

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

Held on Monday, 23 November 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:	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
Others:	1 member of the public.	

F403 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Harvey.

F404 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Eaglestone and Collins declared interests in the item on property matters as they both sat on the Witney Town Hall Charity.

F405 MINUTES

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2020.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F406 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The member of the public present did not wish to participate in the meeting.

F407 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager, together with bank reconciliations and statements and a schedule of payments.

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 101145, Bank Transfer, DDRs and Standing Orders (September 2020)	£1,046,842.00	General CB 1
Cheques 32814-32838 and DDs (September 2020)	£83,259.51	Imprest CB 2

F408 ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2020-21

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/RFO. She advised that the strategy was standard for the sector.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted:

1. that the current investment in secure banks and the Town Clerk/RFO continues to monitor interest rates to ensure that the Council receives the most advantageous interest rates be approved;
2. that the attached appendix being the Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21 be formally approved by the Committee, and subsequently full Council on 7 December 2020.

F409 GRANTS AND SUBSIDISED LETTINGS

The Committee received and considered the report of the DSO and the grant application from Volunteer Link Up.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and that Volunteer Link Up be granted £500 under the General Power of Competence.

F410 MARKING COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS VIA LIGHTING UP OF THE CORN EXCHANGE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager. The Chair commented that LibFest would be purple in colour and that the building could still be lit up even if the event itself did not take place. She suggested that annual events should include International Women's Day (8 March – green, purple and white), World Environment Day (5 June – green), and the NHS Birthday (5 June – blue).

There followed a discussion on what/how many events should be lit up and whether they needed to be included in the annual calendar.

RESOLVED: that the annual calendar for lighting up the Corn Exchange be delegated to the Leader, Mayor, Town Clerk and Office Manager to agree and that International Women's Day (8 March), World Environment Day (5 June) and the NHS Birthday (5 July) be added to this.

F411 **FINANCIAL REPORTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/RFO, the financial report and recommendations made by spending Committees through the current cycle of meetings.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and that the recommendations from spending committees be approved.

a) REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2020-21 AND BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2021-22

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/RFO, which was circulated prior to the meeting. She explained that she had not yet received the tax base information from the District Council that was needed to finalise the budget and therefore the Council would not be able to set its budget and declare the precept at the meeting scheduled for 14 December. Equally there was some further information from the organisation review that was required. However, it had been recommended by the Council's consultants, LGRC that the Council should undertake a Strategic Plan and she and the Leader were therefore recommending that that date be reserved for a meeting to start this process.

Members discussed the general grants budget as due to Covid-19 not much had been spent. Members agreed to roll the underspend over to the next financial year.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:

1. that the meeting on 14 December is a strategy meeting for a Strategic Plan;
2. that the budget for the Grants – General (4100/407) for 2020/21 be rolled over into the next fiscal year;
3. that the revised base revenue budget for 2020/21 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2021/22, as detailed in the draft estimates be approved in principle—subject to any further adjustments necessary – particularly when unknown factors have been confirmed.

b) SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES 2021-22

The Committee received and considered the revised schedule of charges for recreation, burials and hall hire, which had been recommended by the appropriate committees.

RESOLVED: that the Fees and charges as presented, be approved.

c) REVISED CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS PROGRAMME 2020-21

This item would be informed by the Strategic Plan and was therefore referred to that meeting on 14 December.

RESOLVED: that this item be referred to the Strategic Plan meeting on 14 December 2020.

d) REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS PROGRAMME 2021-22 AND BEYOND

This was item would be informed by the Strategic Plan and was therefore referred to that meeting on 14 December.

RESOLVED: that this item be referred to the Strategic Plan meeting on 14 December 2020.

The member of the public left the meeting at this point.

F412 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.

F413 DEBTOR REPORT

The Committee received and considered an updated report from the office Manager on debtors.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

F414 NATIONAL PROTOCOL

Members received and considered the report of the Office Manager, which had been revised due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDED: that the updated protocol in the light of covid be noted and approved and with any lighting up of the Corn Exchange in relevance to this taking precedence over any other event.

F415 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk, circulated prior to the meeting, which included an update on the situation relating to the rent review of the Town Council's rent for the Town Hall, Town House and Buttercross, and also the letting of the retail unit at 51 Market Square.

The confidential report also contained information relating to a licence agreed in 2016 for a property in Vanner Road to have an access off of Council owned amenity land, and the fact that the property had now changed hands, the new owner was requesting the same permissions. She had sought legal advice from the Council's professional advisors which she relayed.

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the recommendation the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee had made in respect of a request from its tenant in Langdale Hall to sub-let a room. She also elaborated on the planning application the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee had been considering for Witney East and the possible alternative access for Windrush Cemetery. She suggested additional budget needed to be made in order to fund the internal road layout.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:-

1. that the rent negotiations for the Town Hall, Town House and Buttercross be delegated to the Town Clerk - and for her to put forward an annual rent of £1,000 more than currently paid in the first instance for consideration by the Trust along with inflationary increases thereafter;
2. that 51 Market Square be retained in the medium term for public facing offices for the Council's own purposes, whilst the economic market picks up, subject to agreement by the Landlord;
3. that the licence granted in 2016 for the property in Vanner Road be brought to an end and the former resident reinstates the wall as detailed in the licence. That no further licences for this arrangement are considered;
4. that the Council sets aside £25,000 for future internal roadways and car park in the Windrush Cemetery in the 2021/22 budget.

F416 **OPEN SPACES STRATEGY & REVIEW OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

Following the recommendation at the last meeting (minute F320), the Town Clerk had sought fee proposals from suitably qualified consultants to undertake a review of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contract and provide an Open Spaces Strategy. The Committee considered the confidential report, along with four fee proposals all of which had been circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED: that the confidential report be noted and that Council proceeds with option D.

F417 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 11 November 2020 as circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the confidential minutes be noted and the recommendations contained therein be agreed.

The meeting closed at: 7.15 pm

Chair