

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday 25 March 2019**

**At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor: A D Harvey (Chairman)

Councillors:     A K Beames         J M Doughty (sub H W Chirgwin)  
                  C Brown                 H B Eaglestone  
                  B J Churchill         J S King  
  T J Morris

Officers:                 Mrs Sharon Groth - Town Clerk  
                              Mrs Nicky Cayley - Democratic Services Officer  
                              Mr Adam Clapton - Office Manager

Also present:            1 member of the public

**F132 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Chirgwin.

**F133 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**F134 MINUTES**

- a)     **RESOLVED:**     to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2019 be signed by the Chairman.
  
- b)     **MATTERS ARISING:**     there were no matters arising from the minutes to be discussed at the meeting.

**F135 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned in line with Standing Order 42 so that Mr Richard Stocking could address the committee on the subject of Libfest's grant application.

Following this address, the Council reconvened.

**F136 GRANT APPLICATION FROM LIBFEST**

This item was taken next with the express permission of the Chairman, in order that the public present could listen to the debate.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had budgeted for this grant. Whilst members wished to emphasise that there should not be an expectation of an annual grant, they were all very happy to approve the request for the 2019 event.

The Committee would return to this item later to discuss the other applications.

**RECOMMENDED:** to grant fund Libfest the sum of £1,395.00 to cover the hire of The Leys for 3 days from The Leys Recreation Ground Subsidised Lettings Budget 4110/202 under the General Power of Competence.

*Mr Stocking left the meeting.*

F137 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council held 4 bank accounts with Barclay’s including a business premium account. This was presenting problems in transferring money to other accounts as this had to be done by cheque and it took 5 days to clear. Other accounts did not have cheque books associated with them so there was a difficulty if money needed to be transferred. It may be that internet banking needed to be looked into.

A member proposed that internet banking should be looked into. The Town Clerk added that the Council’s financial regulations would need to be changed. Other members had concerns about fraud and security

**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:

<b>Cheque No’s</b>	<b>In the sum of:</b>	<b>Account</b>
Cheque 101094 - 101096, DD and Standing orders – January 2019	£1,057,210.30	General
Cheques 31997 - 32037, DD - January 2019	£69,460.25	Imprest
Cheques 101090 – 101093, DD and Standing Orders – December 2018	£185,273.53	General
Cheques 31947 - 31996 DD and DR - December 2018	£77,068.38	Imprest

F138 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, containing spending recommendations from the Estates Management Committee, Sports and Recreation Committee and Community Services Committee.

Members also considered the option to change the telephone lines to STL from BT, delegation of selecting the best utilities deal to the Town Clerk and a schedule of proposed wedding licence charges.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the spending recommendations from the Estates Management, Sports and Recreation and Community Services Committees be agreed;
3. that the telephone line supplier be changed from BT to STL including paying an early exit fee to BT;
4. that the renewal of the utilities services contracts be delegated to the Town Clerk;
5. that the fees and charges for wedding ceremonies as circulated at the meeting be agreed.

**F139 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2018 – 2019: INTERIM UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Internal Auditor circulated with the agenda. Members commented that it was an excellent report.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted.

**F140 DISCRETIONARY GRANT APPLICATIONS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS**

The Committee returned to this item to consider the remaining grant applications received. The requests were:-

1. Home Start Oxford	£1,000	4100/407 to cover match funding for a new programme of Family Well Being Groups in Witney
2. FC Mills	£62	4110/407 to cover hire of pitch for a charity match

Members discussed the applications and decided that Home Start had too much funding already although the Town Clerk pointed out that this was county wide, whereas this project was specifically for Witney. It was agreed that a token grant of £250.00 would be appropriate. The Committee agreed to fund the charity football match.

Members noted the correspondence from the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board thanking the Council for its grant towards the Blue Plaque for Patrick Steptoe. The Town Clerk advised she had received invitations for Councillors to attend the unveiling on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and would circulate it accordingly.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report and correspondence be noted;

2. that the following grants be made under the General Power of Competence:

Home Start Oxford	£250	To contribute to match funding for a new programme of Family Well Being Groups in Witney
F C Mills	£62	To cover hire of pitch for charity match

3. that the organisations receiving funding be asked to acknowledge the Town Council’s financial support within their publicity and literature.

**F141 BURWELL HALL – ADJACENT STREET LIGHTING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager along with comments from a regular Burwell Hall user circulated prior to the meeting. He added that he had noticed that PL 1 was also not lit. Members understood the complexity of the situation but agreed to replace the bulbs in the two unlit lights with LED bulbs. However, the Town Council would not accept long term responsibility for these street lights and would not replace the bulbs in future. The Committee asked the Council’s solicitor to be charged with establishing ownership.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the two unlit street lamps have the bulbs replaced with LED bulbs;
2. that the Town Council does not accept long term responsibility for these street lights and would not replace the bulbs in future ;
3. that the Town Council’s solicitor be asked to establish ownership of the lights.

**F142 EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL: CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk which included the Council’s Risk Management Policy and the Corporate Risk Assessment.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Risk Management Policy and Corporate Risk Assessment be noted and endorsed by the Council.

**F143 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.

F144 **DEBTORS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Office Manager as circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk also brought to members attention some anomalies which had only come to light since the agenda was issued. There were four further debts which dated back to 2017 which Officers were sure had been paid and she explained the reasoning.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the 4 debts reported subsequent to the Office Manager's report totaling £665 be written off at the year end.

F145 **URGENT PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from Abbeymill Homes concerning the bus shelter on Corn Street and correspondence from the Council's solicitors concerning the Langdale Hall.

A member stated that he had been at the site meeting with OCC and Abbeymill Homes where it had been agreed that the bus shelter would remain in situ and would be protected during construction work.

The Town Clerk highlighted the ongoing parking issues in the Langdale Hall, which were raised by a service user at the Annual Town Meeting. The Council's solicitor and property agent were increasingly concerned particularly as the Council was in danger of being exposed to liabilities beyond its control. Members discussed some solutions in demarcation of the various areas of the car park where existing permissions and rights were held.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the correspondence be noted;
2. that in respect of the bus stop on Corn Exchange, Abbeymill Homes be informed that they must reconstitute the bus shelter in its original position at the end of the construction period, and that no more of the shelter be taken down.
3. that the Town Clerk obtain costings for marking out the various areas in Langdale Hall in order to define areas where there were certain rights in place and report to full Council.

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The meeting closed at 7.06pm

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Chairman