

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Held on Monday 28 November 2016

At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: TJ Morris (Chairman)

Councillors: S E Bartington C Holliday
A K Beames C K Woodward
C Brown

Officers: Town Clerk RFO
Democratic Services Officer

Also present: 1 member of the public

F654 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr A D Harvey and Mrs C Reynolds.

F655 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Woodward declared an interest in agenda item 12 – property matters – as he was a member of the CEWT.

F656 **MINUTES**

a) **RESOLVED:** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman.

b) **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the minutes to be discussed at the meeting.

F657 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The member of the public present did not wish to address the Council.

F658 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

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

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the bank reconciliations and statements be noted;
3. that the following schedule of accounts be approved:

Cheque No.s	In the sum of:	Account
Chqs 30607 to 30645 and DD	£63,653.75	Imprest
DD and Standing orders	£65,392.19	General
Chqs 30646 to 30719 and DD	£71,269.18	Imprest
Chq 101036 and DD/Standing orders	£31,251.51	General

F659 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. She highlighted the spending committee's recent decisions incurring additional expenditure included additional emergency lighting in the Corn Exchange, the installation of wi-fi, a new boiler and a dishwasher for the Corn Exchange.

Members agreed that the emergency lighting should be done and that a domestic dishwasher should be purchased for use until such a time that a commercial kitchen might be installed. However, members had some queries about the quote provided for wi-fi especially as the quote provided was only for partial coverage of the Corn Exchange. The Town Clerk also wanted more information about the security of the connection if offering it to hall users.

Consideration of a new boiler was deferred as there was no quotation for this.

A member noted that The Leys had used 9 months of its budget within 6 months. The RFO replied that this was due to heavier use in the summer months.

The Town Clerk highlighted the spending recommendations for the Curbridge Road/Thorney Leys hedge and the Langdale gate wall from the Community Services Committee, and in order for the Works Contract Supervisor to be able to programme these works in she asked if these could be resolved items, which Members agreed to.

With regard to the call recording/storage facility, members felt that it was important to look after staff's safety and the cost was reasonable in comparison to the quote from BT. The RFO had also sourced a quotation for a "cloud" system to back up the Asset Register. Members recognised the value of the register and the importance of a backup; however they asked for more quotations to be sourced and brought back to the Committee.

RESOLVED: that the Officers be permitted to procure the whips for the Curbridge Road/Thorney Leys Hedge and programme the repairs for the Langdale Gate wall with the contractor, as recommended by the Community Services Committee.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations of the Amenities Committee be agreed with the exception of the wi-fi which required further investigation and the boiler which required a price;

3. that a domestic dishwasher is purchased at a cost of £350 for the Corn Exchange;
4. that the recommendations of the Community Committee be agreed;
5. that the outstanding debt be pursued through the Small Claims Court;
6. that the call recording/storage system be implemented;
7. that the asset management project be noted but more information and quotations be obtained for cloud storage;
8. that the quotation for off-site backup for the Council's IT system be agreed.

F660 INTERNAL AUDIT – FIRST INTERIM REPORT 2016/17

The Committee received and considered the report of the independent Internal Auditor as circulated with the agenda. A member asked how things stood with VAT (regarding the Council's partial exemption status and the recovery of VAT). The Town Clerk replied that the Corn Exchange and Langdale were now both registered for VAT, so the Council had been able to recoup the VAT.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

F661 REVISED BUDGET 2016/17 & ESTIMATES FOR 2017/18, FEES & CHARGES FOR 2017/18, CAPITAL & SPECIAL PROJECTS FOR 2017/18 & PREPARATION POOL 2018/19

The Committee received and considered the draft budget report of the RFO and a report and recommendations from the Budget/Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Party held on 24 November 2016 circulated prior to the meeting.

