

**POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 17 June 2019

At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Bolger (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne	V Gwatkin
	O Collins	A D Harvey
	L Duncan	R Smith
	D Enright	
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
Others:	0 members of the public.	

F258 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

F259 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

F260 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

F261 MINUTES

a) **RESOLVED:** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March be signed by the Chairman.

b) **MATTERS ARISING:**

Min F138 – A member asked if the telephone lines had now been changed to STL from BT. The Town Clerk confirmed that this had been done.

Min F145 – A member asked for an update on the Langdale Hall Car Park. The Town Clerk said that she was meeting with Maria Wheatley, the Parking Manager at WODC the following week to progress this.

F262 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

F263 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, VISION & OBJECTIVES FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. She explained that she had amended the Deputy Mayor and replaced it with Leader as being Ex Officio on all meetings.

There was some discussion about the best way to tackle this item as the Mission Statement, Corporate Objectives and Performance Plan all required review by the Committee. There was also discussion about how to measure performance with data that was relevant.

A member suggested that in the course of this, members should look at the WODC report on how to market Witney as a destination – tourists did not stop in the town as there was no coach park.

A member commented that subject to the addition of legal agreements, the terms of reference looked fine. He proposed that these were accepted and the mission statement, corporate objectives and performance plan were referred to the Full Council meeting in July.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the terms of reference be approved subject to the addition of estate management and legal agreements;
3. that the mission statement, corporate objectives and performance plan be referred to the Full Council meeting in July for full discussion.

F264 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda. She gave a brief explanation of the accounts held and the processes used for the information of new Councillors.

The Town Clerk informed Members that the Office Manager was currently reviewing the Council's banking arrangements and a report would hopefully be brought back to the next meeting for consideration. She advised that online banking would simplify matters but the Council's Financial regulations would need to be changed to permit it.

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
Cheque 101107, DDs and Standing orders	£47,483.09	General
Cheques 32140 to 32209 and DDs	£79,662.33	Imprest

F265 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, containing spending recommendations from the Halls and Green Spaces Committee and the Stronger Communities Committee.

Members also considered a confidential debtors report and revising the annual rent for Witney Feast Fair. The Town Clerk, the Leader and Deputy Mayor had met with the Fair's Operator, Mr Wilson, earlier in the week and he had explained that it was a complicated process for him to increase the hire charges to his stall holders and therefore he would prefer one rise covering several years rather than a 5% increase year on year on the proposed figure of £8,700. This was discussed at length by the Committee and it was decided that a charge of £9,150 per annum for a 3-year period should be put to Mr Wilson. This effectively included a 5% increase per annum on the £8,700 originally agreed.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations as detailed in the report of the Town Clerk from the spending committees be agreed;
3. that the annual rent agreement for Witney Feast Fair Operators, Bob Wilson Funfairs Ltd, be set at £9,150 per annum for a period of 3 years.

F266 **DIGITALISATION OF COMMITTEE PAPERS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. The Chairman commented that she had attended presentations from both companies – iBabs and Modern Gov – and had been impressed with what was offered. She was interested to know what the DSO and Town Clerk's preference would be. Both Officers replied that in their opinion Modern Gov offered a better package, largely because it was sector specific and had a good degree of functionality. The Town Clerk explained digitalisation would make the production of committee papers much more efficient saving time and ultimately money. She also explained other time-saving functions of the system which could keep attendance records and also produce action plans – all of which was currently done manually by Officers

A member asked if paper options would still be available if a member had a preference and it was confirmed that it would be possible to print out papers via the systems or for the member to print them at home.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that proposal 2 (Modern Gov) be accepted on a trial basis.

F267 **GRANTS AND SUBSIDISED LETTINGS**

Grant Award Policy

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic Services officer as referred by Full Council on 15 May. Increasingly the Council was receiving applications for £1,000 or more and the annual budget for grant aid was £3,560. Members discussed increasing the amount of money available in total, capping the amount that could be applied for and possibilities of restricting what the Council would be prepared to support.

Members agreed that the level of grant available from budget line 4100/407 should be increased to £10,000 per annum subject to annual review.

