

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Held on Monday 16 November 2015

At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: J S King (Chairman)

Councillors:	A K Beames	A D Harvey
	C Brown (sub for Mrs C Reynolds)	C Holliday
	Mrs B J Churchill	T J Morris
	D S Enright	C K Woodward

Non Committee Member: H B Eaglestone

Officers:	Town Clerk	RFO
	Democratic Services Officer	

Also present: 1 member of the public

Before the meeting commenced a 1 minute silence was held in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015.

F546 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Mrs C Reynolds.

F547 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

F548 **MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2015 as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** there were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2015.

F549 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The member of public present did not wish to speak.

F550 **PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO and the schedule of the payment of accounts.

A member asked if the payment to Treloar was for an ongoing issue. The Town Clerk confirmed that it was for an asbestos survey.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the bank reconciliations and statements as presented be signed;
3. that the schedule of accounts as detailed be agreed:-

<i>Cheques 29945 to 29996 and DD in the sum of £58846.17</i>	<i>Imprest a/c</i>
<i>Cheques 101010 – 101011, DD and Standing orders in the sum of £42960.30</i>	<i>General a/c</i>
<i>Cheques 29997 to 30069 and DD in the sum of £83840.52</i>	<i>Imprest a/c</i>
<i>Cheques 101012 to 101013 and DD/Standing orders in the sum of £48636.36</i>	<i>General a/c</i>

F551 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. Further to her report she updated the Members on the decisions with financial implications arising from the Community Services Committee, as these had not been available when the report had been compiled. These included a new three year agreement to Bob Wilson Fun Fairs for Witney Feast, at an annual rent of £7,700; a grant to Witney Carnival of £800 and budget provision to be made in 2016/17 for bins, benches, floral displays and tree planting.

Members discussed the use of the Barclay Card Machine, and considered that it would be a backward step if this facility was removed. The report suggested a 5% surcharge which the Chairman considered was too high. A member proposed to retain the machine and to make a 3% surcharge for credit card payments.

The report also proposed that the Council Chamber could be available for hire, at a cost of £15 per hour. A member who was unable to attend the meeting had asked where the charge had come from and the RFO clarified that officers had researched similar rooms at other Councils. Members felt that this was a good idea.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations from the Amenities as detailed in the report of the RFO be agreed;
3. that the recommendations from the Community Services Committee as verbally reported by the RFO be agreed;
4. that the Barclaycard Machine be retained and a charge of 3% introduced for credit card payments;
5. that Council agree to the letting of the Town Hall Chamber with immediate effect at £15 per hour.

F552 **DISCRETIONARY GRANT AWARDS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO along with the grant applications, as circulated with the agenda. The Committee did not wish to give money to PACT as the application had come from a professional fundraiser and there was substantial money in their accounts.

In relation to CAB and Volunteer Link Up, members agreed to release the money for annual grants that had been set aside in the 2015/16 budget but wanted it to be clear that these grants could not always be guaranteed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the following grants be awarded:

Organisation	Amount
DITTO	£406.80 subsidised hall hire
Witney Music Society	£100
Oxford Association for the Blind	£100

3. 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
4. that the grant of £1,000 set aside for the Citizens Advice Bureau West Oxon be released (**Local Government Act 1972 s.142(2A)**)
5. that the grant of £500 set aside for the Volunteer Link Up be released (**Local Government Act 1972. s137**)
6. that recipients be asked to acknowledge the Town Council’s support on their literature;
7. that a press release be issued advising of grant support given by the Town Council.

F553 **BUDGET PARAMETERS 2016/17**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO in preparation for the annual review of all the Committees to prepare the revenue budget for 2016/17.

A member recalled that in the previous year there had been a working party. He also noted that the previous Council’s policy had been to cap the precept at 2%. He still agreed with this but was conscious that services from higher tier councils may be delegated to the Town Council.

