

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

Held on Monday, 18 July 2022

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	O Collins L Duncan H Eaglestone	V Gwatkin R Smith
Officers:	Sharon Groth Adam Clapton	Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk
Others:	None	

The Policy, Governance & Finance Committee formed virtually as an Advisory Committee. Any recommendations outside of the current work programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 1 August 2022.

F383 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Harvey & M Jones.

F384 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

F385 MINUTES

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2022.

Minute no. F289 – Emergency Plan. The Deputy Town Clerk advised a multi-agency meeting had taken place in the hope of developing a structured and coherent approach to future flooding events. The Council was awaiting further information from other parties to proceed.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F386 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

F387 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk with accompanying payment schedules, bank statements and reconciliations.

Resolved:

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

Cheque No's	In the sum of:	Account
Cheques 101184, DDs, and Standing Orders May 2022	£1,005,121.61	General CB 1
Cheques 33540-33581, DDs, BACS, and Standing Orders May 2022	£127,743.67	Imprest CB 2

F388 BANK MANDATE & CHEQUE SIGNATORIES

The Committee received a verbal update from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer concerning the Council's bank mandate and authorised cheque signatories.

Members were advised there had been a delay to enacting the above as Councillors struggled to verify their ID in the branch given the limited opening hours. Although now nearly complete, the former resolution had become outdated.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the authorised cheque signatories of the Town Council should be Cllrs J Aitman, V Gwatkin, R Smith, O Collins, and L Ashbourne.

F389 CEMETERY REGULATIONS

The Committee received draft Cemetery and Burial regulations, as amended following recommended adoption by the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee at its meeting on 4 July 2022.

Recommended:

That, the Cemetery & Burial Regulations as presented, be formally adopted by the Town Council.

F390 FINANCIAL REPORT & ASSOCIATED MATTERS

The Committee received and considered the joint report of the Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Town Clerk.

Members noted the Council's Annual Governance & Accountability Return and additional documentation had been submitted to the external auditor; and were advised the figures provided on Council budgets were as expected at this time.

The Committee considered the confidential appendix on a Council debtor and agreed that officers should monitor expected payments before agreeing any further payment plan.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the recommendations of the spending committees as detailed in the report be approved and,
3. That, the debtor outlined in the confidential appendix to the report be monitored to see what further payments are received.

F391 GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning grant and subsidised letting requests.

Members acknowledged recommendations of the Parks & Recreation and Stronger Communities Committees regarding a subsidised letting agreement for Got2b CIC and grant for Witney Voice Box Choir.

The Committee, while understanding of a retrospective application for a subsidised let at the Corn Exchange to help a national charity appeal, had no choice but to reject this as it was late, and the organisation was a church, and the Council cannot financially assist ecclesiastical organisations under statute.

A final request from Oxfordshire Music & Arts Trust (OXMAT) to draw on the remaining funds of their Youth Grant Award 2021 was received. Members were supportive of releasing the amount of £3,834 towards a winter festival, which was a change from their original application, and subsidised use of the Corn Exchange from these funds.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the grant of £100 towards Witney Voice Box Choir be noted and,
3. That, the subsidised letting award of £368.80 to Got2b CIC be noted and,
4. That, these grants be awarded under the General Power of Competence and that the recipients be asked to acknowledge the Council's financial contribution in their promotional literature and,
5. That, the subsidised letting application from White Feather Spiritualist Church be declined and,
6. That, the Grants Policy be amended to advise that retrospective applications will not be considered and,
7. That, the remaining Youth Grant Award 2021 of £3,834 be released to OXMAT (to include a hire charge of the Corn Exchange).

F392 PRINTING & PHOTOCOPYING CONTRACT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning a printing contract for the Council.

Members were advised four quotes had been sought for the contract which reflected the Council's needs and aspirations. The Committee was particularly interested in greener and more

sustainable options provided by the tenderers to help meet its climate emergency obligations and agreed this should be more of a priority than cost.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the decision on which contract to go with be delegated to the Deputy Town Clerk, based on the Committees criteria.

F393 PURCHASE OF A WORKS VEHICLE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer concerning the purchase of a new works vehicle.

Members were advised what the vehicle would be used for and the range it would be travelling so were supportive of this being the first electric vehicle for the Council. The final decision on which of the options to procure should be a decision for officers based on professional information but should be led by a long-term plan for the Council's vehicle fleet.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the decision on which electric vehicle to purchase be delegated to the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer in consultation with the Head of Operations, based on the best information and recommendation available.

F394 SPORTS PITCH BOOKINGS SYSTEM

The Committee received and considered the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer concerning a new electronic Sports Pitch Booking System for the Council.

Members recognised that the current system was not intuitive and cost a considerable amount in time for sports clubs and Council staff. The systems presented provided what was required and were used by other local Councils who were satisfied with their performance.

There was, however, no agreed budget for this project within the current fiscal year and the committee were made aware that other IT functions of the Council were being evaluated to offer a more holistic approach to administration, rather than a piecemeal one.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council agrees that a new system is required in principle and,
3. That, officers continue to explore a more holistic approach to an IT solution to be integrated in the next year.

F395 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.

F396 CHANGE PROGRAMME - CONFIDENTIAL UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Head of Operations (Interim) concerning a planned programme of change for the Council's ground and facilities operation.

Members were supportive of the report and agreed that Option 2 of the recommendations provided the long-term solution to deliver the operations the Council aspired to. It was confirmed that there was little time to facilitate this option, so Option 3 would be beneficial in the interim.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, Option 2 of the report be agreed for the long-term delivery of Operations, but Option 3 would be sufficient until such time as this was completed.

F397 MAJOR CAPITAL & REVENUE PROJECTS

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer concerning major and special projects.

Members noted the updates provided in the report including the potential development and loan required for improvements at West Witney Sports Ground. There was also an update on the latest position of the Corn Exchange refurbishment by the Deputy Town Clerk.

The Committee agreed that the redevelopment at West Witney was a key Council objective, and as well as seeking a contribution from the District Council, a loan would potentially have to be taken to deliver the project.

It was advised that a core drill survey would be required to confirm the integrity of the floor in the Main Hall of the Corn Exchange at a cost of £1,950.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, the Council agrees in principle to applying to the Public Works Loan Board for a loan to deliver the improvements at West Witney Sports Ground and,
3. That, the additional cost of £1,950 for the core drill survey at the Corn Exchange be approved.

F398 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer concerning property and legal matters.

Members were advised a number of assets, due to be transferred to the Town Council from the District Council, were being delayed due to a lack of District Council resources.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, the Town Council corresponds with the Chief Executive of the District Council regarding the situation with legal transfers.

Cllr H Eaglestone left the meeting at 7.19pm

F399 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee meetings held on 22 June and 6 July 2022, which had been circulated ahead of the meeting.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 22 June and 6 July 2022 be noted and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

The meeting closed at: 7.21 pm

Chair