

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Held on Monday 11 January 2016

At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: J S King (Chairman)

Councillors:	C Brown (sub for Cllr A K Beames) Mrs B J Churchill A D Harvey	C Holliday T J Morris Mrs C E Reynolds C K Woodward
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Officers:	Town Clerk Democratic Services Officer	RFO
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F020 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr A Beames.

F021 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr King declared a non pecuniary interest as he was the Lifetime President of Witney Model Club which had applied for a discretionary grant.

Cllr Harvey declared a non pecuniary interest as he was the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for the Environment at WODC.

Cllr Morris declared a non pecuniary interest as he was treasurer of Witney Carnival.

Cllrs Churchill and Woodward declared non pecuniary interests as they were members of the Shadow Corn Exchange Trust.

Cllrs Churchill and Brown declared a non pecuniary interest they were elected members on the West Witney Sports & Social Club Committee.

F022 MINUTES

a) **RESOLVED** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 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 16 November 2015.

F023 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

F024 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO which included the schedule of accounts paid and bank reconciliations, as circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED:

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

Cheques 30070 to 30116 (excl 30114 & 30115) and DD in the sum of £62971.80 Imprest a/c
Cheques 101014 – 101015, DD and Standing orders in the sum of £79443.84 General a/c
Cheques 30117 to 30163 and DD in the sum of £61255.86 Imprest a/c
Cheques 101016 to 101017 and DD/Standing orders in the sum of £60191.32 General a/c

F023 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO. She summarised the implications of decisions made by the spending committees as detailed in her report.

It was explained that an additional fee invoice for £1,500 for the setting up of the Corn Exchange shadow trust had been received, resulted in a total cost of £3,500 so far. The Town Clerk was not sure if this would be the final bill. A member proposed that this was met from the fund of the start-up grant. Members agreed with this.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations from the Amenities Committee be agreed;
3. that the recommendations from the Community Services Committee be agreed;
4. that the further costs of setting up the Shadow Trust be met from the start up grant.

F024 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING PARTY MEETING HELD ON 21 DECEMBER 2015 ON THE BUDGET AND PRECEPT FOR 2016/17**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Finance and Budget Working Party held on 21 December 2015. The Chairman of the Working Party commented that it had been a very interesting meeting. The members had agreed that the Council needed to “live within its means” and safeguard assets. Covenants also required looking into, particularly at West Witney Sports Ground.

The Working Party had ideally wanted to maintain the 2% rise in precept but if this was not possible to go no higher than 4.5%. After work by the RFO, the precept figure proposed was an increase of 3.26% - this would achieve a balanced budget, as well as providing a

contingency for the potential loss of the Council Tax Reduction Grant. The Officers were thanked for their work on this.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted.

F025 **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL PROJECTS PROGRAMME: REVISED BUDGET 2015/16 AND ESTIAMTES FOR 2016/17**

The Committee received and considered reports prepared by the RFO as circulated prior to the meeting.

A member raised the issue of Burwell Hall and the associated projected loss. She felt that the salary recharges had distorted the figures and it looked far too high. She thought the salaries should go into central support. The Town Clerk explained that the recharges had not been apportioned yet, and the budget was realistic only allowing for caretaking, cleaning and bookings administration. Central overheads had not been added in.

A member commented that something similar had been suggested some time ago but it would mean that the true running costs wouldn't be reflected. Moving charges around would not affect the bottom line of the budget. The RFO explained that she had budgeted out the hours spent on the various services for Burwell Hall. There were also on costs – e.g. pension contributions. The subject had been discussed at various points over the last 15 years but the Council had always viewed the halls as a service offered. The Town Clerk commented that it was a previous Council policy to outsource the management of Burwell Hall, on a similar model to the Madley Park Hall, but due to the closure of the Corn Exchange it was retained with the intention to review the situation at a later date.

A member noted that West Witney Sports Ground was making a profit. The Town Clerk advised that this was not the case - as the figures did not include recharges, in fact it would make a loss.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the revised base revenue budget for 2015/16 and the draft estimates for 2016/17, as detailed in the budget papers, be adopted, for submission to the Special Policy & Resources meeting on 20 January 2016;
3. that the Committee accepts and recommends to full Council the increase in Precept for 2016/17 of 3.26% as detailed in the report of the RFO;
4. that the revenue growth items as detailed in part 2 of this agenda item be approved and recommended to full Council for adoption;
5. that the capital projects as detailed in part 2 of this agenda item be approved and recommended to full Council for adoption;
6. that the fees and charges for 2016/17 as detailed in part 3 of this agenda item be approved and recommended to full Council for adoption;

F026 **WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL’S S106 PROJECT LIST/INFRASTRUCTURE DELEIVERY PLAN**

This item was differed to a future meeting.

