

FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Finance & Audit Committee meeting held on Wednesday 21st January 2009 in the Council Chamber, the Corn Exchange, Faringdon

PRESENT: Cllrs. S. Leniec (Chairman)
Mrs. M.J. Barker
Mrs. J. Boulton
A.V. Hickmore
A. Marsden
D. Price
M. Wise

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

01/09 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. J.C.W. Gillman.

02/09 Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Wise declared an interest in the grant application from Faringdon Twinning Association as he is the Chairman of the Association.

03/09 Minutes of Last Meeting : 10th December 2008

The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

04/09 Matters Arising from 26th November and 10th December 2008

Min. 72/08: The Clerk reported that the War Memorial Trust had agreed to allow the free use of the room, but had requested a contribution of £100 towards the cost of heating and lighting.

05/09 Public Speaking Time & Public Question Time

No members of public present wished to speak at this time, and no questions had been received.

06/09 Applications for Financial Assistance

The Chairman reminded members that only £1219 remained in the Council's grants budget for 2008/09. The following grant applications were considered:

1. Faringdon Youth Centre : £4,300 towards the cost of Centre relaunch and ongoing service.
It was AGREED to defer this application to the next financial year.
2. Assisted Reading for Children in Oxfordshire : £905 to support and expand work in Faringdon.

It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £645.50.

3. Faringdon Twinning Association : £1000 to develop the youth aspect of the Association.

It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £645.50.

The Clerk asked for authority to pay the War Memorial Trust £100 from the S.137 grant budget, as outlined in Min. 04/09 (72/08) above, and this was AGREED.

07/09 Faringdon Community & Tourist Information Centre

Mrs. Thurston tabled a report in which she set out the number of visitors and enquiries received during the past quarter, and highlighted the success of Christmas card sales and the Artist of the Month project. She also paid tribute to Roger Hudspith, who had left the Centre after 15 years service. Mrs. Thurston was thanked for her report, and all the hard work of herself and the other staff at the Centre.

08/09 Future of Corn Exchange

The Clerk tabled an email from Mr. Andrew Logan, the Vale's Interim Strategic Director outlining the draft heads of terms for the handing over of the Corn Exchange to the Town Council, which followed a meeting with the group delegated to progress this matter.

The Clerk's breakdown of anticipated additional costs following the handover was also considered. Cllr. Leniec informed members that a verbal estimate had been received for the refurbishment of the toilets in the sum of £30K and warned that work required to the boilers could total £20K plus labour costs. He asked that members also take these potential costs into consideration.

Following a lengthy discussion, Cllr. Hickmore proposed that the terms set out in Mr. Logans' email be recommended to Council as the best that could be achieved and that these be accepted, in the event of the Council making the decision to accept the Corn Exchange. This was seconded and CARRIED.

09/09 Precept 2009/10

Members were asked to consider various changes proposed by Cllr. Leniec and set out in a paper which was tabled at the meeting. Cllr. Leniec suggested that, in order to reduce the increase in Council Tax payable by residents, and in the light of the current economic climate, any capital expenditure projects for the year should be funded from reserves and removed from the Council's budget for 2009/10.

Cllr. Price proposed that Cllr. Leniec's suggested changes be agreed, and this was seconded and CARRIED. Cllr. Hickmore proposed that the figure of £7418 be earmarked in reserves for Depreciation, and this was AGREED. It was AGREED to prioritise the list of capital expenditure projects at the next Finance Committee meeting. After these agreed changes, the following budget totals were AGREED.

(a) Office & Establishment	£167,400
(b) Faringdon Community & Tourist Information Centre	£ 19,484
(c) Direct Council Expenditure	£ 17,000
(d) Venues Committee	£ 25,080
(e) Recreation & Open Spaces	£ 12,810
(f) Planning & Highways	<u>£ 1,320</u>
	£243,094

Cllr. Leniec stated that this would represent a 2.4% increase in the Precept for a Band D property and proposed that the total of £243,094 be recommended to Council, which was seconded and CARRIED.

10/09 Requests from other Committees/Working Parties for the release of funds

Members considered a request from the Venues Committee and the Climate Change Working Party to release up to £4,000 for work in the Pump House including the installation of thermostatic valves and draughtproofing of windows. Cllr. Price proposed that the request be AGREED, which was seconded and CARRIED.

11/09 Completion of Audit of Accounts to 31st March 2008

Members received notification of the completion of the 2007/08 Audit together with the Auditor's Note of Issues Arising from the Audit. The Auditor's comments were NOTED, in particular with reference to the Internal Audit, and the Committee were content with the effectiveness of their internal audit arrangements. The Clerk was congratulated on an excellent set of accounts.

12/09 Risk Assessment

Members were asked to consider recommendations from Cllr. Hickmore and the Clerk, which were ACCEPTED and it was AGREED to put this forward to full Council for approval.

Cllr. Leniec proposed invoking S/Order No. 65 because of the confidential nature of the following item, and this was seconded and CARRIED.

13/09 Staff Matters

(a) Members considered a report from the Town Clerk following staff appraisals carried out with Mrs. Sally Thurston, TIC Supervisor and Mrs. Diane Keany, Assistant Clerk, together with her recommendations for spinal column increments.

Cllr. Hickmore proposed that the Clerk's recommendations be accepted, and this was seconded and CARRIED.

(b) To receive advice from Peninsula Business Services regarding the continued absence of the Park Superintendent.

The Clerk outlined the advice she had received, and read a letter she had recently received from Mr. Bream, both of which were NOTED.

(c) To consider the provision of staff Parking Permits

The Clerk explained that she anticipated the withdrawal of the permits by the VWHDC. Cllr. Hickmore stated that, as these had been issued for many years, they had become part of the Clerk and Deputy Clerk's remuneration and should therefore be continued. He proposed that parking permits should be purchased for the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and the Council van, and this was seconded and CARRIED.