

Cheques 100964 and DD/Standing Orders in the sum of £21,928.15 General a/c

2. That the bank reconciliations as at 31 July 2014 and 31 August 2014 be noted.

F440 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the financial report of the Town Clerk as circulated prior to the meeting.

In answer to a Members question regarding the Leys water supply it was confirmed that Officers would be seeking a contribution from those who held events on the Leys. However it was appreciated that the work needed to be done as there was a leak.

A member queried the item concerning West Witney Sports and Social Club. The Town Clerk advised that she was “flagging” the item as it was an ongoing project

A member commented that he was happy to support the delegation to the Town Clerk to negotiate the Carnival charges but he thought that it should be recognised as a great community event, whilst another member was concerned that the Council should not set a precedent for other users to “browbeat” the Council into reducing costs.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations from the Committees as detailed in the Town Clerk’s report be agreed;
3. that with regard to the Carnival charges negotiations be delegated to the Town Clerk.

F441 **DISCRETIONARY GRANTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the DSO and the discretionary grant applications as circulated with the agenda, along with the Town Clerk’s addendum detailing two other requests for funding received in the interim period.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the following grants be awarded:
3.

a. Vitalise	No grant be awarded
b. Witney Music Society	£100
c. Adventure Plus	£275
d. Witney Film Festival	Subsidised letting of £140 to cover the hire charges of Langdale Hall
e. Have Your Say Day (CSP)	Subsidised letting of £196 to cover the hire charges of Langdale Hall
4. that payments 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

5. that under the **Local Government Act 1972 s.142(2A)** West Oxfordshire Citizens Advice Bureau be granted £1,000 as set aside for them in the 2014/15 budget;
6. that a press release be issued advising of grant support given by the Town Council.

F442 **FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Finance and Budget Working Party held on 23 September 2014.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Town Clerk had drawn attention to a new investment opportunity with CCLA which would provide a higher rate of interest than the high street banks. Particularly she had drawn attention to a commuted sum of £69,000 which it was unable to be spent but she considered could be invested, and this might provide a good opportunity. It was a recommendation of the Working Party that Mark Davies of CCLA should make a presentation to the Committee – which was arranged for Thursday 20 November.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes of the Finance & Budget Working Party held on 23 September 2014 be noted.

F443 **CORN EXCHANGE REFURBISHMENT – FINANCIAL IMPLICSTIONS AND AWARDING OF CONTRACT (PHASE 1)**

Prior to introducing her report the Town Clerk informed members that the agent selling Langdale Hall had to date received interest from 11 parties. Two viewings had taken place and another was in the pipeline. She understood that one of those parties were possibly in the process of putting forward a bid. The agent had advised he would be requesting all bids by the end of October, and given the level of interest, would expect to have a capital receipt for the Council by the end of the year.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated prior to the meeting. It listed the current budget for the capital refurbishment for the Corn Exchange as well as professional fees. The tenders for the work were higher than anticipated and therefore she had listed ways to fund the project before the completion of the sale of Langdale Hall. If funds could be moved from reserves, it would avoid interest associated with taking out a loan.

A discussion followed on the preferred option for the Council. A member said that he had not seen a business case for the Corn Exchange and without one, he could not vote on a proposal. He was concerned about committing funds without having sold the Langdale Hall.

Another member said that it was essential to open the Corn Exchange to replace Langdale Hall, as the Council could not afford to operate two halls in the Town Centre. There was a further discussion on whether money should be spent without a business case being presented. Another member pointed out that if the Langdale Hall could be sold by December, the Corn Exchange would not be ready for hire.

A member pointed out that the Council would be eligible to apply for loans to cover the funding gap. The Town Clerk cautioned that this could not be done retrospectively (via the Public Works Loan Board) – a capital project was needed and a loan could not be used to replenish reserves that had been spent. (Other members were unhappy about the prospect of taking a loan.) A discussion took place on to the implications of taking a loan

Members discussed the recommendation from Ridge on the awarding of the tender for the Phase 1 works to the Corn Exchange. The Council's Financial Regulations required the lowest tender to be accepted unless there was an overwhelming case against this. The Corn Exchange Advisory Board had some questions to ask Ridge on the tenders.

A member proposed that following the decision of which tender is awarded, funds from the rolling capital fund, the cemetery access fund and a proportion of the sports and recreation and building repair fund be used – allowing the Town Council to continue with the maintenance of those – and any shortfall in funds be made up in the short term by a loan from either West Oxfordshire District Council or the Public Works Loan Board until a receipt is received from the sale of the Langdale Hall.

Another member made an amended (counter) proposal that the granting of the contract for phase 1 of the Corn Exchange works should be dependent upon the outcome of the sale proceeds from the Langdale Hall to ensure that a clear funding path could be provided for the full value of the refurbishment contract, whether this was proceeds from the sale of the Langdale Hall or a loan from West Oxfordshire District Council or the Public Works Loan Board.

Members voted on the amended proposal, with 4 voting for it and 4 voting against. The Chairman therefore had the casting vote, and the amended proposal was not carried. Members then voted on the original proposal, with 5 members voting for it, 2 members against and 1 abstention.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the responsibility for making the final decision on which tender to accept be delegated to the Town Clerk, the Mayor and Cllr R Curry, after meeting with Ridge to discuss the tenders;
3. that following the decision of which tender is awarded, funds from the rolling capital fund, the cemetery access fund and a proportion of the sports and recreation and building repair fund but not in full – allowing the Town Council to continue with the maintenance of those – and any shortfall in funds be made up in the short term by a loan from either West Oxfordshire District Council or the Public Works Loan Board until a receipt is received from the sale of the Langdale Hall.

The Chairman left the meeting at 7.30pm and Cllr T Morris assumed the Chair.

F444 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

The Town Clerk had circulated an information paper prior to the meeting on the grounds maintenance contract. The purpose of the report was to draw members' attention to the

timings and flag the potential financial implications in the coming financial year from undertaking a review and feasibility study. She also highlighted the option of bringing the contract “in house”.

A member commented that he saw this as an opportunity, perhaps to work with the District Council. He was looking forward to the potential positive outcomes on this and the potential of shared services with the District Council.

The Town Clerk explained that the Facilities Manager had a number of questions to put to the Town Council and therefore wondered if there should be a working party.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Facilities Manager make the re-tendering (and all that goes with the re-tender process) of the Grounds Maintenance contract high priority in order to meet the timescales of the new contract commencing on 1 April 2016 (or the terminating of the old contract as of 31 March 2016 to bring it back in-house)
3. that the Council sets up a Grounds Maintenance Working Party – membership to be established at the next full Council meeting on 13 October 2014.

F445 **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 confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

F446 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report from the Personnel Sub Committee held earlier that evening.

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

The meeting closed at 7.35pm

Chairman

DRAFT