

FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Finance & Audit Committee meeting held on Wednesday 22nd October 2008 in the Council Chamber, the Corn Exchange, Faringdon

PRESENT: Cllrs. S. Leniec (Chairman)
Mrs. J. Boulton
Ms. J. Farmer
J.C.W. Gillman
A.V. Hickmore
A. Marsden
D. Price
M. Wise

In Attendance: 1 Member of Public
Mrs. S. Thurston, F.C. & T.I.C. Supervisor
The Town Clerk

55/08 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Mrs. M.J. Barker.

56/08 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

57/08 Minutes of Last Meeting : 23rd July 2008

The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

58/08 Matters Arising

Min. 43/08(c): Cllr. Marsden asked whether the credit card terminal had yet been installed in the F.C. & T.I.C. Mrs. Thurston stated that she was expecting it in the next few days.

Min. 48/08(a): The Clerk stated that she had completed a claim online, but no response had been received from the defendant. She was instructed to follow this up with the Court and report back to the next meeting.

Min. 48/08(b): The Clerk confirmed that she had lodged a claim, but had received neither acknowledgement nor reply. It was AGREED that no further action was required and Council would be recommended to write the debt off.

Min. 50/08(b): The Clerk stated that, so far, £1321 had been spent and she anticipated this would rise to approx. £2,000 by the end of the grass cutting season. It was reported that ROS Committee had instructed the Clerk to seek an independent medical examination for the Park Superintendent, and this was APPROVED. The Chairman suggested that any further discussion on this matter should be deferred until the end of the meeting, when it could be discussed in private session and this was AGREED.

Min. 52/08: Cllr. Hickmore reported that Mr. Jonathon Ede had confirmed his knowledge of the encroachment and he carried out annual inspections to ensure access is available to the SSSI. It was also reported that Mr. Ede had suggested transferring the land to the Town Council, rather than to the Faringdon Fossil Trust.

Cllr. Price drew attention to a problem of fly tipping at the end of the Fernham Road.

59/08 Public Speaking Time

The only member of public present did not wish to speak at this time.

60/08 Public Question Time

No questions had been received.

61/08 Community & Tourist Information Centre

Mrs. Sally Thurston tabled a written report outlining the Centre's visitor numbers and enquiries during the last quarter. She also highlighted various activities which she had organized, which had been extremely successful, and reported on new initiatives being planned for Christmas and beyond. Mrs. Thurston was thanked for a concise, but informative report and was congratulated on the quality of the new stock and her excellent management of the Centre. She was asked to pass on the Committee's thanks to her staff for their hard work. Members then considered the ½ yearly financial report to 30th September 2008, and this was NOTED.

62/08 Finance

The Chairman suggested dealing with the Precept item for the Community & Tourist Information Centre next, to enable Mrs. Thurston to join in the discussion and then leave the meeting if she so wished and this was AGREED.

Precept 2009/10 : Community & Tourist Information Centre

To consider initial suggestions for capital expenditure.

The following items were suggested and AGREED:

Relocation Costs from Pump House to Corn Exchange

New computer and monitor

Mrs. Thurston left the meeting and the normal Agenda was resumed.

(a) Members considered the 1/2 yearly reports to 30th September 2008 as follows:

(i) *Office & Establishment*

(ii) *Direct Council Expenditure*

(iii) *Summary of Council Income & Expenditure*

The Clerk highlighted various items of potential overspend, and the reports were NOTED.

(b) Precept 2009/10

Members considered initial suggestions for capital expenditure and the following were AGREED. The Clerk was asked to obtain estimates for the next meeting.

(i) *Office & Establishment*

2 New computer systems

Relocation costs of Town Clerk's office to Pump House

(ii) *Direct Council Expenditure : NIL*

(c) *Depreciation – To consider Clerk’s proposed depreciation rates on Council assets*
The Clerk’s table of assets to be considered for depreciation was considered. After some discussion, it was AGREED that Cllr. Marsden should liaise with the Clerk to draw up depreciation rates for each item and report back to the next meeting.

(d) *Current Banking Situation*

Members were asked to review the security of Council deposits in the light of the current banking situation. The Clerk stated that she had been assured by the Bank of Ireland that the Council’s deposits with them were guaranteed for two years, with no upper limit. The Clerk was asked to obtain written confirmation of this from the Bank. Despite this, some members were still concerned about the security of the Council’s deposits with the Co-operative Bank and it was proposed, seconded and CARRIED that a maximum of £50,000 should be held in the Co-operative Bank across all the Council’s accounts, and any surplus funds should be transferred to the Bank of Ireland as a matter of urgency.

Cllr. Price suggested that a review of the Council’s banking arrangements should be carried out, and the Clerk was asked to include an item on the Agenda for the next meeting.

(e) *Request from J.E.F.F. to commission survey on Folly Tower roof to be funded from the J.E.F.F. annual grant for 2008/09.*

Cllr. Marsden explained that J.E.F.F. had already agreed to fund the survey of the Tower roof, following a request from the Folly Trust. However, he proposed that this should be commissioned by the Council from the 2008/09 grant earmarked for J.E.F.F., and then donated to the Trust when received. He stated that this would enable the Council to claim the VAT on the survey. Cllr. Marsden’s proposal was seconded and CARRIED.

63/08 Applications for Financial Assistance

Ms. Gene Webb was invited to speak in support of the following application:

Faringdon On Line £458 towards the cost of organizing the Poetry Competition 2008

It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £458, as requested.

64/08 Risk Assessment

Members were asked to consider setting up a Working Party to carry out a review of the Committee’s Risk Assessment. It was AGREED that Cllr. Hickmore and the Clerk should carry out the review and report to the next meeting.

The Chairman proposed invoking S/Order No. 65 that, in view of the confidential nature of the following two items of business, the Press and Public be asked to withdraw. The proposal was seconded and CARRIED.

65/08 Corn Exchange Lease

The delegation set up under Min. No. 53/07 tabled the notes of their meeting held on 20th October 2008. It was NOTED that the delegation had put forward three options and these had been conveyed to the District Council, with a request for more details

66/08 Staff Matters

To discuss the continued absence of the Park Superintendent on sick leave

Members discussed what support could be given to the Park Superintendent to facilitate his early return to his duties, and the Clerk was asked to seek advice from Peninsula Business Services before taking any action, and to report to the next meeting.

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