

## Finance and General Purposes Committee

21<sup>st</sup> August 2023 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 G Roberts (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor C Jennings  
Councillor N Hards  
Councillor J Loder  
Councillor G Ryall  
Councillor J Broadbent

#### Officers:

Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk  
Mrs L Blake – Deputy Town Clerk

Two Grant Aid applicants attended virtually, via Teams.

Cllr G Roberts took the Chair for this meeting.

#### 47. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr D Aragao and Cllr T Worgan (Chair). Cllr C Jennings attended as a substitute.

#### 48. Declarations of interests

No declarations were made.

#### 49. To approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2023

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

**50. Questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item**

There were no questions.

**51. To note the grant report from Didcot Barramundi Club**

The Committee noted the report.

**52. To consider three grant applications – Be Free Young Carers £5000; Whispering Jungle Show £6,200 and Clean Slate £500**

Standing orders were suspended.

Daniel Swift from Concrete Youth addressed the Committee virtually and spoke to support their application of £6,200. He explained how the grant, if successful, would enable two productions a day of the Whispering Jungle show to be performed, over two days, at Cornerstone in Didcot. The shows would be aimed at audiences with learning difficulties.

The Councillors asked questions to clarify the project. The Chair thanked Daniel for his presentation, and he left the meeting.

Kizzie Wilson from Be Free Young Carers, spoke virtually regarding their application for £5,000 to enable the charity to take young carers, between the ages of 8-12 years, out on day trips throughout the summer holidays. The aim was to allow the young carers some respite from their role within their home setting. This initiative was called the 'Summer Holiday Activity Programme'.

Councillors also asked questions to clarify the project and thanked Kizzie for attending. Kizzie then left the meeting.

Standing orders were reinstated.

The Committee discussed the applications in the order they were presented.

Concrete Youth's application for £6,200 for the Whispering Jungle show was discussed first. Members were keen to support the project but felt that the charity should also investigate funding from other avenues, since the show would benefit not only Didcot residents, but people from outside of Didcot.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr N Hards, and RESOLVED to award half of the cost; £3,100. All members agreed. The Council would also encourage the charity to contact other local authorities for additional funding.

The second application discussed was from Be Free Young Carers for £5,000. Members were hugely supportive of this project.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr G Ryall, and RESOLVED to approve the full amount; £5,000. All members agreed.

The third application, for £500, was from Clean Slate.

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr N Hards, and RESOLVED to approve the full amount; £500. All members agreed.

Cllr C Jennings asked the Deputy Town Clerk to investigate the Grant Aid process to ensure it was made clear to applicants that projects needed to benefit the residents of Didcot. Suggested amendments to the process and/or website would be presented at a future meeting.

**53. To approve the monthly reports for June 2023**

It was proposed by Cllr J Broadbent, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to approve the monthly reports for June. All members agreed.

**54. To receive the budget for July/August 2023**

The Committee noted the budget for July/August 2023. The Town Clerk also gave out a version of the budget that highlighted cost centres that may be overspent by the end of the financial year.

**55. To note the budget setting timetable for the 2024-2025 financial year**

The Town Clerk explained the document and the process in which the Town Council usually follow to set their budgets. The 'first round' usually discussed by each Committee considers 'larger items' such as the pavilion, new vehicles, and new play parks (capital projects), that may require additional funding in the form of a grant or loan. The 'second round' usually includes 'smaller, every day' revenue items relating to the everyday provision of services and facilities.

The Town Clerk also discussed the process of receiving the Tax Base from South Oxfordshire District Council, which enables the Town Council to set their precept. This is calculated by SODC based on new housing numbers but also on the families with income to pay council tax. The tax base will be confirmed in December so the Council will need to calculate the budget on historic tax bases until confirmed.

The budget setting timetable for the 2024-2025 financial year, was noted.

**56. Edmonds Park Community & Sports Pavilion – cost report 3**

The Committee noted the cost report. The project is on budget and completion will be January 2024.

**57. To note the PWLB final repayment and the interest rate**

The Committee noted the document and the drawdown of the remainder of the £2.4m loan from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB).

To enable the building of the new Community and Sports Pavilion in Edmonds Park, the first tranche of £750,000 was drawn down in May 2023.

The decision to draw down the remaining loan was taken by the Finance and General Purposes Committee at their July meeting. This was due to rising interest rates.

The sum of £1,650,000.00 was drawn down on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The repayments will finish on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2048 – a repayment period of 25 years. The interest rate is 5.530%.

The arrangement fees are £577.50 which is taken from source. This leaves the sum of £1,649,422.50 to enter the Council's bank account on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023.

The Town Clerk would then transfer this sum (in multiples of £150,000) into the Town Council's CCLA investment account.

#### **58. To review the first draft of the medium-term finance plan**

Cllr N Hards noted there were two misspellings of 'Edmonds Park' in the document, which would be amended.

The Town Clerk explained that a training session with Derek Kemp from DCK, could be arranged for all those wanting it to enable them to understand the plan in more detail. Members AGREED for the Town Clerk to arrange the training.

There was a discussion on Neighbourhood Plans, but this would be an item for a future meeting of the Planning and Development Committee.

#### **59. To consider the budget proposal from DCK**

Members considered the budget proposal. Questions were asked regarding the CIL funds and the Town Clerk explained that these funds could only be used for capital projects.

The Town Clerk also explained that budget training could be arranged to go through this proposal, at an approximate cost of £570 per day, for those who felt it would be of benefit.

It was proposed by Cllr C Jennings, seconded by Cllr G Roberts, and RESOLVED to arrange training. All members agreed.

#### **60. To note the investment report fact sheet for the CCLA Investment Bond**

The Committee noted the fact sheet. The Town Clerk confirmed that the figures represented in the report were from June and in fact the interest rate was now over 5%.

#### **61. To consider the cost of removing two damaged hanging basket columns**

The Committee considered the report and the two options to remove the damaged columns.

It was proposed by Cllr G Ryall, seconded by Cllr C Jennings, and RESOLVED to go with the Officer's recommendation of using company one, SCS OXON Ltd at a cost of £825.00 (ex. VAT).  
All members agreed.

**62. To approve the award from SODC's "Everyone Active" fund of £1,000 for the 'Sow & Grow' project**

The Committee approved the £1,000 award for the 'Sow & Grow' Community Planting project.

**63. To review the progress report**

The Committee discussed the items on the progress report.

Meeting closed at 21.10pm.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair) Date: \_\_\_\_\_