

SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 17 December 2018

At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: A D Harvey (Chairman)

Councillors:	A K Beames	P J Dorward
	C Brown	J M Doughty
	H W Chirgwin	J S King
	B J Churchill	T J Morris
	H B Eaglestone	L M Price
	D S T Enright	

Officers:	Town Clerk
	Democratic Services Officer
	Office Manager

Also present: 1 member of the public

F629 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Woodward.

F630 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

F631 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

F632 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 35(B) TO ENABLE ALL MEMBERS TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE MEETING

RESOLVED: that standing order 35(B) be suspended to allow all members present to participate fully in the meeting.

F633 GRANT APPLICATION FROM THE LOWER WINDRUSH VALLEY GROUP

The Committee received and considered the report of the DSO and the associated grant application from the Lower Windrush Valley Group for a grant of £240 to produce more leaflets about the Lake and Country Park. The Town Clerk pointed out that this would be a direct benefit to the Town Council. Members were all happy to agree to the request.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;

2. that grant of £240 to the Lower Windrush Valley Group be made under the General Power of Competence.

F634 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer concerning the extension of the Christmas Lights contract for a further 2 years. This had been recommended by the Christmas Lights Working Party as it would enable the Town Council to spread the cost of some essential work over the next two years rather than paying for it up front.

However, the Operations and Estates Officer had experienced another year in which there had been significant problems during and after the lights installation to the extent that penalties had been issued. In light of this he felt it best to ask Council if it still wished to extend the contract.

The Operations and Estates Officer had been assured that in following years a different sub-contractor would be used for the installation and erection of the lights. If the contract with Gala Lights was to come to an end then the Council would need to go out to tender and there would be no guarantee of the result.

A member commented that there was a desire to extend the area covered by the lights particularly down Bridge Street and businesses may be on board to help finance this. The Town Clerk replied that it was possible to extend the lights with Gala Lights but there would be additional costs and there would need to be a budget for this.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the contract be extended for one year with an option to extend it to two;
- 3) that businesses be asked how much they would be willing to contribute to additional Christmas Lights.

F635 **COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL PROJECTS PROGRAMME: REVISED BUDGET 2018/19 AND ESTIMATE 2019/20**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. The first item for consideration was the addition of budget lines for 2019/20.

She advised that the Committee also needed to consider the grant to West Oxfordshire Community Transport and whether it wished to increase the grant to the £18,000 as requested, rather than the £12,000 previously recommended. This followed a representative explaining the position of the Company in more detail at the previous Full Council meeting. All members agreed that the grant should be £18,000.

The report also covered the production of Thrush Green – the organisers were requesting a grant of £14,250 from the Town Council to cover costs. They now planned to charge £10 per ticket. After discussion it was felt that the Town Council would be able to assist with

publicity in terms of its social media pages and notice boards and would be happy to support the production with offering three uses of the Corn Exchange (subject to availability) for rehearsals free of charge and the sum of £250.

Cllr Dorward arrived at 6.17pm.

The Committee also agreed to put £1,000 into the budget for a play day; to increase the grant to the Rotary Club from £1,700 to £2,000 to facilitate the Christmas Lights Switch On event; to add £1,000 in the budget towards resolving parking issues in the Langdale Hall car park, and to add in £1,000 for the Blue Plaque Trail.

The Town Clerk had advised in her report that the Witney Music Festival would be looking for a grant to cover the whole period of its hire from Tuesday through until the following Monday. Whilst the existing grant pot might cover this, there was an expectation that Libfest would also apply for a grant, and there may be other events on The Leys which may ask for support. Members agreed to increase the overall budget for subsidised lettings on the Leys Recreation Ground to £5,000 but this was not to be attached to any event in particular at this stage. One member abstained from voting on this.

Members also considered whether to approve the 2018/19 supplementary estimate to deal with the cedar of Lebanon tree in St. Mary's Churchyard. There were two options – the cheaper, which was to turn it into a monolith and consequently would have ongoing cost implications. The more expensive option at £7,000 was the permanent removal of the tree, which the Tree Officer at WODC was happy with. Members agreed that the more expensive option should be taken, subject to the agreement of the Church.

Cllr Enright arrived at 6.45pm.

The Committee considered budget papers prepared by the Town Clerk. The budget equated to a 2% increase on the current year's council tax - £2.75 per annum for a band D property.

Members also considered the capital and special revenue projects and were happy with these.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the grant to West Oxfordshire Community Transport be increased to £18,000;
- 3) that the production of Thrush Green be supported by offering three uses of the Corn Exchange (subject to availability) for rehearsals free of charge and the sum of £250;
- 4) that the grant to the Rotary Club of Witney be increased to £2,000 to facilitate the Christmas Lights Switch On event;
- 5) that the subsidised lettings budget for events on The Leys Recreation Ground be increased to £5,000;

- 6) that the Cedar Of Lebanon Tree be felled at a cost of £7,000 subject to the Church being amenable;
- 7) that the budget for 2019/20 be noted, with the above amendments and approved resulting in a 2% increase in council tax;
- 8) that the capital and special revenue projects be approved.

F636 **PRECEPT 2019/20**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. 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, 435,067 in respect of Council Tax for the town during the financial year 2019/20.

The meeting closed at 6.50pm

Chairman