It was also suggested that the grant application form be revised to include a section on how the application met Witney Town Council's objectives. This was felt to be a good idea, although the Council would need to set its objectives at the next Committee meeting on 15 July before this could be introduced.

The Committee also discussed capping grant awards and agreed that a limit of £500 per application would enable more groups/people to be helped. Members looked at possible exclusions – what would not be funded - and asked officers to make some amendments and bring this back to the next meeting. It should be noted, however, that schools should not be excluded as long as their applications could demonstrate some form of community engagement.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the budget line 4100/407 be increased to £10, 000 to be reviewed annually;
3. that each grant is capped at a maximum of £500 and that an applicant may only apply once in any 12-month period;
4. that officers make some amendments to the exclusions and bring this back to the next meeting of the Committee;
5. that schools should not be excluded subject to demonstrating community engagement.

F268 **DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATIONS**

Discretionary Grant Applications

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic Services Officer and the grant applications.

The requests were: -

1. Enrych	£500	4100/407 to support service delivery
2. Witney Methodist Church	£500	4100/407 to refurbish their ground floor toilets
3. Witney Town Band	£1, 000	4100/407 (£500 for routine running of the band and £500 for the trip to Unterhaching)
4. Dance Creative	£600	4100/407 for venue hire (not Town Council venue)
5. Jewins Women2women	£2, 990	4100/407 to set up a pilot scheme

Ltd		promoting African culture to children
6. Witney Woodland Volunteers	£500	4100/407 to fund running expenses
7. Witney Carnival Committee	£256	4100/407 (in addition to the £800 set aside in a different budget line) for provision of toilets at the carnival
8. Crohns and Colitis UK (Oxford)	£300	4110/407 to cover hire of the Corn Exchange on 28 June for a tribute band evening
9. The Mayor of Witney	£480	4110/407 to cover 3 lettings of the Corn Exchange for fundraising events

Cllr Enright as Mayor left the room during consideration of his application, and re-entered afterwards.

Members agreed all the applications with the exception of Enrych, Dance Creative and Jewen's Women2 Women. Members asked that Enrych be asked to apply again if they had a more locally based project and Dance Creative be informed that the Council would be happy to discuss the use of its venues as an alternative to their current venue, and that again they could apply in 12 months' time. Jewen's Women2Women was turned down on multiple reasons, including no details of safeguarding, no engagement with local schools or information on how children would be selected for the programme. It was also felt to be a high request for grant funding for the benefit of just 10 children. Members noted the correspondence from Volunteer Link Up, Citizen's Advice West Oxfordshire and Richmond Village, all thanking the Council for their respective grants.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report and correspondence be noted
2. that the following grants be made under the General Power of Competence:

Witney Methodist Church	£500	to refurbish their ground floor toilets
Witney Town Band	£1,000	£500 for routine running of the band and £500 for the trip to Unterhaching
Witney Woodland Volunteers	£500	to fund running expenses
Witney Carnival Committee	£256	for provision of toilets at the carnival
Crohns and Colitis UK (Oxford)	£300	to cover hire of the Corn Exchange on 28 June for a tribute band evening
The Mayor of Witney	£480	to cover 3 lettings of the Corn Exchange for fundraising events

3. t
h
a
t

t
h
e

o
r
g

organisations receiving funding be asked to acknowledge the Town Council's financial support within their publicity and literature;

4. that a report is sent to the Town Council illustrating how the grants have been spent by each organisation.

F269 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 48

RESOLVED: to suspend standing order 48 in order to allow the meeting to continue past two hours in length.

F270 ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2018/19

The Committee received and considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2019.

RECOMMENDED: that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and the Financial Statements for the year ending 31 March 2019 be adopted by Full Council on 26 June 2019.

F271 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

F272 DEFERAL OF AGENDA ITEMS 11, 12, 14, 15 AND 16

RESOLVED: that due to the length of the meeting, agenda items 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 be deferred to a Special meeting of the Policy, Governance and Resources Committee to be held on 26 June 2019 at 6pm.

F273 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee received and considered the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 10 June 2019 as circulated prior to the meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the confidential minutes be noted and the recommendations contained therein approved;
2. that the Town Clerk provides a report to the next meeting on the cost of holding meetings in the Corn Exchange as opposed to the Town Hall Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at: Time Not Specified

Chair