

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

Held on Monday, 26 July 2021

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor L Ashbourne (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	H Eaglestone
	J Aitman	V Gwatkin
	O Collins	M Jones
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Tina Jardine	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	None.	

As there was no legislation in place for the Town Council to hold virtual meetings, and because of the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee formed virtually as an Advisory Committee. Any recommendations outside of the current work's programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 2 August 2021.

F390 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology of absence was received from Cllr D Harvey.

F391 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared by members at the meeting.

F392 MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021.

The Deputy Town Clerk drew attention to minute number F300(1) – The amount awarded to 2120 (witney) Squadron Air Cadets by way of a grant should read £994.31.

Resolved:

That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F393 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present to address the committee.

F394 **COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Committee received details of the priorities arising from the recently adopted Open Spaces Strategy for the spending committees of the Council. The Town Clerk advised these would be embedded into Officers' work plans.

Resolved:

That, the priorities for the spending committees of the Council be noted.

F395 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received the joint report of the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer outlining payment schedules, bank statements and bank reconciliations which are brought to the Policy, Governance & Finance committee as part of the Council's due diligence.

Recommended:

Members noted the report, the bank reconciliations and agreed the following schedule of payments be approved:

Cheque No's	In the sum of:	Account
Cheques 101155-101158, DDs and Standing Orders May	£132,589.23	General CB 1
Cheques **33096-33112, DDs and Standing Orders May	£84,682.38	Imprest CB 2
Cheques 101159-101163, DDs and Standing Orders June	£608,252.17	General CB 1
Cheques 33113-33153, DDs and Standing Orders June	£102,814.69	Imprest CB 2

F396 **FINANCIAL REPORT & ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

The Committee received the joint report of the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Members were presented quarterly income and expenditure updates on the Council's budgets and received the recommendations of the spending committees in this cycle of meetings.

The Deputy Town Clerk drew members' attention to the recommendation of the Stronger Communities Committee to launch the Youth Funding Grant Awards, based on the same criteria as 2021 at the beginning of August.

Members were also presented with quotes for replacing the gates at Witney Town Bowls Club and for plotting future grave spaces at Windrush Cemetery, both of which were necessary works on the Council's estate.

In respect of an insurance settlement for damage to pillars at St Mary's churchyard, members were disappointed that the current offer did not cover the full outlay of the Council and costs

paid in good faith were being disputed; the committee accepted that the full costs may not be recovered.

Recommended:

1. That the report be noted, and;
2. That, the recommendations of the spending committees, as detailed, be agreed and;
3. That, the lowest quote for gates at Witney Town Bowls Club, be agreed and;
4. That, the quote for the plotting of grave spaces at Windrush Cemetery be agreed; and
5. That, the insurance settlement offer for the damage to St Mary's pillars be delegated to the Deputy Town Clerk, ensuring the best financial outcome for the Council is achieved.

F397 GRANT APPLICATION - ROTARY COLOUR RUN

The Committee received and considered a grant application request from the Rotary Club of Witney towards a Colour Run event in August.

Members were supportive of the application which would benefit Witney and its residents.

Recommended:

1. That, an award of £500 be approved and;
2. That, this grant be awarded under the General Power of Competence from the Council's discretionary grants budget (4100/407).
3. That the Rotary Club of Witney be asked to acknowledge the Council's financial contribution in its promotional literature.

F398 BABY BONDING PROGRAMME

The Committee received and considered an application to provide free Baby bonding sessions for new parents.

Members were supportive of the sessions but felt further information was needed on how those who needed the subsidised support would be referred before the decision could be fully agreed.

Recommended:

1. That, an award of £300 be approved in principle, subject to further information being provided from the applicant on referrals for this service and;
2. That, this grant be awarded under the General Power of Competence from the Council's discretionary grants budget (4100/407) once further information is received.
3. That, the applicant be asked to acknowledge the Council's financial contribution in its promotional literature.

F399 RECORDING EQUIPMENT FOR MEETINGS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Democratic & Legal Services Officer concerning the broadcasting of meetings and the equipment required for this to proceed.

Members were supportive of the proposal and reiterated the need to reach those who could not attend in-person meetings. The equipment would be a good starting point and could be added to if required.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the Council supports in principle the broadcasting of meetings and;
3. That, a supplementary estimate of £1000 is allocated towards this project and;
4. That, a further report be presented to a future meeting if further government guidance/legislation regarding meeting arrangements is produced.

F400 **PROCUREMENT POLICY**

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning a procurement policy for the Council.

Members were supportive of the proposed policy which supplemented the Council's financial regulations. There was agreement that the limit on tendering should be reduced so that the regulations were in sync with other guidance.

The Town Clerk advised the policy, as presented had considered the Council's aspirations on sustainability and the desire for local contractors. Members, while welcoming these additions requested that a Social Values Policy be created to supplement it further.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the procurement policy as circulated be adopted subject to the creation of, and mention of a Social Values Policy for the Council and;
3. That, the Social Values Policy be brought to the next meeting of the Committee and;
4. That, in the Council's financial regulations, the limit on tendering be reduced to £25,000 to reflect current practice and based on the requirement to publish contracts on the Government Tender/Contracts portal.

F401 **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.

F402 **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

The committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk concerning the future of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Service.

She highlighted concerns that due to staff shortages grass cutting obligations were not being fulfilled, and whilst the Operations & Estates Advisor had suggested offsetting this against the Council's request for more wildflower planting, a rough calculation had revealed that it was not a fair compensation.

Recommended:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and;
2. That, negotiations of the financial implications of the future Grounds Maintenance Service be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this committee.

F403 **PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential update report of the Town Clerk concerning several areas in the Council's estate.

She particularly drew attention to the suggested nominal rent to the Allotment Association, now she was able to proceed with lease negotiations because the legal transfer of the new allotment site at Windrush Place had completed.

The Town Clerk also explained the history behind the lease negotiations relating to Raleigh Crescent Play Area which the District Council had previously promised to upgrade the basketball and youth shelters but had not done so. Members agreed that unless this intention was fulfilled, they should only be taking on the refurbished play area at this stage.

Recommended:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and;
2. That, the recommendations of the Town Clerk be approved.

F404 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The committee received and considered a verbal report from the Town Clerk from the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held earlier in the evening.

Recommended:

1. That, the confidential verbal report from the Personnel Sub-committee held on 26th July 2021 be noted, and the recommendations contained therein approved.

The meeting closed at: 7.12 pm

Chair