

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

Held on Monday, 31 January 2022

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	M Jones
	O Collins	T Ashby (In place of H Eaglestone)
	V Gwatkin	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
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 programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 14 February 2022

F46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs L Ashbourne and H Eaglestone.

Councillor T Ashby was in attendance for Councillor H Eaglestone

F47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

F48 MINUTES

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

Minute F586 – The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the agreed Open Spaces infrastructure policies would be implemented and published online soon.

Minute F588 – The Town Clerk advised actions concerning the Council’s banking arrangements were ongoing.

Resolved:

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

F49 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present to address the committee.

F50 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk 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.

Resolved:

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

Cheque No's	In the sum of:	Account
DDs and Standing Orders October	£77,878.62	General CB 1
Cheques 33275-33323, DDs, and Standing Orders October	£151,809.45	Imprest CB 2
Cheques 101168-101169, DDs, and Standing Orders November	£1,039,781.45	General CB 1
Cheques 33324-33378, DDs, and Standing Orders November	£123,111.20	Imprest CB 2
DDs and Standing Orders December	£8,859.08	General CB 1
Cheques 33379-333408, DDs, and Standing Orders December	£86,258.61	Imprest CB 2

F51 **FINANCIAL REPORT & ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

The committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

It was confirmed the items listed would be funded within the current fiscal year, apart from where stated.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

F52 **BUDGET - REVISED 2021/22 AND ESTIMATES 2022/23**

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/RFO.

The report contained revised financial reports on the 2021-22 and proposed 2022-23 budgets. Reviews had taken place by each spending committee during the last Council cycle to balance their budgets in line with the formerly agreed precept increase of 4.9% for 2022-23.

Members scrutinised the budget and raised several questions on specific budget lines and earmarked reserves for deferred or potential projects and services. The committee was satisfied the budget, as presented would offer best value for the Council and residents in the forthcoming year.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted; and,
2. That, the earmarked reserves as detailed in the report fund some revenue and capital expenditure, including the repurposing the EMRs A/c 375 – CCTV Leys/Burwell to fund 4990/402 the annual contribution towards the CCTV Town Centre Scheme and,
3. That, the revised budget for 2021-22 as presented, be adopted and,
4. That, the Capital & Special Revenue Projects as listed, be approved and,
5. That, the recommendations from the Spending Committees to balance the budget be approved, therefore adopting the budget for 2022-23 as presented.

F53 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The committee received and considered the report of the Democratic & Legal Services Officer.

Members noted that no Annual Town Meeting took place during 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic so an in-person meeting, later than the scheduled date of 16th March, but before 1st June would be favourable.

The committee agreed the format of the evening should be as in previous years, with the same local invitees, Committee Chairs providing reports for two years work ahead of the meeting, and round tables laid out for attendees.

Recommended:

1. That, the Annual Town Meeting for 2022 be held in-person at the end of April or beginning of May; and,
2. That, the format of the meeting be similar to that of previous years in the Corn Exchange.

F54 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Committee received the draft calendar of meetings for the forthcoming municipal year, as prepared by the Democratic & Legal Services Officer.

Recommended:

That, the calendar of meetings for the forthcoming municipal year as presented, be adopted by Witney Town Council.

F55 OFFICE 365/COMPUTER SOFTWARE

The committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members were advised that further information had been received since the report had been written and regrettably, the Town Council could not upgrade to Windows 11 as key software had not been tested with the programme and therefore, would not be supported.

The Council could however proceed with upgrades to Office 365, email migration and the creation of an intranet/extranet service to help facilitate the growing Council workforce and members. The Council's IT providers had offered a small, time sensitive discount on these services.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted; and,
2. That, the Council upgrades to Office 365 and creates an Intranet/Extranet, taking advantage of the terms offered by its IT provider.

F56 **PROCUREMENT POLICY**

The committee received and considered a draft Procurement Policy for the Town Council.

Members were advised this policy was previously submitted to the committee and amendments had been made to help realise the Council's aspirations concerning social values, not just financial ones.

As a small organisation, it was difficult to weight decision-making based on social values but with this policy, consideration would be given where possible. It was confirmed that the Council had financial regulations which included statutory requirements on the awarding of contracts which would still have to be adhered to.

Recommended:

1. That, the Procurement Policy as presented be adopted by Witney Town Council.

F57 **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.

F58 **PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO concerning property under the Council's ownership and ongoing legal or commercial communications.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO be noted.

F59 **CORN EXCHANGE BUILDING REPAIRS & EXTERNAL DECORATION**

The committee received and considered the confidential report of the Operations & Estates Advisor.

Members recognised the works were required to help solve a long-standing damp issue at the Corn Exchange but were disheartened so few quotes had been submitted for the work from qualified tradespeople.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted; and,
2. That, the required works be advertised on the national Contracts Finder website to see if any further quotes could be obtained ahead of the Full Council meeting on 14th February.

F60 **TOWN HALL WINDOW REPAIRS AND EXTERNAL BUILDING DECORATION.**

The committee received and considered the confidential report of the Operations & Estates Advisor.

Members were pleased to see the specification for these works and the quote comparison provided by officers to explain the differences in quotes which were in budget. There was however, some disparity in the quotes in terms of scaffolding costs and other work components which could not be discerned at the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted; and,
2. That, the decision on which contract award be delegated to Officers in conjunction with the Chair and Deputy Leader.

F61 **FUTURE MAJOR/STRATEGIC PROJECTS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO concerning major and strategic projects.

Recommended:

1. That, the confidential report be noted; and,
2. That, the confidential appendix report of the Projects Officer be noted and,
3. That, architects be instructed to draft indicative layout plans of the property outlined in the report to visualise the space and help gauge public interest and,
4. That, a decision on 3G pitch feasibility on Town Council owned land is deferred until after a meeting with the Football Association.

F62 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 12th, 19th, and 26th January 2022 previously circulated. Since the agenda had been published a further meeting had been held on 28th January 2022 and these minutes had also been circulated ahead of the meeting.

Resolved:

That, the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-committee held on 12th, 19th, 26th and 28th January 2022 be noted, and the recommendations contained therein approved.

The meeting closed at: 7.43 pm

Chair