

Finance and General Purposes Committee

22nd April 2024 at 7.30pm

All Saints Room, Didcot Civic Hall



Minutes

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this Committee.

Present:

Councillor T Worgan (Chair)
Councillor G Roberts (Deputy Chair)
Councillor D Aragao
Councillor G Ryall
Councillor J Loder
Councillor J Broadbent
Councillor L Hislop

Non-voting members:

Councillor A Jones

Officers:

Mrs L Blake – Deputy Town Clerk (DC)
Mr S Mundy – Estate Manager (EM)
Mr M Blake – Outdoor Services Manager (OSM)

179. Apologies

Apologies were tendered by the Town Clerk and Cllr N Hards.
Cllr L Hislop attended as a substitute.

180. Declarations of interests

No declarations were made.

181. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25th March 2024

The Chair paged through the minutes. It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr J Loder, and RESOLVED to approve the minutes as an accurate record and note them as such. The vote was unanimous.

182. Questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item

There were no questions.

183. To approve the final figures for March 2023-2024

The Committee considered the figures.

Councillors thanked the Estate Manager and his team for their work on Willowbrook which meant the annual income had exceeded the estimated income for the year, even though the centre is only open less than 50% of the time.

Cllr J Broadbent asked how the figures would have differed if the Finance and General Purposes Committee had awarded the full amount of Grant Aid to applicants throughout the 2023-2024 financial year.

- *The final Grant Aid figure, as of 31st March 2024, was £49,684 (as Abingdon Bridge wanted their £4,200 grant paid out of the 2024-2025 financial year – originally had asked for £5000). Had the Committee resolved to approve the full application amounts, the total spend on Grant Aid for the 2023-2024 financial year would have been £51,084.30.*

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to approve the final figures for March 2023-2024. The vote was unanimous.

184. To review the amendments to the financial regulations

Members reviewed the suggested amendments and noted that the National Association for Local Councils was updating the Financial Regulations this summer. A further review of the regulations will be needed later in the year.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to accept the suggested amendments and recommend their adoption to Full Council. The vote was unanimous.

Cllr T Worgan noted that the Citizens Advice grant awarded at the 18th December 2023 meeting, was over £10,000. This should have been subject to ratification by resolution of the Full Council, but this had been omitted. However, the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee were formally accepted by Full Council at the meeting on 8th January 2024.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED for this to be formally minuted at the next Full Council meeting. The vote was unanimous.

185. To review and approve the Strategic Risk assessments

The Committee reviewed the Strategic Risk Assessments. It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr J Loder, and RESOLVED to approve the Strategic Risk Assessments. The vote was unanimous.

186. To receive the Edmonds Park Community & Sports Pavilion – cost report 10 – and tracker of final payments

The Committee RESOLVED to receive the documents. The estimate of the construction cost is £2,196,898 and the overall project cost is £2,307,060. There is a contingency balance of £92,940 out of the total authorised expenditure of £2.4m.

It was discussed that an official open day could be arranged for the start of the summer holidays to coincide with the opening of the Splash Park. This could be discussed at the next Property and Facilities Committee meeting.

Cllr G Ryall asked about the progress with the removal of debris left behind following the construction. It was confirmed that the EM was meeting with staff from both Life and Ridge on Wednesday 24th April and an update of the meeting would be sent to Committee members.

187. To consider the tender returns for the Teen Play Provision at Edmonds Park and approve the successful company

The Committee considered the eleven quotes received for the new teen play area in Ladygrove and were impressed with the quality of tender returns. Many submissions met the brief, but some did seem more catered to younger children. Almost all the quotes received were within budget and a few offered something completely new for the area.

It was proposed by Cllr J Broadbent, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to recommend Full Council accept the quote from company eight, for the value of £46,840.94 (ex VAT). The vote was unanimous.

It was proposed by Cllr D Aragao, seconded by Cllr L Hislop, and RESOLVED to allow Officers to apply for s106 monies for this project. The vote was unanimous.

188. To consider a potential new project for Edmonds Park – the installation of a new sandpit, and the recommendations to the Committee

The OSM presented the report on a potential new sandpit project for Edmonds Park, to be located in the fenced in section adjacent to the young children's play area. This sandpit would be created similar to the one installed by the outdoor team in Ladygrove Park.

Members liked the concept and preferred the 'Fishing Boat' as the centre piece. The project overall would cost approximately £9,187.00 (ex VAT).

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to recommend the project be approved to Full Council in May, on the condition that Officers could confirm the correct cost centre and budget for this project. The vote was unanimous.

- *It was noted following the meeting that the capital project cost for the construction of the sandpit, could be taken from EMR 338 Play Areas (£4,135) and EMR 334 Community Projects (£66.58).*

The installation of the Fishing Boat could be undertaken later in the financial year.

189. To note the CIL for April 2024 of £7,610.83

The Committee noted the £7,610.83 of CIL for April 2024.

190. To consider the purchase of a new Floor Scrubber for the Civic Hall

The EM presented the report on the purchase of a new floor scrubber for the Civic Hall. He explained that a cordless, battery-operated piece of equipment would be more beneficial for the Civic Hall, due to the limited number of electrical sockets in the main hall. The original leaded scrubber at the Civic Hall, would be transferred to the new pavilion.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr L Hislop, and RESOLVED to accept the quote of £1919.86 from Company A, Seldrums, for a new battery-operated floor scrubber for the Civic Hall. The vote was unanimous.

- *It was noted after the meeting that the cost for this purchase would be taken from cost centre 401/4020 'Cleaning and Hygiene'.*

191. To consider the purchase of a Wessex CRX 320 to aid the outdoor team with the cutting of the open green spaces and make a recommendation to Full Council

The OSM presented the report on the purchase of the Wessex CRX to the Committee following a demonstration with the equipment earlier in the month in which some Councillors attended. He explained that the Wessex could be used alongside the tractor more efficiently, reducing the time, the manpower and fuel needed to cut the Town Council's open spaces. Operators would also be able to continue to cut in the rain, due to the tractor being enclosed (the current ride on mowers are not enclosed).

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to recommend the purchase of the Wessex to Full Council, provided the cost centre could be confirmed. The vote was unanimous.

- *It was noted after the meeting that purchasing the Wessex CRX 320 on Hire Purchase over 60 months would cost the Town Council £4,664.60 in a deposit and admin fee, and £469.77 a month. The deposit could come out of cost centre 199/4902 'Capital Projects – Groundskeeping Equipment' with the monthly payments coming from 300/4045 'Machinery Costs'.*

192. To review the progress report

The Committee reviewed the report.

It was confirmed that the grass verge maps would be made available to Councillors to view, at a day and time to be arranged. Members asked for a statement to be added to the website to invite residents to comment on what areas needed cutting and which areas could be left 'wild'. It was suggested that they be given three weeks to submit comments.

193. Exclusion of the press and public

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

194. To review the up-date on the CCTV cameras and options for additional cameras

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr T Worgan, and **RESOLVED** to accept option one and defer the decision on option two to the next meeting of the Committee so that costings could be presented. The vote was unanimous.

195. To consider the future use of Willowbrook Leisure Centre

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr T Worgan, and **RESOLVED** to defer this item to the next meeting of the Committee so that Officers can present a more detailed report on running the building in house and Newbury College could provide the Committee with confirmed commitments regarding their proposal. The vote was unanimous.

196. Up-date on the Ladygrove East development

The Committee noted the update and endorsed the comments made by the Town Clerk.

The meeting closed at 9.12pm.

Signed: _____(Chair)

Date: _____