

Didcot Town Council

Finance and General Purposes Committee

20th May 2024 at 7.00pm

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 N Hards

Officers:

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

7 Grant Aid applicants were in attendance.

1. To receive nominations for the appointment of the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr G Roberts and seconded by Cllr J Loder to appoint Cllr T Worgan as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. There were no further nominations.

Vote: IN FAVOUR: 3, AGAINST: 0, ABSTENTIONS: 2.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Cllr T Worgan as Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

2. To receive nominations for the appointment of the Deputy Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan and seconded by Cllr J Loder to appoint Cllr G Roberts as Deputy Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. There were no further nominations.

Vote: IN FAVOUR: 3, AGAINST: 0, ABSTENTIONS: 2.

It was RESOLVED to appoint Cllr G Roberts as Deputy Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

3. To receive apologies

There were no apologies.

4. 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

Cllr N Hards declared that he is a member of the Great Western Railway Society and would therefore leave the meeting when this grant application was discussed. No other declarations were made.

5. To review the Terms of Reference for this Committee

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference. It was proposed by Cllr J Loder, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to accept the terms of reference for the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The vote was unanimous.

6. To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2024

Cllr N Hards had two queries on page three of the minutes: he enquired as to what 'EM' stood for. The Deputy Clerk confirmed this was short for Estate Manager. He also queried the new sandpit in Edmonds. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that the sandpit would go ahead but the centre piece would be investigated later. Cllr T Worgan asked for a report to be presented at the next meeting on alternative options, possibly made by the outdoor team.

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.

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

The Town Clerk gave the Committee a verbal update on the debris at Edmonds Park. Ground workers from Life have been on site and had already filled two skips with rubbish after two full days of work.

- Cllr D Aragao entered the meeting at 7.13pm.

It was RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the Grant Aid applicants to address the Committee.

Ben Drabble from TRAIN was the first to address the Committee on his application for £10,484 to cover a proportion of the running costs for Didcot Youth's Centre, "The Base" located in the marketplace in the town centre.

Councillors asked questions which included how TRAIN would continue to support the youths of the town if the Council was unable to provide the whole requested sum. Ben explained that TRAIN would have to decide who they could and could not support.

- Cllr J Broadbent entered the meeting at 7.24pm.

Cllr N Hards left the room at this stage so that the GWR application could be presented.

Roger Orchard addressed the Committee on the Great Western Railway Society's application for £2,000 to help cover the costs to install a public water fountain at the Railway Centre.

When asked what the impact on the project would be if the Council could not provide the whole amount, Roger explained that they would have to rely on volunteers and fundraise.

Cllr N Hards returned to the meeting.

Claire Crossley spoke on Riverside's application for £5,500 to cover the cost of 100 sessions for Didcot clients, giving them support from professionally trained counsellors.

When presented with the same question, 'what would the impact be if the Town Council could not provide the full amount?', Claire confirmed that Riverside would continue to provide as much support to Didcot residents, as possible.

Bill Service spoke on the Didcot Bowls Club application for £2,810 to renew the Club's entry and bar security systems. He explained that the systems are extremely dated and need replacing. He also explained that the maintenance of the building is carried out by volunteers and if the Council was unable to support this project, it would delay the work.

Ruby Livesey addressed the Committee on the £7,128 application to help cover the costs of acknowledging and celebrating the agricultural heritage and community of Didcot, by holding a 'Didcot Dairy Story' event, exhibition, and magazine. If the Town Council was unable to fully support this project, the volunteers would do everything they can to ensure the exhibition was a success.

Racheal Spindler spoke on Boundary Park's £5,000 application to help towards the running costs of the annual 'Bands at the Boundary' event in June 2024. Various amounts have already been secured and sponsorships are in place for this annual event. Should the Council be unable to support Bands at the Boundary, the event may need scaling back.

Faye Golding-King spoke on Home Start Oxfordshire's £7,000 application to help support Didcot residents with trained home visiting volunteers, two parent and baby support groups and one to one tailored support sessions with a skilled Family Support Worker.

When asked the question on how Home Start would be impacted should the Council be unable to provide the full amount, Faye explained that the charity would continue to fundraise so that the support could still be provided.

Faye Mortenson was unable to attend the meeting. It was decided that her application for £1,7077.12 to help fund exercise and weekly coffee morning sessions for the elderly community in Didcot, be considered at the September meeting so that she can present it to members of the Committee and answer any questions they might have.

All applicants were thanked for their presentations and informed that future applications would still be considered. Applicants were also reminded of the various other authorities which could also be contacted for grants.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

8. To review the grant application report summary

The Committee discussed each application.

Cllr N Hards left the meeting so that members could discuss the application from the Great Western Railway Society. It was felt that this application did not quite meet the needs of the town as the other applications did.

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to defer this application to the September meeting. All members agreed.

Cllr N Hards rejoined the meeting and discussions.

After much discussion, it was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr N Hards, and RESOLVED to award TRAIN 75% of their requested amount: £7,863. The vote was unanimous.

Riverside had initially asked for a much larger sum but had since revised their application. It was proposed by Cllr N Hards, seconded by Cllr D Aragao, and RESOLVED to award Riverside 75% of the requested amount: £4,125. The vote was unanimous.

The Bowls Club application was discussed. It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to defer this application to the September meeting. The vote was unanimous.

Members discussed the need to support local heritage and culture and suggested future budgets could include a cost centre for local culture and funding historical types of projects locally.

The Didcot Dairy application was discussed. It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr D Aragao, and RESOLVED to award Didcot Dairy £500 toward their project: 6 members agreed, 1 member abstained.

Members agreed that the Bands at the Boundary event was a positive event for Didcot and wanted to support it. It was proposed by Cllr T Worgan, seconded by Cllr J Broadbent, and RESOLVED to award Boundary Park the full amount of £5,000 on the condition that after this year's event, organisers would 'hold back' some of the profit to help cover the 2025 event: 6 members agreed, 1 member abstained.

After discussing the Home Start application, it was proposed by Cllr J Broadbent, seconded by Cllr N Hards, and RESOLVED to award them 75% of their requested amount: £5,250. The vote was unanimous.

- The total amount awarded at this meeting, amounts to £22,738.

9. To review the effectiveness of the internal audit control for 2023-2024 and whether it is time to gather quotes for a new contractor

Members discussed this item and the best practice procedures.

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr N Hards, and RESOLVED to change internal auditors every three years. The vote was unanimous.

A new internal auditor will be investigated next year.

10. 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, and a statement would be added to the website. The OSM was due to have a 'walk around' with the contractor on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 to look at the areas in Didcot which had been missed.

Costs had been received for the CCTV cameras and would be forwarded to members.

No response had been received from Restore.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Signed: _____(Chair)

Date: _____