

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

Held on Monday, 28 September 2020

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor L Ashbourne (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	V Gwatkin
	O Collins	M Jones
	H Eaglestone	R Smith
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
Others:	# members of the public.	

F312 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Harvey.

F313 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Ashbourne declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item on Property as she had had a lot of contact with one of the applicants for the property. She would leave the meeting for the discussion of this item.

F314 MINUTES

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020. A member asked if the grants that had been agreed were being used given the situation with the pandemic. The Town Clerk replied that Rotary had decided their event could not go ahead so their grant would not be paid over and the other grants had not been paid over either.

RESOLVED: to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F315 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

F316 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Members received and considered the report of the Office Manager along with payment schedules and bank statements.

RESOLVED:

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

Cheque No's	In the sum of:	Account
Cheque 101138-101140*, DDRs and Standing Orders (June 2020) [*cancelled chq]	£69, 714.47	General CB 1
Cheques 32701 – 32724 and DDs (June 2020)	£75, 506.50	Imprest CB 2
Cheques 101142 – 101144, DDRs and Standing Orders (June 2020)	£95, 849.69	General CB 1
Cheques 327725-32759 and DDs (July 2020)	£86,043.97	Imprest CB 2
No cheques, DDRs and Standing Orders (August 2020)	£6, 242.98	General CB 1
Cheques 32760 -32813 and DDs (August 2020)	£84, 418.36	Imprest CB 2

F317 YOUTH FUND AWARDS

The Chair gave an update on the recommendations from the Stronger Communities Committee on the Youth Grant awards. She added that the grants could not be used for furlough and the money granted had to be used to actively support young people in the town.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and that the following recommendations of the Stronger Communities Committee be agreed:

1. that Junior Park Run be awarded the sum of £3,120;
2. that Home-Start Oxford be awarded the sum of £11,700;
3. that Got2B CIC be awarded the sum of £15,210;

And in addition:

4. that the shortfall of £30 be taken from the Town Council's general fund;
5. that the above financial awards be made under the General Power of Competence.

F318 MARKING COMMUNITY & NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS VIA LIGHTING UP THE CORN EXCHANGE - POLICY

The Committee received and considered a draft policy on marking community and national campaigns via lighting up the Corn Exchange. This led to a discussion amongst members on timescales for lighting up and what might be appropriate if there was any concern over a request that was received.

The Town Clerk cautioned the committee that if the lighting up occurred too often then it would not be “special”. It was agreed that there should be a maximum number of times that the Corn exchange should be lit up during the year and that also an annual calendar needed to be drawn up.

RESOLVED: that the policy be noted and:-

1. that the policy be approved with the amendment to point 6 to include “requests received less than 8 weeks in advance may not be accepted”;
2. that final decisions on applications are delegated to the Town Clerk, Leader and Mayor;
3. that the Leader, Town Clerk and Office Manager would come up with a maximum number of lighting up opportunities and also an annual calendar;
4. that Cllr Gwatkin’s offer to fund the purchase of the lights be accepted – the condition being that the Corn Exchange be lit up annually for LibFest.

F319 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. She advised that she would present the six-month position during the budget setting cycle, which would include the salary information and recharges from services.

There was a discussion about opening the 1863 café as this would have budget implications in terms of staffing and the Town Clerk was therefore concerned about the viability. A member stated that he did not think it was the right time to open a café – even in terms of a takeaway. Other members felt staff had worked hard to get to this point and that therefore it should open as an outside café with table service and takeaway, even if it would increase costs.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:-

1. the recommendations with financial implications from the committees as detailed below be agreed:-

	Budget Line	Amount
1. Defibrillator@WWSG	4166/402	To be established
2. Salt grit bins	4036/402	£500 for 2 x bins
3.COVID Heroes Awards	4141/408	£500 for badges/certificates

2. that the 1863 Café/Bar be opened as an outside seated café with table service and takeaway only (outside orders to be taken) for 2/3 days per week [subject to it being deemed COVID-19 safe].

F320 **BUDGET PARAMETERS 2021/22, CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS 2021/22 AND**

BEYOND

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, which provided the background to the budget setting cycle, and she explained that she was looking for guidance from the Committee on the budget parameters – including whether they wanted to cap or increase the Precept.

The Town Clerk also brought to members attention the fact that the grounds maintenance contract was due for renewal 30 September 2021, and highlighted the fact that given the Council's Climate emergency declaration, this might be the opportune time to carry out a thorough review of the contract, and the way the Council procures these services.

The Chair spoke about the ground's maintenance contract review and the possibility of an open spaces' strategy. It was decided that a task and finish group should be set up to look into this and the Town Clerk was asked to look into appropriate consultants to assist. The Town Clerk explained about the protocols for retendering, and due to the timeframe it might be necessary to extend the current contract but the Committee decided it would be guided by the consultant engaged to undertake the review, in order to set the best time to start a new contract.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:-

1. that no decisions should be made on the level of the precept until the staff review had been completed and considered;
2. that the fees and charges be increased in line with inflation;
3. that a task and finish group consisting of Cllrs Gwatkin, Ashbourne and Smith and relevant Officers be set up to look at the Grounds Maintenance Contract and an Open Spaces Strategy ;
4. that the Town Clerk would obtain fee proposals from potential consultants who could assist with the full review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract and report back to the next meeting.

F321 **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.

Councillor Collins left the meeting at this juncture.

F322 **DEBTOR REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report on debtors from the Office Manager.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

Councillor Ashbourne left the meeting for the discussion of the next item on Property Matters and Councillor Smith took over the position of Chair for this item only.

F323 **PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received a confidential report on property matters from the Town Clerk.

As thorough discussion was held on the offers received via the Council's property agent.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk proceeds as set out in the confidential report of the Council's property agent, and further negotiations are delegated to her.

Councillor Ashbourne re-joined the meeting after discussion and resolution of this item had ended and resumed the position of Chair.

F324 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered a confidential verbal report of the meeting held earlier that evening, given by the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED: that the confidential verbal update from the meeting held earlier be noted, and the recommendations contained therein agreed.

The meeting closed at: 7.52 pm

Chair