

Notice of a meeting of the

Finance & General Purposes Committee
20th May 2024 at 7.00pm
All Saints Room, Civic Hall, Didcot



All members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are summoned to attend this meeting for the transaction of the business on the agenda.

Admission of the public and media

The Council welcomes members of the public to its meetings in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meeting) Act 1960.

Reports and minutes

We add reports and minutes to our website.

Recording, photographs and filming

The press or public may audio-record, photograph or film meetings, or report from the meeting using social media. As such members of the public may be recorded or photographed during the meeting. We ask that anyone wishing to record or photograph the meeting notifies the Town Clerk before the start of the meeting.

Public participation

The Council welcomes the public's involvement in meetings, which must be in accordance with our rules (Standing Orders 30-32 on a matter before the Committee).

At the relevant time during the meeting, the Chair will invite members of the public to present their questions and statements. Please contact the Town Clerk to participate on email – jwheeler@didcot.gov.uk

Agenda

1. To receive nominations for the appointment of the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
2. To receive nominations for the appointment of the Deputy of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
3. To receive 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.
5. To review the Terms of Reference for this Committee – *see attached papers.*
6. To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd April 2024 –*attached.*
7. Questions on the Minutes as to the progress of any item.

*The meeting will come out of standing orders to allow the grant applicants time to present their requests to the Committee. Councillors to ask questions at the end of each presentation. The whole process – presentation should take no longer than **four minutes**. Timings must be adhered to and presentations stopped if they overrun. Councillor questions will be allowed for a maximum of **three minutes** per application.*

Standing Orders to be reinstated – grant applicants are welcome to stay.

8. To review the grant application report summary – *see attached papers.*
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 – *see attached report.*
10. To review the progress report – *see attached.*



Janet Wheeler
Town Clerk
14th May 2024

Voting members:

Cllr Tony Worgan (Acting Chair)
Cllr Gavin Roberts (Acting Deputy Chair)
Cllr David Aragao
Cllr James Broadbent
Cllr Nick Hards
Cllr Jim Loder
Cllr George Ryall

Nominated Substitute members:

Cllr Olly Glover
Cllr Luke Hislop
Cllr Tony Hudson
Cllr Chris Jennings
Cllr Mocky Khan
Cllr Hugh Macdonald
Cllr David Rouane

Terms of Reference

Finance and General Purposes Committee



1. The Finance and General Purposes Committee is a Committee of the Town Council (under S.101 of the Local Government Act 1972).
2. The Committee shall operate within the Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
3. The Committee shall be a Standing Committee (to be re-appointed at the Annual Meeting or Mayor-making) comprising 7 Town Councillors.
4. The quorum shall be four Councillors.
5. The Committee shall elect its own Chair and Vice Chair at its first meeting following the Annual Meeting of the Town Council or Mayor-making.
6. Number of meetings in an ordinary year: 12 times, on a monthly basis unless moved due to Christmas and Easter, and others as appropriate and as determined by the Committee.
7. Notice of meetings shall be in accordance with public notice requirements as set out in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.
8. Minutes of the Committee meetings shall be prepared by the Clerk and submitted to the next Committee meeting for approval. The draft minutes shall be submitted to the Council for information.
9. The Committee will support and assist in measures to address the climate emergency for the Council and will assist other Committees in discharging their responsibilities towards tackling the emergency in all projects – as well as measures within its own business.
10. The Committee shall be responsible for –
 - Administration of the Town Council Finance and General Purposes and Arts and Grants Budgets;
 - The financial administration of the Council, including preparation of estimates, management and use of capital assets, and the expenditure and receipt of monies throughout the year
 - Financial Regulations and Financial Risk Assessment yearly and make recommendations to Full Council

Agenda item 10 – Finance Committee terms of reference

- Any other issues, excluding policy, not listed under the scheme of delegation of any other Committee
11. In addition to the broad areas raised above the Committee will have the following areas of responsibility:
- to review the long term financial strategy of the Council with a view to advising the Council on funding for significant projects
 - to appoint the Internal Auditor
 - develop and review the Council's Financial Plan and Investment Strategy
 - to determine fees and charges for services provided by the Council
 - to be responsible for advising the Council on Standing Orders in respect to the Conduct of Meetings, Code of Conduct for members and all similar documentation relating to the overall administration of the Council's affairs
12. The Committee shall have delegated authority to spend within its authorised annual budgets.

Didcot Town Council

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: _____

Finance and General Purposes Committee
20th May 2024

Report author: Janet Wheeler



Grant Aid applications

Introduction

1. The Committee is asked to consider eight grant aid applications as set out in this report.

Recommendation

2. The Committee should consider these grant aid applications and agree an amount to award if the Committee decides to provide a grant.

