

Finance and General Purposes Committee

17th June 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 D Aragao
Councillor G Ryall
Councillor J Loder
Councillor C Jennings (Subbing for Cllr G Roberts)
Councillor A Hudson (Subbing for Cllr N Hards)

Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk (TC)
Mrs L Blake – Deputy Town Clerk (DC)

11. To receive apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs N Hards, J Broadbent and G Roberts. Cllr A Hudson substituted for Cllr N Hards, and Cllr C Jennings substituted for Cllr G Roberts.

12. To receive declarations of interests. Members are reminded to declare any interests they may have on any item on this agenda in accordance with Didcot Town Council's code of conduct

No declarations were made. Cllr C Jennings later declared a pecuniary interest in item 14 and left the meeting.

13. To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2024

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

14. Questions on the Minutes as to the progress of any item

Cllr T Worgan explained that a previous Grant Aid applicant had asked that their application be discussed at this meeting. The decision was made to stick to the previous decision of considering applications at three grant meetings throughout the

year – the next meeting where this could be discussed would be on 23rd September 2024. All members agreed with this.

15. To note the unaudited financial statement for 2023-2024 financial year

It was proposed by Cllr J Loder, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the unaudited financial statement for the 2023-2024 financial year. The vote was unanimous.

16. To review and approve the fixed asset register for 2023-2024

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the main change to the document was the addition of the new Community and Sports Pavilion in Edmonds Park.

Cllr C Jennings asked whether the new Pears Mapping software would be used in the future to help curate this document. It was confirmed this would be used.

It was proposed by Cllr J Loder, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the fixed asset register for 2023-2024. The vote was unanimous.

17. To review and approve the final report from the internal auditor

The Committee reviewed the internal auditor report.

Cllr G Ryall congratulated staff on their work – the report showed only two minor recommendations.

It was recommended that Officers investigate potential use of a Customer Relationship Management package, the cost versus the benefit.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the final report from the internal auditor. The vote was unanimous.

18. To review and recommend to full Council the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024

The Committee reviewed the AGAR and the explanation of variances. The Town Clerk confirmed additional information will need to be provided this year, due to the 'business' transacted by the Council, exceeding 2 million. This information will include bank statements.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr J Loder, and RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024, to full Council. The vote was unanimous.

19. To review and approve the financial reports for April 2024 (under the new coding)

The Committee noted the reports under the new codes, the income and expenditure of each Committee was summarised separately.

It was noted on page 9.37, that the balances owed by Croudace and Coop Earley, had been paid in March and should have been removed.

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to approve the financial reports for April 2024. The vote was unanimous.

20. To note a report on the centre piece for the new sand pit at Edmonds Park

The Committee noted the recommendations on the design from the Outdoor Services Manager.

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr C Jennings, and RESOLVED to approve the spend of up to £1,000 on a new centre piece, a castle, for the sandpit in Edmonds Park. The vote was unanimous.

21. To consider the cyber protection proposal

Members discussed the proposal and the quote received.

Cllr D Aragao queried the effectiveness of removing the existing ESET anti-virus and replacing with EDR 24:7, when they could run alongside each other. Members did not feel informed enough to make a decision at this stage. Although they know the importance of the Council being fully protected, they requested that Officers explore other packages that are easy to use and more widely available than Sentinel. There may be other products in the market place that offer a similar level of protection and allow the Council to provide its services efficiently.

It was RESOLVED to bring this item back to a future meeting once more information has been gathered. All members agreed.

22. To review the progress report

The Committee reviewed the report.

Restore had still not been in contact with DTC regarding their proposed building project, but it was noted that their architect had stated that work could commence in 2024. No planning application has been submitted yet.

Cllr C Jennings explained that the grass cutting is still an issue within the town, with a lot of confusion over the responsibility of some areas. A discussion was had over the out-dated maps provided by OCC and potentially arranging meetings with the District and the County Council. It was also noted that some areas are either under management companies or still with the developer. Members suggested noting problematic areas and issues, so that they can be raised with District and County.

23. 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.

24. To review quotes for the proposed new CCTV cameras

Due to living in close proximity to one of the proposed cameras, Cllr C Jennings left the meeting at this stage and did not participate in discussion.

Members reviewed the quotes and requested that Officers ask for more clarity from SODC, as to what it was the Town Council would be paying for.

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr T Worgan, and RESOLVED to defer this item to the next meeting, so that more information could be obtained. All members agreed.

Cllr C Jennings returned to the meeting.

25. To consider the appointment of an Estate Administrator (agreed in principle by the Personnel and Administration Committee)

The Committee noted the confidential staff report from the Town Clerk. They supported this proposed appointment and expressed a hope that this would give time to the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk to apply for more grants. It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the appointment of an Estate Administrator to full Council. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting closed at 8.46pm.

Signed: _____(Chair)

Date: _____