A member stated that he was concerned that no money had been budgeted for a Neighbourhood Plan. The RFO explained that she could not budget for something for which there was no Council resolution. The Town Clerk reminded Members of the resolution reached at the EOC on 1 November 2016 and advised that a report, as had been requested, on the financial implications and timing would be going to the Full Council meeting on 7 December 2016. The RFO pointed out that to budget £100,000 would equate to an additional £10.07p on a Band D equivalent Council Tax.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the revised base budget for 2016/17 and the draft estimates for 2017/18 as detailed in the budget papers be adopted, subject to final scrutiny by the Officers, for submission to the Special Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 14 December 2016;
3. to recommend to Full Council an increase in precept for 2017/18 of 3.36%;
4. that the revenue projects as detailed in part 2 of the report be approved and recommended to Full Council for adoption;

5. that the capital projects as detailed in part 2 of the report be approved and recommended to Full Council for adoption;
6. that the fees and charges for 2017/18 as detailed in part 3 of the report be approved and recommended to Full Council for adoption;
7. that the minutes of the Budget/Medium Term Financial Strategy held on 24 November 2016 and the recommendations contained therein be agreed.

F662 **GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer along with several grant applications as circulated with the agenda. There had also been an application from Volunteer Link up for a grant of £500 and from Citizens Advice Bureau for £1,000 – this money was earmarked in a separate budget.

With regard to the application from the Lower Windrush Valley Project, who was requesting a grant to print a leaflet which included the Lake & Country Park, it was pointed out the partnership working which had been established over the years which the Council had benefitted by. Members felt that this should be funded from the Lake & Country Park cost centre not from the limited budget set aside for community grants.

Members noted that applications seemed to be forthcoming from the same organisations and asked for a list of which organisations had received grants in the last 3 years. In order to encourage new applications it was suggested that the scheme be publicised in a future edition of the Council's newsletter.

The requests from LibFest and the Witney Music Festival for free use of The Leys had been referred by the Community Services Committee, with the inclusion of the actual costs to hire the Leys Recreation Ground. There followed a discussion on these requests. Members decided that both events should be supported equally. Therefore LibFest would be granted free use of The Leys amounting to £1,350, and would be required to pay £162.50 for the Health and Safety review. The Music Festival wanted The Leys for an extra two days and would receive the same discount as LibFest (£1,350) and would have to pay the £162.50 for the Health and Safety review and the outstanding hire charge of £900. Both applicants would need to pay the £1,000 deposit before the booking could be confirmed, subject to satisfying all other terms and conditions within the time limits.

Members considered that the Music Festival had in effect grown out of The Leys, it had been suggested that West Witney Sports Ground would be a better location as it was over three times as large and cheaper to hire. There were also concerns on the condition of the ground at The Leys. Members agreed that if the Music Festival chose this option, there would be no hire charge for the first year.

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the application from Witney Boys Brigade be declined and they are advised to contact the Rotary Club or Round Table;
3. that the following grants be approved under the General Power of Competence:

Organisation	Amount
Lunchtime Recitals	£240 (65% of requested amount and 65% of members live in Witney)
Witney Model and Collectors Club	£400
Witney Woodland Volunteers	£385
Oxfordshire Play Association	£500 (to ascertain where the play day will be held and to request feedback on its success)
Witney Music Society	£125 (2/3 of requested amount as 2/3 of members live in Witney)

4. that with regard to the Lower Windrush Valley Project, members requested confirmation of the printing costs, however they also considered that this should be funded from the Witney Lake & Country Park cost centre rather than the community grants budget;
5. that the grants for Volunteer Link up and Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire be approved and the same amounts put into the budget for 2017/18;
6. that LibFest be granted free use of The Leys amounting to £1,350, and be required to pay £162.50 for the Health and Safety review;
7. that Witney Music Festival should receive the same discount as LibFest (£1,350) and pay the £162.50 for the Health and Safety review and the outstanding hire charge of £900. If the music Festival chooses to use West Witney Sports Ground there would be no hire charge for the first year;
8. that those grant funded be requested to acknowledge the Council's support in their publicity and the Communications Officer issues a press release.

F663 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PLAN

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk on the Corporate Performance Plan as circulated with the agenda. A member thought that the plan would be a good document for Committee Chairman to use as a starting point for mission statements and budget prioritisation in the following Council year.

The Town Clerk explained that this was a draft and the purpose of bringing it to committee was so Members could review the requests made as part of the satisfaction survey to see if there was any further items for inclusion in the 2017/18 budget. Members felt that some of the items had already been addressed such as the Christmas Lights and therefore considered there was nothing further to be added to the budget.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

F664 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.

F665 **PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received reports from the Town Clerk on confidential matters relating to the Corn Exchange and Langdale Hall.

Corn Exchange

The Leader was keen to work with the Trust in future and as a long term goal. There had been a meeting to discuss issues further; although it seemed to be keen on the Council giving them the money to employ someone. The Council could do this itself. He suggested that the Council sets aside a sum of money to develop an artistic programme.