Background

3. Didcot Town Council has a policy of providing grant funding for organisations. The following applications have been received and is summarised below for consideration:

a) Didcot Dairy Story	
Date received:	February 2024
Amount:	£7,128
Application summary:	To record memoirs and local history relating to the Jobs Dairy Farm in Didcot including an Exhibition at the Cornerstone to tell the Didcot Dairy Story.
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	None
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

Agenda item 8
Grant Aid Applications

b) Riverside Counselling	
Date received:	March 2024
Amount:	£18,494
Application summary:	To help run the drop-in Counselling sessions - TBC
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	March 2022 - £2,500
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

c) Great Western Railway Society	
Date received:	April 2024
Amount:	£2,000
Application summary:	To install a public water refill station
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	None
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

d) TRAIN	
Date received:	April 2024
Amount:	£10,484
Application summary:	To help with essential costs of running the services and activities
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	December 2022 - £10,000
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

e) Boundary Park (Bands on the Boundary)	
Date received:	April 2024
Amount:	£5,000
Application summary:	To help with running costs for Bands on the Boundary event
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	None
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

f) Elderly Exercise/Coffee mornings (Faye)	
Date received:	April 2024
Amount:	£1,077.12
Application summary:	To help with running costs of the weekly meet-ups
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	None
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

g) Didcot Bowls Club	
Date received:	May 2024
Amount:	£2,810.80
Application summary:	To renew the security system and install CCTV
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	None
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

h) Home Start	
Date received:	May 2024
Amount:	£7,000
Application summary:	To help support vulnerable Didcot families
Previous awards/ applications in the current and the preceding 2 financial years:	April 2023 - £7,000 October 2022 - £2,000 October 2020 - £2,000
Supporting documentation held in the office:	Application form and supporting data

Financial Implications

- A total of £51,000 (FY 24/25) is available in the grant aid budget (150/4701) Following the payment of £4,200 to Abingdon Bridge charity and £5,200 to the King Alfred Drive Community Centre the sum of £41,600 is left in the cost centre. If we award the full sums requested we will be in deficit -£12,402.92.

Legal Implications

- The Council can give grants to organisations and the Council sets out its rules within its grants policy.

Risk Implications

Agenda item 8
Grant Aid Applications

6. The Council has a grant aid policy with which application(s) should comply.

2024-2025 GRANT AID

Total Grant Aid budget for 2024-2025 = £51,000

- £4,200 to Abingdon Bridge
- £5,200 to KADCC

Currently available = £41,600

Grant Aid applications for the 20th May 2024 Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting:

Date received	Applicant	Amount requested	Comments	Emailed to ask to attend F&GP	Attending?
a. February 2024	Didcot Dairy	£7,128		10.05.2024	Yes – Ruby Livesey
b. January 2024	Riverside Counselling	£18,494	Has been on hold – amended details to follow	10.05.2024	Yes
c. April 2024	GWR Society	£2,000		10.05.2024	Yes – Roger Orchard
d. April 2024	TRAIN	£10,484		10.05.2024	Yes – Ben Drabble
e. April 2024	Boundary Park	£5,000		10.05.2024	Yes – Racheal Spindler
f. April 2024	Faye- Elderly coffee mornings	£1,077.12		10.05.2024	?
g. April 2024	Bowls Club	£2,810.80		10.05.2024	Yes – Bill Service
h. May 2024	Home Start	£7,000		10.05.2024	Yes – Faye Golding-King
March 2024	LG Fishing Association	£9,000	Keep on hold until a new agreement has been discussed	xxx	xxx
TOTAL		£54,002.92	(excludes £9,000 application from Fishing Club)		

Finance and General Purposes Committee

20th May 2024

Report author: Janet Wheeler



Review the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control for 2023 - 2024

Introduction

1. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires the Council to have in place *“a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives; ensures that the financial and operational management of the Council is effective and includes effective arrangements for the management of risk”*.

In addition Regulation 6 requires the Council to *“conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control in preparation for completion of its annual governance statement.”*

The System of Internal Control

The system of internal control refers to the strategies, policies, management systems and procedures that need to be in place within the Council to help ensure the effective exercise of the Council's functions and services in compliance with all relevant laws, acts, regulations and proper practices.

The system of internal control helps to promote the economic, efficient and effective use of public money, safeguards the Council's assets and interests and controls the way the Council accounts to, engages with and leads its community, formulates its priorities and objectives, and delivers services in a way that meets those objectives.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk failure to a reasonable level via a series of controls. However it cannot eliminate all risk failure to achieve aims, objectives and policies, and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The detailed scrutiny by the Finance and General Purposes Committee has contributed to transparency in how we manage the public assets; activities; finances and affairs.

Responsibility for the System of Internal Control

The Council is ultimately responsible for establishing and overseeing the development of a sound and effective system of internal control and for reviewing the effectiveness of this system on an annual basis.

