

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

Held on Monday, 30 January 2023

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	O Collins H Eaglestone	V Gwatkin R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Derek Mackenzie Nigel Warner	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	3 members of the public.	

F57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

F58 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

F59 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 21 November 2022 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 21 November 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

F60 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from Eric Marshall of Witney Music Festival concerning both Agenda Items 6 and 12.

The Committee reconvened.

F61 **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT - WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the members of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee received the report and verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members raised some ambiguity concerning Sections 8 and 4d and asked if there could be greater clarity on the level of financial support from the council in future years prior to its approval at the meeting of the Full Council on 13 February 2023.

The acceptance of the partnership agreement was proposed by Councillor O Collins and Seconded by Councillor R Smith. Members voted, 4 in favour, 1 abstention.

Resolved:

1. That, the report, and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers re-visit the sections above to make it clearer what funding could be provided by the Council and,
3. That, the final version of the agreement be made available for ratification by Full Council on 13 February 2023.

F62 **GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS**

In order for the members of the public present to observe the discussion on this item, the grant application for Witney Music Festival was brought forward at this juncture.

The Committee considered the grant application and recognised the benefit the annual event at the Leys provided the community, so agreed to the request for £10,000.

Resolved:

1. That, the grant request by Witney Music Festival for the sum of £10,000 be agreed from the discretionary grants budget and'
2. That, this grant be awarded under the General Power of Competence and that the recipient be asked to acknowledge the Council's financial contribution in their promotional literature and during the event.

F63 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS – POLICY REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the amended Third-Party event policy prepared jointly by the Venue & Events Officer and Operations Manager.

Members thanked officers for a competently put together and straightforward document that was easy to read and were pleased to see issues arising throughout the year were included along with impending legal changes on events.

Resolved:

That, the Witney Town Council Event Hosting Policy is updated with the amendments proposed.

F64 **INTERNAL AUDIT - INTERIM REPORT 2022/23**

The Committee received and considered the Interim Report prepared by Auditing Solutions Ltd. Along with an update from the Responsible Financial Officer.

Members were pleased to see there were no issues or matters arising from the report.

The RFO confirmed to members that the next audit would focus on the Corn Exchange café income and expenditure.

Resolved:

That, the Interim Audit Report be noted.

F65 **ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

The RFO gave a verbal update to advise that a change in the investment strategy would allow the Town Clerk to consult with the RFO on the investment of funds, rather than the Chair of this Committee but any changes would be reported at the next available meeting.

In response to questions from members the RFO confirmed that the investments the council held were in a variety of accounts including a low-risk basket of investments managed by CCLA Investments who provide investment management principally to Charities, Church of England and the public sector. Statements showing current investments could be referred to this committee alongside payment of accounts in the future.

Members voted unanimously in favour of approval of the current investments and the proposed new Annual investment Strategy.

Resolved:

1. That, the written and verbal report is noted and,
2. That, the current investment in secure banks is approved, and,
3. That, the revised Annual Investment Strategy is approved and,
4. That, the RFO to provides a breakdown of where investments are held in future reports.

F66 **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023**

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

Members discussed the options for layout of the hall, opting for Option two as this would allow residents to see the new seating partly exposed and agreed it was more welcoming to sit around the tables rather than have a row of councillor sitting in a line on the stage.

Members welcomed the idea of grant recipient organisations being invited to the meeting, with perhaps Witney Music Festival providing a musician in the café/bar area to welcome residents.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, Option 2 be used for the layout and,
3. That, local grant recipients are invited to attend and,
4. That, a PowerPoint presentation be provided if time/resources permitted and,
5. That, the Witney Music Festival be approached to provide a musician.

F67 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Committee received the draft calendar of Meetings for the 2023/24 council year.

Resolved:

That, the draft calendar be accepted.

F68 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer with the accompanying payment schedules, bank statements and reconciliations.

Resolved:

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

Cheque Numbers	In the sum of:	Account
Cheque 101194 - 101199, DDs, and Standing Orders November 2022	£87,282.11	General CB 1
Cheques 33805 - 33886, DDs, BACS, and Standing Orders November 2022	£186,421.33	Imprest CB 2
DDs, and Standing Orders December 2022	£8,970.86	General CB 1
Cheques 33887 - 33914, DDs, BACS, and Standing Orders December 2022	£158,688.55	Imprest CB 2

F69 GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

The Committee considered Discretionary Grant Applications from Witney Talking News and Witney Town Band and supported the awards unanimously.

With regard to the request from Clean Slate, Members deferred a decision to allow officers to request further information from Clean Slate regarding the work they do for Witney residents and supporting accounts information.

The Committee was unanimously in agreement of the request from Wear Without Waste for a subsidised let of the Corn Exchange for their fashion show. Members asked Officers to enquire as to how residents access the Wear Without Waste services.

The report also advised the Youth Services Grant award to The Parish of Witney has been returned as the project it had been awarded for had was currently not viable. Members discussed and agreed that the funds should be returned to the Council's reserves, but they would consider a further application in the future should The Parish of Witney wish to apply.

