussed the lease terms, level of rent and its obligations as a tenant.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1. that the report be noted;
- 2. that the Officers ask the Town Hall Charity for a grant towards the repairs;
- 3. that all the repairs are undertaken as soon as possible.

**F135 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Committee received and considered the Options Appraisal undertaken by KMC Management Consultancy Ltd. The Facilities Manager highlighted the recommendation for the contract to commence in October 2016 if possible. The current contract had been extended until April 2016 in order to bring the contract in line with the financial year end. Based on this recommendation the Council would have to give the current contractor an extension from April 2016 to October 2016.

**Recommendations:** that the options appraisal be noted and the recommendations contained therein agreed.

*The Committee adjourned for the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee at 7.40pm and reconvened at 8.15pm. [Minute ref S136 to S143 refers]*

F144 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received a verbal report from the meeting held earlier.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the verbal report be noted and recommendations contained therein agreed.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their support in her term of office.

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The meeting closed at 8.17pm.

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