

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 28th March 2022

Title: Financial Report & Associated Matters

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk, Adam Clapton

Background

It is the Council's usual practice that all matters discussed, and recommendations made by spending committees which have financial implications, are reported to this committee. This committee is responsible for the overall fiscal management of the Council. With the current cycle of meetings being held virtually, the recommendations will need to be ratified at the Full Council meeting on 11th April 2022.

Current Situation

Parks & Recreation Committee – 7th March 2022

PR101 – Burwell Hall Changing Rooms. The Committee agreed the redevelopment of the changing rooms commence with architects being employed to provide an official concept design. Funds would be used from the EMR for this project.

PR103 – Leys Traffic Calming. The Committee agreed to ask Oxfordshire County Council how much additional funding it could provide to the designed scheme presented to the committee (scheme design included as an appendix to this report).

The Town Council has £5,000 allocated for this project and confirmation has been received that the County Council can provide all the additional costs if the Town Council would like this project to go ahead.

Recommended:

That, members resolve whether to continue with this project, paying £5,000 as the Town Council's contribution, already budgeted for under EMR

PR104 – West Witney Tennis Colour-coating. The committee agreed to spend £7,100 to complete this task from budget line 4921/800 (£10,000).

Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee- 14th March 2022

H112 – Matters Arising from the Minutes. The committee agreed the additional line dancing element of the tea dance event could be covered by subsidised letting of a 4-hour period (2 hours for line dancing and 2 hours for tea dance), subject to a satisfactory grant application. This would equate to £62.50 per week.

H115 – Corn Exchange Damp Works. The committee agreed to spend £8,168.70 to offer a long-term fix to the problem from an EMR totalling £50,000 (EMR includes a budget for lift replacement/renewal).

H118 – Windrush Cemetery Mapping. The committee agreed to the additional sum of £1,275 (exc. VAT) to produce a concept design of the cemetery, including the layout of graves and new roads/pathways. This would be funded from the cemetery layout EMR

Stronger Communities Committee- 21st March 2022

SC124 – Happy to Chat Benches. The committee agreed to increase a former unspent budget of £100 to £150 for the completion of this project. The funds could be allocated from the community infrastructure budget of set for the 2022/23 fiscal year.

SC125 - In Bloom & Wild Witney Competitions. The Committee agreed to enter Thames & Chiltern categories for The Cemetery and Eton Close totalling £75, to fund schools £25 each for Schools in Bloom (totalling £300), and community gardening groups to the sum of £340. This would be funded from the In Bloom Budget for 2022.

SC127 – Platinum Jubilee Working Party Minutes. The committee agreed the recommendation of the Working Party that £600 should be re-purposed from the In Bloom Budget towards the Jubilee Legacy Project planting at Unterhaching Park.

SC123 – Third Party Events. The Committee offered support to Witney Music Festival and agreed a grant application should be made to this committee for £10,000. It was stated these funds would be paid back by the Festival after the event, but this committee should consider available funds as a grant application request.

Corn Exchange Retractable Seating Contract – Delegated Approval of Additional Funds

That, the Council commits to paying a further £3,080.00 to Hussey Seatway Ltd. for the provision of retractable seating in the Corn Exchange. The decision taken by the Town Clerk under Standing Order 26/Financial Regulation 4.3 as a matter of urgency due to the timescales of the project and rapidly increasing costs of raw materials.

CCTV – Annual Payment towards Town Centre Scheme

Historically the Town Council has contributed £10,000 towards the town centre CCTV scheme. The invoice requesting this year’s contribution has now been received and the Committee are requested to consider if it wishes to continue to contribute to the scheme for a further year.

Gas & Electricity Contracts Renewal

The Council’s energy contracts expire on 31st March 2022. As Green Energy UK is the only provider offering 100% green energy, officers have agreed to a 1-year contract on the following basis.

Contract Standing Charge in Pence per day exc. VAT	Electricity	50.00 (31.69)
	Gas	58.09 (55.32)
Contract Unit Rate or Peak Rate in Pence per KWh exc. VAT	Electricity	28.70 (15.9)
	Gas	12.00 (4.4)

The increase is high due to the volatile global market conditions.

2022 Insurance Renewal

This committee committed to three-year agreement with Zurich Municipal at a meeting on 22nd March 2021, minute no F156 refers. The annual cover (year 2) has been renewed in line with this agreement at a cost of £18,801.87 inclusive of taxes.

Bank Mandate

The Town Clerk issued the paperwork to Committee members on 14 February 2022 in order for them to take it into the local Barclays Bank branch to verify their identity. This is a necessity for the purposes of setting up the bank mandate to sign cheques over £5,000 as well as setting up the online banking facility. So far one Member has confirmed she has done this. The current position is that only two Councillors are set up on the bank mandate and it is increasingly difficult and time-consuming getting cheques signed in a timely manner, it would therefore be appreciated if the remaining Members can go to the local branch as soon as practicable so that the mandate can be finalised without further delay.

Stocktake

With the café/bar 1863 and the bar at Burwell Hall now fully operational the Council needs to have a periodic independent stock check – particularly to value the stock at the year-end for the Council's final accounts but also to keep an accurate track of the physical stock, the movement during the period as well as account for wastage and identify any discrepancies. The Town Clerk is in the process of sourcing a suitable contractor – and hopefully further information will be available at the meeting.

Debtor Report

Members are invited to note the confidential debtor briefing as an appendix to this report.

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 regarding its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

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

All the Council's Committees receive financial reports to conduct its checks and balances, and consideration is given to budgets and funding availability when agreeing expenditure.

Financial implications

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

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Agree the recommendations of the spending committees as detailed above,

2. Decide on whether to accept the design for Leys Traffic Calming scheme and associated costs, as presented by Oxfordshire County Council,
3. Note the additional funding for the retractable seating at the Corn Exchange, as agreed by the Town Clerk under delegations in statute,
4. To consider the payment request of £10,000 as the Council's annual contribution towards the CCTV town centre scheme,
5. Note the Gas & Electricity Contracts renewal,
6. Note the 2022 Insurance renewal premium,
7. Note the information regarding the Town Council Bank Mandate,
8. Note the employment of an independent stock-taker for the Council's Bar Operations,
9. Consider the confidential debtor report and associated recommendations.