In addition to the community grant request from Witney Music Festival awarded earlier, further requests were unanimously approved for Witney Carnival and Oxfordshire Play Association.

Members also discussed four requests for subsidised letting on council event land which all provided a benefit to the community. Members were unanimous in their decision to approve Witney Music Festival, Witney Carnival and LibFest subsidised hire. The application for Witney Pride resulted in a vote of four for approval with one member against.

Members were pleased to receive correspondence from Volunteer Link-Up thanking them for a grant award.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Witney Town Band (Training Band) be awarded a grant of £300 and,
3. That, Witney Talking News be awarded a grant of £500 and,
4. That, a decision on awarding Clean Slate be deferred subject to further information and,
5. That, subsidised hire of the Corn Exchange for Wear Without Waste to the sum of £283.33 be agreed and,
6. That, the sum of £2,500, awarded to the Parish of Witney be returned to the Council's general fund and,
7. That, the grant of £10,000 be approved for Witney Music Festival (as agreed earlier) and,
8. That, the grant of £2,100 be approved for Witney Carnival and,
9. That, the grant of £1,000 be approved for Oxfordshire Play Association and,
10. That, the subsidised lettings applications for Witney Music Festival (£2,214), Witney Carnival (£1,660.50), LibFest (£1,476) and Witney Pride (£738) be approved and,
11. 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.
12. That, the correspondence from Volunteer Linkup be noted.

F70 FINANCIAL REPORT & ASSOCIATED MATTERS

Members received and considered the joint written report of the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Members were pleased to hear from the RFO that the income and expenditure statements had been brought as up to date as possible and gave an accurate position of the current budget spending.

Members noted the Corn Exchange theatre projection agreement and discussed the disposal of the Hall's former tiered seating platform. Members felt it a shame to scrap this and agreed to delegate to Officers to offer this for sale.

Members discussed the request received for one of the surplus children Christmas competition winning lights. They agreed that this should be granted at no cost to the requestee providing the

light successfully passes a Portable Appliance Test (PAT). This would be offered to parents after the lights came to the end of their natural display life of seven years.

The Committee considered and agreed to accept the offer to join the National Association of Local Council's (NALC) Super Councils Network at a cost of £530 (ex VAT) for 2023/24.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the disposal for the Corn Exchange seating platform be delegated to officers and
3. That, the request for the Christmas light be approved at no cost to the resident and,
4. That, the offer of to join NALC Super Council Network be accepted.

F71 SPLASH PAD - LARGE SCALE REPAIRS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager.

Members felt that it was important that the repairs were carried out so as to avoid all potential occurrence of the splash park not being able to operate. They felt that the additional spending required for Option two was sensible as this would hopefully increase the lifespan of the Splashpad.

Resolved:

1. That, the report is noted and,
2. That, repairs and upgrades to the system are carried out with Option two of the report, and funded from the Earmarked Reserve set aside for the Splash Pad Renewal.

F72 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:

That, in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission 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.

F73 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received a confidential verbal report from the Town Clerk/C.E.O.

Members were pleased to hear that the transfer of playparks across the town had progressed to an advanced stage with Heads of Terms being drawn up for Cedar Drive, Waterford Lane and Raleigh Crescent. Regarding Unterhaching Park the Town Clerk reported that the Operations Manager was due to review and approve the playpark surface repairs along with necessary repairs to the wall and gate by West Oxfordshire District Council prior to its final handover.

The Town Clerk updated members on her meeting with Witney Lawn Tennis Club. Further discussions would be required but at this stage, the Town Clerk was looking for agreement in principle to proceed with the negotiations as outlined.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted.
2. That, permission be granted to the Town Clerk to negotiate a new lease with Witney Lawn Tennis Club.

F74 **MAJOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS**

The Committee received the confidential written report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O

Members were advised that Courtside CIC expected to hear back in March 2023 regarding their recent Grant application from the Community Ownership Fund. Once the decision was known the council could consider the implementation of the scheme and whether a decision on a new works depot would have an impact.

The Committee also considered the option to use some of the £75,000 Section 106 monies held for Burwell Hall towards the cost of installing new lockers and refurbishment of the existing changing rooms. All members agreed to this proceeding further.

Members were pleased to hear an update on the proposal for improvements to the existing West Witney Sports Ground building and facilities. All members agreed the sooner this could be actioned the better and it was pleasing to hear that the Sports & Social Club would be involved in the process.

The Committee were surprised at the costs supplied to provide a new depot to host the Council's Grounds Maintenance service. The Town Clerk confirmed that once the decision is known in respect of the Grant Application for The Leys Masterplan then options can be explored further.

Resolved:

1. That, the written report is noted.
2. That, the S106 funding set aside for the Burwell Hall/Recreation Ground be used towards the cost of installing new lockers and refurbishment of the existing changing rooms.

F75 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 21 December 2022, 11 January and 25 January 2023.

Resolved:

That, the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 21 December 2022, 11 January and 25 January 2023 be noted, and the recommendations contained therein approved.

The meeting closed at: 7.37 pm

Chair