

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

**Held on Monday, 14 June 2021**

**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	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Simon Wright	Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	No members of the public.	

As there was no legislation in place for the Town Council to hold virtual meetings, and because of the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee formed virtually as an Advisory Committee. Any recommendations outside of the current work's programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 28th June 2021.

**F293 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Harvey who was on Council business.

**F294 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

**F295 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Ruth Smith be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee.

There being no other nominations it was:

**Resolved:**

That Councillor Ruth Smith be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2021/2022 municipal year.

**F296 MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021.

There were no matters arising.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F297 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no applications from members of the public to address the committee.

F298 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received the joint report of the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer outlining payment schedules, bank statements and bank reconciliations which are brought to the Policy, Governance & Finance committee as part of the Council's due diligence.

**Recommended:**

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

<b>Cheque No's</b>	<b>In the sum of:</b>	<b>Account</b>
DDs and Standing Orders February	£3,359.52	General CB 1
Cheques 32975-33012, DDs and Standing Orders February	£119,014.66	Imprest CB 2
DDs and Standing Orders March	£52,577.40	General CB 1
Cheques 33013-33070, DDs and Standing Orders March	£122,367.01	Imprest CB 2
DDs and Standing Orders April	£2819.21	General CB 1
Cheques 33071-33095, DDs and Standing Orders April	£146,203.97	Imprest CB 2

F299 **DISCRETIONARY GRANT AWARD POLICY**

The Committee reviewed the current Council policy on discretionary grant awards.

It was suggested that section 5.1 of the policy that set a £500 limit should be removed to allow greater flexibility when considering applications. In addition members considered whether grant applications should be determined bi-annually.

A member suggested that sections 4.3 and 4.4 could be amended. With regard to 4.3 it was considered that building and equipment costs were an issue for organisations and the flexibility to award in such circumstances should be available. In respect of 4.4 it was agreed that this should just read hospitality so that applicants such as foodbanks were not precluded.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the Discretionary Grant Award Policy be amended by the deletion of sections 4.3 and 5.1 and 4.4 being amended to hospitality only;
2. That, consideration of grants be undertaken twice a year at the March and September meetings of the committee; and
3. The, revised process be reviewed after six months operation.

F300 **GRANTS AND SUBSIDISED LETTINGS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning discretionary grant applications from 2120 (Witney) Squadron and Jewins Women2Women Ltd together with a subsidised lettings application from the Royal British Legion.

Members expressed support for the application from 2120 (Witney) Squadron subject to the recommendation regarding changes to the policy being approved at Council.

In respect of Jewins Women2Women members expressed their support for the work being undertaken but felt unable to support a grant based on the information submitted. The Committee suggested that the applicants, in being informed of the decision, be advised that the council would welcome a new application with more information about direct support to clients in Witney.

The Committee supported the subsidised letting request from the Royal British Legion.

**Recommended:**

1. That, an award of £949.31 to 2120 (Witney) Squadron be approved subject to the adoption of the revised Grants Policy;
2. That, no award be made to Jewins Women2Women at this time but the applicant be asked to provide further information and submit a future application if they wish;
3. That, a Subsidised Lettings Grant of £165 be awarded to the Royal British Legion (Witney Branch);
4. That these grants be awarded under the General Power of Competence; and
5. That, correspondence from Oxfordshire Association for the Blind and Life Education be noted.

F301 **INTERNAL AUDIT - FINAL REPORT 2020/2021**

The Committee received and considered the final Internal Audit report for 2020/2021. Members thanked officers for their hard work in respect of the audit and welcomed the positive assurances in each relevant area.

**Recommended:**

That, the final Internal Audit Report for 2020/2021 be received and noted

F302 **ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2020/21**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2020/21.

It was noted that the document would be presented at the forthcoming Council meeting for ratification as required under the Accounts & Audit Regulations.

**Recommended:**

The Council is invited to note this report and

1. That, the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 where questions 1 to 9 were answered yes, be approved;
2. That, the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 be approved; and
3. That, the unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021 be noted

F303 **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.

F304 **PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received a confidential verbal update from the Town Clerk in respect of a number of property matters.

During discussion it was noted that there was a large amount of furniture and other equipment in council buildings and this would need to be stored to allow conversion to additional office space. Members concurred that this should be done and that some items could be disposed of subject to valuation following a future report to this Committee.

**Recommended:**

That, the confidential update be noted and the Town Clerk be delegated to find a suitable storage facility for the excess furniture in the council facilities for a period of six months and that a valuation for some items is sought with a view to disposal.

F305 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 7 June 2021.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 7 June 2021, and recommendations therein be agreed.

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The meeting closed at: 7.03 pm

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Chair