F027 **THE QUEEN’S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from the Pageant Master, Bruno Peake. He wanted to encourage beacons to be lit in celebration of the Queens 90th Birthday. The Town Clerk reminded members that the Town Council already had beacons from the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. A member wanted to know if neighbouring parishes would be doing this as the idea of beacons was to create a chain of light. The Town Clerk suggested she would look into this. Members wanted to participate and a member suggested that it could be done with charities such as Rotary. Cllr Morris agreed to ask the Carnival Committee if there could be any involvement.

RECOMMEDED: that the Council takes part in the lighting of beacons, potentially with the involvement of a charity.

F028 **DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer. The Town Clerk asked if members were happy to continue with the annual grants as detailed in the report. A member wanted to know why the organisations listed were recipients of annual grants as she felt other organisations should be on the list. The Town Clerk gave the history behind each of them; most of them provided something to the Town as a whole or as a service to the Town Council’s events.

There had been a last minute application from Broadhill Pre School for funding for new doors. The applicant did not meet the Council’s grant funding criteria and the application was therefore rejected. It was suggested that they contact Witney Educational Foundation.

The Town Clerk raised an additional item concerning hire of the Corn Exchange – a potential application for a subsidised letting. She explained that James Condon had previously addressed the Pubic Halls Committee as he wanted to hire the building for a music event from 6pm – 4am. The commercial cost would be £1,639 plus a £500 deposit. As an introductory offer, and given the fact that Mr Condon pledged to make a donation to the Witney School of Rock, the Town Clerk discounted the charge to £1,271 plus the deposit. He was unhappy with both charges and said that as he would be making a donation to Witney School of Rock he should be charged the charity rate. Members discussed this and agreed that he should be subject to the set rates.

RECOMMENDED:

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

Organisation	Amount
Witney Model and Collectors Club	£300

and that the award of the above grants be made under the following power:

Local Government Act 1972. S137- Power of Local authorities to incur expenditure for certain purposes not otherwise authorised

3. that the following amounts for grants be approved for the 2016/17 budget:
 - Witney Mills Cricket Club - £500
 - Volunteer Link Up - £500
 - Witney Town Band - £500
 - Witney Carnival - £800 (already agreed – see minute C534)
 - West Oxon CAB - £1,000
 - Witney & District Twinning Association - £350 + free room hire
4. that recipients be asked to acknowledge the Town Council's support on their literature;
5. that no grant be awarded to Broadhill Pre-School as the request does not fit the Council's criteria, and that they be advised to apply to the Witney Educational Foundation;
6. that a press release be issued advising of grant support given by the Town Council;
7. that Mr Condon be advised the hire charges for his event in the Corn Exchange in March be as quoted by the Town Clerk, detailed above.

F028 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2015/16 (FIRST INTERIM)

The Committee received and considered the Internal Audit Report.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

F029 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Committee received and considered a report from the Town Clerk on the format for the Annual Town Meeting. A Councillor had mentioned at another meeting that he was keen to see changes. The Town Clerk reminded members that it was a statutory meeting of the electorate hosted by the Town Council. A member commented that he liked the format from last year and how the room was laid out – without the use of the stage.

A member stated that he had been to every Annual Town Meeting in the last 15 years and during that time, everything had been tried to encourage people to come. The fact remained that people only came when they were unhappy about something.

Another member thought it would be nice to have more of a "Witney Conference" with the involvement of other agencies, although he thought this was something for next year, as the timescale was too short for the current year's preparation.

The Town Clerk added that the Annual Town Meeting was an opportunity for the Council to use it for engaging in consultations with the public to gauge opinion on a particular subject or general satisfaction of Council services. Members thought that a satisfaction survey would be something that would be achievable for this year.

There were some discussions about offering refreshments. It was agreed that officers were already busy enough but a charity could be asked to offer tea and coffee in return for

donations. The Council would provide the ingredients and make a £50 donation to the charity as a starting point, if necessary.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that District and County Councillors are invited to attend and participate in the meeting;
- 3) that all Committee Chairman compile their own reports, with the assistance of Officers for presentation at the meeting;
- 4) that the Officers publicise the meeting using social media as well as those listed in the report;
- 5) that Thames Valley Police be invited to attend and participate;
- 6) that the Town Clerk draws up a short “customer satisfaction” survey;
- 7) that refreshments are offered via a charity in return for donations. The Council would provide tea and coffee and make a £50 donation to the charity as a starting point if necessary.

F030 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016/17 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, which included the calendar of meetings.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the continuation of the Committee structure as presented be approved;
- 2) that the calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2016/17 as presented be adopted by Council.

F031 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.

F032 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE WORKING PARTY

The Committee received a confidential verbal report of the Grounds Maintenance Working Party held earlier that evening.

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

F033 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee received a confidential verbal report of the Personnel Sub Committee held earlier that evening.

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

The meeting closed at 6.57pm.

Chairman