Another member commented that the Chancellor of the Exchequer would not make his statement yet and so no tier of Council knew what it should be working to yet. Therefore he felt the Council should wait and set the budget in January as had happened last year.

Cllr Holliday left the meeting at 6.30pm.

The member felt that if the District Council maintained its 0% increase in Council Tax it would be hard for the Town Council to go over 2%. A member said that he did not want a rise in the precept to be the first port of call and he would rather see efficiency savings. He proposed that a working party should do a draft budget.

The Town Clerk clarified the timings of the budget setting cycle as the calendar of meetings had been changed to meet the deadline of the District Council. She advised that the RFO would be working on the budget next week and once she had a draft budget she would arrange a meeting of the already formed Budget WP.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the budget framework and parameters for 2016/17 be considered by the Budget Working Party in due course.

F554 OPENNESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGULATIONS 2014 – RECORDING OF MEETINGS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. The Council had adopted a policy of recording all meetings after the regulations came into force in August 2014. The Town Clerk's report pointed out that only one person had recorded a meeting, since this policy was made. She also highlighted the need to keep recordings for 6 years.

As a consequence she asked the Committee to reconsider the Council's Policy - recording of all meetings and only record those where press and/or public were present.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council's Policy on recording of all meetings be changed to only recording meetings where a member of the press or public was present.

F555 CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR 31 MARCH 2015

The Committee received the conclusion of audit for 31 March 2015 from the Council's External Auditors – BDO, which was for information only. The RFO advised that it would need to go to full Council on 25 November for adoption. She explained the 'matters arising from the audit' and that the treatment of the section 106 funding for Allotments had been treated no differently to previous years.

She also pointed out that all external auditors had questioned councils' investments with CCLA, due to the fact that the Audit Commission had not advised on what had been agreed. The query was to whether these investments should be long or short term.

A member thought that the queries were technicalities and not really issues of concern.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

F556 **CORN EXCHANGE STORAGE OPTIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, which proposed an external storage container in order to help solve the storage problems of the Corn Exchange. However, she had subsequently had a meeting with the Planning Officer at the District Council and had been told that this would not be an acceptable solution in a conservation area.

This meant that an actual building would be needed and further research was required. The Shadow Trust had made it clear that they wanted the storage problem solved before taking on the building. A member proposed asking the Planning Department what would be acceptable and to obtain quotes based on that. Members felt that this was a sensible idea.

RECOMMENDED: that the Town Clerk has a discussion with WODC Planning Department on what would be an acceptable option for external storage at the Corn Exchange and to then obtain quotations based on this.

F557 **SPLASH PARK**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda. During the last cycle of meetings a post installation report had been presented to the Amenities Committee which included a budget update. Some members of the Policy and Resources Committee had requested an update as the Committee had overall responsibility for the Council's finances. The working budget sheet showed a surplus of £11,514 however this was not tangible as money had been diverted from the Council's other revenue budgets.

There was an unbudgeted water bill of £6,886 and the Town Clerk explained that this was due to the fact that the full extent of the running costs was not known when the Council committed to the project. Members were concerned to hear of the financial status of the project and of the lack of transparency from utilising various other revenue budgets in order to cover the expenditure of some items, as well as the diversion of some income items. The water bill was an issue and with hind sight it may have been better to have installed a more extensive system that had used more grey water.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Town Clerk discusses the budget sheet with the lead officer of the project and report back to the Committee.

F558 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND 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.

F559 **PHOTOCOPIER CONTRACT RENEWAL**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the RFO which had previously been circulated. Members endorsed a three year contract for a new machine which would be supplied from a local supplier with good support services.

RECOMMENDED: that a new three year photocopier contract be set up with the supplier agreed by members.

The Committee adjourned at 7.10pm for a meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee. Minutes nos. S560 – S566 refers.

F567 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 21 October 2015 and a verbal report from the meeting held earlier that evening.

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

The meeting closed at 7.35pm
