

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 2 February 2015

at 6pm in the Windrush Room, Langdale Hall

Present

Councillor Mrs J C Baker (Chairman – until 7pm)
J S King (Chairman – from 7pm)

Councillors:	Mrs B J Churchill	D S Enright
	A K Beames	T J Morris
	D A Snow	A D Harvey
	H B Eaglestone	R F N Curry
Officers:	Town Clerk	DSO
	RFO	

F042 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for their absence was received from Councillors C Holliday, P J Dorward, Ms C Curry, B J Woodruff, C K Woodward

F043 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr T Morris declared he had an interest in agenda item 7 the grants, as he was the Treasurer of the Witney Carnival who had applied for a grant from the Council. Cllrs J Baker and J King also declared an interest as they were trustees on the Volunteer Link Up and was also being considered for an annual grant in 2015/16 budgets.

F044 MINUTES

- a. **RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman
- b. there were no matters arising from the minutes.

F045 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

F046 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received and considered the schedule of the payments of accounts as circulated with the agenda.

In answer to a Members question the RFO confirmed that the December salaries were paid early (19 December), along with the payment to HMRC and Pensions for November, as the Council's normal pay date coincided with the bank holidays.

2. That Council continues to transfer £150,000 to the Rolling Capital Fund year on year;
3. That the Council continues to cap precept increases at 2% year on year;
4. That the Council is still committed to making at least £100,000 of savings or increases its income stream in order not to use the General Fund over the current and next two financial years;
5. That the revised budget for 2014/15 and the estimates for 2015/16 as presented be agreed, subject to any amends from agenda items to be discussed later on the agenda;
6. That the precept requirement for 2015/16 would be £1,225,570.

The Chairman took the opportunity to highlight the savings achieved in the current year and the position going forward. She was pleased that the Council had begun to achieve some of the savings in order to stabilise its financial standing.

The meeting adjourned at 6.25pm whilst the Extra Ordinary meeting of Full Council was held.

Minute No. 049-052 refer

The meeting re-commenced at 6.27pm

F053 DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. The RFO advised that the balance remaining in the budget for grants now stood at £335 for the remainder of the financial year.

Members considered the regular annual grants to local organisations as listed in the RFO's report. The Town Clerk reminded Members of the history behind the grant to Witney Mills Cricket Club. A Member suggested this should be reviewed during the year by the Recreation Committee. Another Member questioned the grant to the West Oxon CAB. The Chairman said that she felt strongly about supporting them because of the service they give to the community.

The report contained information on the Twinning anniversaries and in line with previous celebrations the Town Clerk was seeking opinion on whether the grant for 2015/16 should be increased. Members felt that Witney had a lot to offer culturally and to tourism. A Member mentioned other countries who would be interested in twinning with Witney. Members also discussed other avenues for funding and the fact that our twinning partners got significant funding from the EU.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Oxfordshire Play Association be not awarded a grant on this occasion;
3. that the correspondence from the Witney Model Club be noted;

4. that the regular annual grants as detailed in the RFO's report be agreed with the exception to Witney & District Twinning Association and Witney Carnival;
5. that a grant to the Witney & District Twinning Association, towards commemoration of the twinning anniversaries be agreed, subject to the agreement of the Committee on the appropriate use. This would incorporate the annual grant of £350 and also expenses to cover hosting the dignitaries from the twin towns at civic events such as Remembrance Sunday;
6. that Officers look into EU funding for twinning;
7. that a grant of £750 is awarded to the Witney Carnival in the next financial year.

Cllr D Enright left during the discussion of the above item, the time being 6.35pm

F054 TO AGREE EXPENDITURE UNDER S137 OF LGA 1972 FOR 2015/16

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk advised that this was a statutory required agreeing the Council's expenditure under S137 of the LGA 1972.

A Member suggested that the expenditure pertaining to the Christmas lights should be reviewed. Another Member commented that he had been involved with the Christmas Tree Light switch on which had been achieved in 3 weeks with a cost of £2,500. He was aware that there were other organisations which wanted to help and organise the event jointly.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted.
2. that a review of the expenditure on Christmas Lights & Entertainment is undertaken prior to committing any expenditure in 2015;
3. that the Council, in accordance with its powers under sections 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, should incur the following expenditure which, in the opinion of the Council, is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure:

	£
Recreational Grants	3,560
Direct grant to Volunteer Link Up	500
Direct grant to Town Twinning Association	5,000
Subsidised room lettings	1,800
Town Christmas Lights & Entertainment	27,615
TOTAL	38,475

F055 **TOWN HALL ACCOMMODATION & ADMINISTRATION**

The Committee received and considered the Town Clerks report circulated prior to the meeting.

With regard to the archiving problem a Member suggested that the Town Clerk speaks to West Oxfordshire District Council as he was aware they had space at its premises off Station Lane.

The Town Clerk highlighted the problems which had been encountered in the Town Hall since the start of the year – particularly the fact that the Computer Server crashed. Under her emergency powers she had been able to procure a new server, and fortunately the Council had an earmarked reserve against the replacement which covered this expenditure. She asked Members for their opinion on whether the warranty cover should be enhanced.

She also updated Members on the situation relating to the Town Hall accommodation which had been out of action since 19 January 2015. Most of the replacement equipment and electrical installations were covered under the Council's insurance. However, whilst the electricians were working in the roof space over the Council Chamber it had been brought to the Officers attention that the roof was in a poor state of repair. The Works Contracts Supervisor was in the process of getting quotes for the work. The Facilities Manager was in the process of rescheduling a meeting with the Council's landlords and would report back to the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Officers look into space available via WODC for archive, should that not be suitable then proceed with option 2;
3. that the Officers go ahead and procure a suitable Franking Machine;
4. that the emergency expenditure of £5,103 on the new server covered by the Earmarked Reserve in the Renewals fund, be noted;
5. that the extended warranty cover on the server is purchased.

*Councillors J Baker, R Curry and T Morris left the meeting at this juncture, the time being 7pm
Cllr J King took over as chairman.*

F056 **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

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

The Town Clerk advised that this was a statutory meeting, which was scheduled to be held on 11 March in the Langdale Hall.

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.

F057 COMMITTEE STRUCTURE & CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR

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 Committee meetings continue on a Monday and Tuesday with a start time of 6pm and full Council at 7pm;
3. that the frequency of meetings of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee is increased to quarterly.

The meeting closed at 7.10pm
