

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 22 March 2021

Title: Finance Report

Contact Officer: Town Clerk - Sharon Groth

Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for the whole of the Council's approved budgets are provided at appendix 1 for scrutiny. The period to which this report relates is Period 11, 1 April 2020 to 28 February 2021.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the financial reports do not include the recharges from the Works, Agency or Central Support departments, nor does it include the salary information where this is directly attributable. The External Book-keeper will be working on these as part of the year end process.

Financial Implications of Recommendations made by Spending Committees

It is the Council's practice that all matters discussed and recommendations made by spending committees, which have financial implications, are reported to this committee, as this committee is responsible for the overall financial management of the Council.

Sport & Play Committee

- a. Football Season Extension & Training – as covered in an earlier report to this committee
- b. Old Bowls Building - £50 for planting around the building/bee boxes if possible
- c. West Witney - That the Town Council's earmarked reserve (EMR) for Sports Improvement be allocated towards temporary measures and facilities at West Witney Sports Ground, subject to approval by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee – this is covered at a later agenda item.

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

- a. CEWP Minutes - That Drama by Design be employed as consultants on the refurbishment of the Main Hall at the Corn Exchange to include seating, lighting and audio elements. The cost being £7350.00, covered from the existing consultancy budget for the project, and that an additional budget of £2000.00 is requested from the Town Council to cover construction supervision by Drama by Design at a cost of £4200.00.

- b. Tower Hill Vehicular Access - Setting an additional budget sum to cover the associated costs of Cemetery Access Audit reports recommendations – these are yet to be established.
- c. Rolling the remaining 2020/21, 301/4036 maintenance budget into the 2021/22 financial year to enable the recommendations in the report to be carried out
- d. Allotments – That 55 sheds be ordered at a cost of £22,000 for the Windrush Place site; The provision of 3 bay composting areas at both Lakeside and Windrush Place Allotments. 2. The request that Council consider fencing Hailey Road Allotments 3. The request that council provide secure storage at Newland Allotment. All expenditure to be met from the EMR designated for allotments.

Stronger Communities

- a. Tree Planting – it was agreed to roll over the grant promised to Wychwood Project for tree planting and that the hedge laying would be covered within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- b. Tree load testing – The Operations & Estates Advisor had obtained a quote for a load test of two trees which was £1,926.

Witney Carnival

Stronger Communities Committee also deferred the request from the Witney Carnival organisers for a grant/funding of £4,000 towards a scaled down version of this years event on 10 July 2021. Bearing in mind that according to the government’s roadmap all restrictions may be lifted on 21 June 2021.

The Council had budgeted the usual £1,000 towards this event in 2021 /22 which covers them having to bring in additional toilet facilities for the event.

Due to COVID the Town Clerk had to make savings where possible to offset the loss of income as well as additional costs incurred in order to implement COVID safety measures – therefore a lot of budgets have been scaled back quite a lot whilst trying to keep key services and facilities running and maintained. At such an early stage having not started the new financial year as yet it is difficult to highlight exactly where the additional £3,000 can be met from to support this event. The only solution could be from the discretionary grants budget which at a previous meeting was agreed to roll over to the next financial year – however the terms and conditions for that grant pot limits grant applications to £500 per applicant. At this stage the Council would need to make special one-off dispensation.

The Town Clerk sought additional information from the Carnival Chair for assurance that there would be no risk to the Council if it pledged this funding and the event didn’t proceed – because quite frankly the Council should not put at risk taxpayers money. The email correspondence is attached for information. If the Council is so minded to support this event

then it would be preferable to procure these goods and services directly with the suppliers so that the Council can claim the VAT back – which may reduce the grant by 20% in any case.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

All Officer reports set out the financial implications so that consideration is generally given to budgets and funding availability when agreeing expenditure.

The Committee receives financial reports in order to carry out its checks and balances, especially as it has overall scrutiny of the Council's finances through Officer reports. This coupled with internal and external audits provides the Council with its assurances.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

This report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control, as it enables income and expenditure to be reviewed and compared with the Council's budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and give consideration to the recommendations with financial implications from the committees as detailed above, but particularly:

1. Agree a supplementary estimate of £2,000 to cover the additional professional fees for the consultants being used on the Corn Exchange Phase 2 refurbishment project;
2. Consider the request of the Witney Carnival for funding of £4,000 towards this years scaled back event – and if the funding is agreed, from which budget line it is to be funded.