The Town Clerk understood that one of the companies approached to run the building by the trust could supply an arts programme at a reasonable cost. This could be a possibility. Another member commented that the reasoning behind the Trust concept was to open up new funding streams, although this could be limited if there was no security of tenure in place such as a lease. The Town Clerk pointed out that some members had proved that there was funding available to the Town Council if it was actively looked for. It was imperative to move forward with the building.

A member who was also a Trustee advised that there was to be a Trust meeting the following evening and discussions this evening might prove to be academic.

The Chairman advised that the Personnel Committee had recommended that a Public Halls Officer was recruited. The Town Clerk added that the Officer would be tasked with bringing people in to the Corn Exchange. Members noted this but still felt that money should be set aside for the artistic programme – the figure of £10,000 was suggested. The RFO thought that this could come from the rolling capital budget.

Langdale Hall

The members received the confidential report of the Town Clerk. She reported that the planning application had not been progressed as it had been possible that there might have been an offer on the building. This had not come to fruition.

The Chairman proposed that as the Corn Exchange refurbishment had been funded via other means it was not obliged to sell the Langdale Hall. Therefore the Council would look at other means of running it as a 'community building'. All members agreed with this proposal.

The Town Clerk reminded members of a local charity who was still interested and she understood Base 33 were also looking for space. As the two groups had possible synergies, she had put them in touch with each other.

The Town Clerk had a quotation for a masterplan. Members agreed that this should be actioned. She also advised that the agent was seeking an abortive fee as the sale had fallen through. Members agreed that this should not be paid.

Allotment at Park Road

The Town Clerk reported that Cottsway Housing Association (CHA) has advised that the rent for the lease of the land designated as allotment gardens at Park Road was going to increase from £5 to £100 per annum. She tabled a legal response from NALC. She, along with the Chairman, had met with the CEO of CHA who had explained that it had to be seen to be getting value for money, hence the proposed increase in the rent. As a consequence the Town Clerk had been asked to justify why it should pay less.

Play Area at Park Road

The Town Clerk reminded Members of the confusion with regard to the ownership of the land which had been enjoyed as a play area since the 1980s, and which the Council had evidence the intention was to transfer it into its ownership. However for reasons unknown the land had been registered to CHA. The Chairman and Town Clerk had also discussed this situation at their meeting with the CEO. He confirmed that there were no plans to build on it at present and it was happy to grant a licence for the Town Council to use it as a play area. There was unfortunately no conclusive evidence that the land was transferred to the Town Council but if it did appear then the Council would move to retain the land permanently.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the confidential report of the Town Clerk be noted;
2. that the Town Clerk proceeds with the recruitment of a Public Halls Officer as agreed by the Personnel Sub-Committee on 22 November 2016;
3. that the Langdale Hall be taken off the market and that the Council looks at other means of running it as a community building;
4. that the quotation for the masterplan in respect of the Langdale Hall and West Witney Sports Ground be accepted;
5. that the agent who dealt with the sale of Langdale Hall be informed that the Council cannot pay an abortive fee;
6. that the quotation from Treloar Associated for the Buttercross structural survey be accepted;
7. that the Town Clerk obtains a fee proposal for a structural survey for the Town Hall to be included in the budget for 2017/18 ;
8. that with regard to the lease to the tenant of the Cemetery Lodge that option 2 as detailed in the report of Mark Baker of Wilsons Commercial be agreed;
9. that the updates on Park Road Allotments and Play Area be noted.

F666 **GROUND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update with regard to the new GM Contract and advised that there were some anomalies between the bill of quantities and the tender. At this stage it had reduced the contract price by £5,000, although there was additional works which needed to be taken into account. The Works/Contracts Supervisor was trying to iron out the issues. Members requested that the Town Clerk undertakes an investigation into how this had occurred. A member asked for this to be a standing item on the Amenities Committee agenda whilst it was outstanding.

RECOMMENDED: that the update be noted and that the item be a standing item on the Amenities Committee agenda whilst it was outstanding.

F667 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the Personnel Committee Minutes of the meetings held on 31 October 2016 and 22 November 2016 as circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 31 October 2016 and 22 November 2016 be agreed and any recommendations contained therein be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.

Chairman