

SPECIAL FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 11 February 2013

at 6.25pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present

Councillor: Cllr Harry Eaglestone (Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs J C Baker	A K Beames
Non- Committee:	Ms C Curry	A D Harvey
	Mrs B J Churchill	D A Snow
Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer
	Facilities Manager	Deputy Town Clerk

1 member of the public and 1 member of the press

F063 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for their absence were received from Councillors R F N Curry, Mrs S E Davies, P J Dorward, D S Enright, J S King, T J Morris, B J Woodruff and C K Woodward

F064 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

F065 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr James Mills, a parish warden for Witney, wished to speak with regard to St Mary's churchyard wall. He understood that responsibility for this closed churchyard was transferred to Witney Town Council in 1977. He remarked that where a churchyard had been closed, it must be kept in good order of repair. The church wall was now in need of repair and he also had concerns with regard to memorial safety.

Mr Mills requested that the church wall be repaired, and that the Council should look to set up a working party to consider budgeting for the churchyard, as the Council did for its cemeteries. He also commented that this working party could investigate sources of funding, e.g. English Heritage.

The Town Clerk enquired whether ashes were still being interred into the churchyard, and Mr Mills agreed to investigate this. The Town Clerk queried the Town Council's responsibility for the memorials and headstone as she recalled some years ago the then Technical Officer presenting a comprehensive report to the Council and she would see if she could locate a copy. Mr Mills commented that he was bringing these to the Town Council's attention in order to fulfill his responsibilities as a Church Warden.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that the estimated costs for the repairs to the wall were £3,5000.

F066 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 44(B)

RESOLVED: that Standing Order 44(b) be suspended to allow all Councillors present to speak and vote on the following agenda items.

F067 **GRANT APPLICATION**

The Committee received and considered the grant application, as circulated with the agenda.

The Committee was concerned regarding the security of the building. The Facilities Manager commented that all her questions had been answered, and copies of these, together with the answers from Witney Radio, had been circulated with the agenda.

A Member commented that WitneyTV and Radio provided a great service and was in favour of approving the application. He was sure that there would be an agreement, which should include a clause regarding the abuse or misuse of the system, keys and importance of locking up and securing the building. The Facilities Manager commented that Members should be cautious of allowing a tenant in the building and suggested a rolling short term tenancy agreement.

A Member remarked that there would be legal costs to the Council, and that it was usual for the tenant to pay the legal costs. A Member remarked that they would be advertising Council events free of charge, and would be paying their own legal costs in taking advice on the agreement.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that the application for use of the flat in Langdale Hall from Witney Radio be agreed in principle, subject to further consultation with the Facilities Manager and Public Halls Committee Chairman.
- 3) that, subject to a satisfactory outcome of recommendation (2) the Facilities Manager negotiates a legal agreement and length of lease for the use of the flat in Langdale Hall to Witney Radio..
- 4) that the rent be covered by a discretionary grant.

F068 **COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS PROGRAMME : REVISED BUDGET 2012/13 AND ESTIMATES 2013/14**

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

The Town Clerk advised that the increase in the Facilities Team training budget, as agreed at the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting earlier in the evening, increased the precept to £1,132,036.

A Member commented that there was still no provision in the budget for the Corn Exchange. The Town Clerk confirmed that this had been raised at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on 28 January 2013, however, no Member had made any proposal. A Member commented that this was an unknown quantity, with many variables and the time to look at costings and fund raising, together with assets and matched funding, would be once the feasibility study was completed.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) the revised base revenue budget for 2012/13, as presented, be adopted.
- 3) that the estimates for 2013/14, as presented and amended (training budget) be adopted.
- 4) that the level for the Rolling Capital Fund for 2013/14 be £150,000.

- 5) that the precept for 2013/14 be levelled at £1,132,036 (20.62%).
- 6) that, on behalf of the Council, a press release is issued with regard to the precept in order that Members are not required to make individual statements.

F069 **TO APPROVE THE COUNCIL'S EXPENDITURE ON ITEMS COVERED BY SECTION 137 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

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 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	4,060
Direct grant to Town Twinning Association	350
Subsidised room lettings (Town Twinning & Talking Newspaper)	1,865
Town Christmas Lights & Entertainment	28,565
TOTAL	34,840

F070 **PRECEPT FOR 2013/14**

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

RECOMMENDED: that the Town Clerk be authorised to sign and serve a precept on the West Oxfordshire District Council, in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), requiring the District Council to pay the Town Council the sum of £1,132,036 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2013/14.

F071 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC** – To consider and if appropriate, to pass the following resolution

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.

F072 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Chairman gave a verbal report from the Personnel Sub-Committee held earlier in the evening.

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

The meeting closed at 6.55pm

Chairman