The Finance & General Purposes Committee supported by the Town Clerk and the finance contractor is responsible for maintaining and developing the system of internal control, reviewing its effectiveness and monitoring and ensuring compliance within the different areas of Council work.

Didcot Town Council existing System of Internal control

- Strategic aims and targets are considered by the Council throughout the Autumn meetings when the annual budget work ensues.
- Regular monitoring of strategic aims and targets
- Consultation and engagement with the community via the Town Council websites; noticeboards; social media; public meetings and events.
- Review of the Council's procedural documents including:
 - Committee Structure; powers and duties of Committees
 - Standing Orders relating to the Proceedings and Business of the Council
 - Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurement
 - Financial Regulations
 - Scheme of Delegation
 - Members and Offices Code of Conduct and Relations protocol
 - Council Policies and Procedures
- The work of the Internal Auditor – planned, monitored and reported via the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Plan.
- Use of an Annual Budget timetable for the setting of the Council Revenue and Capital budget each year.
- Regular Budgetary control including assessments of expected outturn and reporting of the Council's financial position on a regular basis to budget-holding committees and particularly F&GP.
- The implementation of effective risk management principles across the Council including the annual update strategic risk register; review of the risk policy and undertaking of new risk assessments as the Council takes on new challenges.
- Policies to support confidential reporting; whistle blowing; investigation of complaints from members of the public.
- Effective and regularly reviewed insurance arrangements
- Formal information technology policies and procedures for email, internet, social media and other computer use.
- Effective employment policies; competent human resources and personnel support and advice.

- Supporting financial polices to support investment; procurement; payment for goods and services; income collection and Debt Recovery Policy.
- A commitment to staff development and training.
- A commitment to Member training.

Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control

The Standing Orders are in place containing the NALC mandatory sections. The Financial Regulations are currently under a review to up-date (at the Annual Meeting). There is now a new set of Financial Regulations issued by NALC which will be reviewed and considered prior to adoption. There will be a review of Terms of Reference for all standing Committees and a consideration of the Schedule of Delegation. Some policies have been reviewed and others adopted.

Internal control is also significantly informed by the work of the Internal Auditor. The Internal Auditor reviews all the major services, systems and processes every year to ensure that internal financial controls are in place and operating effectively. The Internal Auditor will make comments in relation to identified weaknesses during audit reviews. Our current Internal Auditor carried out two visits in person to the offices and will conduct another visit to sign off the year end.

The Internal Auditor gives a full report which is reviewed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The report is ratified at full Council before the auditor signs the appropriate section of the Annual Return.

Comments and recommendations are reviewed by the Committee and followed through by the Town Clerk and Officers including any issues noted on the previous year's audit:

- Review of the internal audit plan before the appointment is confirmed
- Scrutiny of all decisions and recommendations made at Committee and ratified by Full Council – including the consideration of any policy, staffing and financial implications.
- Monitor performance against aims, targets and budgets.
- Review agendas and minutes in relation to achieving the Council's strategic aims and targets.

Recommendation

The work of the internal auditor and the current system of internal control is commended in the view of the Town Clerk and recommended for formal approval. The Committee need to make a decision on whether to retain this internal auditor for a fifth year or whether to tender out for a new internal auditor for 2024-2025.

The final report for this year will be carried out in June 2024.

Janet Wheeler
Town Clerk

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – PROGRESS REPORT

Agenda item 10

Meeting/minute	Item/topic	Up-date/status	Review date/meeting
Various meetings and minute 194	CCTV cameras and the case for an extra camera	Agreed for two extra cameras but DTC may have to pay for one.	Costs to be confirmed at next meeting.
Various meetings	Status of Restore project and OSM’s plans for the allotment site	Review of use of site	Suggest a meeting with the charity to understand their plans – invited to Jan, Feb and March meeting but no response. TC to chase them.
Minute 139 – reposition of CCTV camera	Costs, feasibility and potential funding to be explored	To be progressed	To be chased at SODC.
Minute 138 – North Brook Community Centre	Consideration of appointing a consultant to overview this build.	Contact made with Croudace Homes and a possible consultant lead from Darren Wright, H&S Consultant	Time scale of build confirmed and completion due April 2025
Minute 170 – Grass cutting maps	To be shared with Cllrs via Sharepoint or made available at Civic Hall	Work awaiting allocation to a member of staff	Working through queries with contractor
Minute 170 – re-coding of accounts	Completed	Completed	May F&GP – plus explanatory report
Minute 187 – S 106 for teen play at Edmonds Park	Application for S106 money towards the teen play at Edmonds Park	Application submitted	Awaiting confirmation from SODC
Minute 188 – Sandpit project at Edmonds Park	New sandpit adjacent to young children’s play area - approved.	Going ahead – fishing boat to be added at a later stage	Awaiting staff time to progress.