

ON TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of a Finance & Audit Committee meeting
held on Wednesday 22nd July 2009
in the Council Chamber, the Corn Exchange, Faringdon**

PRESENT: Cllrs. S. Leniec (Chairman)
Mrs. M.J. Barker
Mrs. J. Boulton
J.C.W. Gillman
A. Hickmore
D. Price
Dr. M.L.H. Wise

In Attendance: Mr. D. Mepham, O.C.C. Youth Leader (for Min. 56/09)
3 members of the Youth Centre (for Min. 56/09)
The Town Clerk

48/09 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. Ms. J. Farmer and from Mrs. Sally Thurston, F.C. & T.I.C. Supervisor.

49/09 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

50/09 Minutes of Last Meeting : 17th June 2009

The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

51/09 Matters Arising from 29th April and 17th June 2009

Min. No. 47/09: It was NOTED that both the noise limiter and water boiler had been installed.

52/09 Public Speaking Time & Public Question Time

There were no members of public present at this point of the meeting and no questions had been received.

53/09 Faringdon Community & Tourist Information Centre

- (a) Members received a written report from Mrs. Thurston, which was NOTED.
- (b) The quarterly financial report to 30th June 2009 was received and NOTED. The sales figures were disappointing, however it was agreed that this was a common problem in the present economic climate.

to 30th June 2009 were NOTED.

- (i) Office & Establishment & Grants
- (ii) Direct Council Expenditure
- (iii) Summary of Council Income/Expenditure

The Clerk drew attention to the level of bank interest income, which had reduced significantly and was unlikely to reach the budgeted figure for the year, and stated that she intended to speak to the Bank of Ireland to ensure that the Council were receiving the correct rate of interest.

55/09 Internal Audit Report

Members received the report dated 1st June 2009, which was NOTED and the Clerk was congratulated on her management of the Council's finances and general affairs.

56/09 Applications for Financial Assistance

The following applications were considered:

1. **Wantage Advice Centre** : £300 towards the cost of providing a volunteer to Faringdon Family Centre.
It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £300.
2. **1861 (Wantage) Squadron, A.T.C.** : £600 towards the cost of a new minibus
It was NOTED that 6 members of the Squadron were Faringdon residents, and it was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £300 which would be time limited to January 2010.
3. **Faringdon Youth Centre** : £4,300 towards various items of equipment for the new Youth Centre.
Mr. Dave Mephram and the 3 members of the Youth Centre who were present were invited to speak in support of the application, following which it was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to make a grant of up to £2,000 for the leasing of an LCD projector and the purchase of a remote controlled electric screen and interactive whiteboard.
4. **Faringdon Twinning Association** : £355 to develop the youth aspect of FTA
It was NOTED that the event for which the funds were required had already taken place. It was AGREED to defer the application to the next meeting, and in the meantime the Clerk was asked to ascertain whether the funds were still required.
5. **Downlands Artistic Skating Club** : £750 towards the cost of two Faringdon skaters attending international championships in France and Portugal.
The Clerk advised that this grant would come outside S.137 and advice from the OALC was considered concerning the Council's inability to award grants to individuals.
Cllr. Gillman proposed that the application be rejected, which was seconded by Cllr. Hickmore but was LOST. Cllr. Price then proposed that a grant of £300 be awarded, to which Cllr. Hickmore proposed an amendment of £100 specifically towards the cost of training, which was seconded and CARRIED.

Grant No. 1 is awarded under the s.142 2(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Grant Nos. 2 and 3 are awarded under S.137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Grant No. 5 is awarded under s.19 of the Local Government(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

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- (a) members received a request to release the sum of £500 from the Grants Budget (set aside for the Faringdon Poetry Competition) towards the cost of organizing Heritage Day on Sunday 13th September. The request was AGREED and the Clerk was asked to take the funds from the remaining sum in the Arts Budget.
- (b) To consider organizing a Civic Service and/or Civic Reception to coincide with Heritage Day and to release funds for the event.
- Cllr. Wise withdrew this request because it had transpired this was an inappropriate day to hold a Civic Reception, and this was now being considered to coincide with the Christmas Lights Switch On Ceremony.

58/09 Corn Exchange Agreement

- (a) The Draft Agreement and recommendations from the group of members set up under Min. Nos. 53/07 & 43/08 were considered. It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to APPROVE the Agreement. It was NOTED that this would be signed by the Mayor and the Town Clerk on behalf of the Council, for which there would be an official ceremony held on 30th July in the Corn Exchange with the Chairman and Chief Executive of the VWHDC.
- (b) Members received the recommendations from the group of members set up under Min. 38/09 regarding the financing of the Corn Exchange refurbishment to seek borrowing approval for a loan of £100,000 from the PWLB over a 20 year period, with a view to repayment of the loan with the £80,000 agreed under S.106 from Bloor Homes. It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to agree the recommendation.

59/09 Items referred from Recreation & Open Spaces Committee

- (a) *To consider releasing up to £1600 from reserves to engage the services of Sacha Barnes Consultants to draw up a concept plan for Tucker Park to be used as part of an application for a Playbuilder Grant.*
- An email from Sacha Barnes, which was received subsequent to the ROS meeting on 14th July, was considered. This set out the total cost of their service from conception to completion as £4,990. The Clerk pointed out that grants were available as part of the playbuilder funding for the initial £1600 for work prior to the application and, if the application were successful a sum could be included for consultants fees. It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to release the £1600 requested for the initial concept plan.
- (b) *To consider releasing £800 for the immediate purchase of new lawnmower, to be replaced by funds raised from the sale of the Council's existing sit on mower.*
- It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to agree to the release of £800 from reserves for this purpose.
- (c) *To consider releasing the sum of £5864 for the replacement of fencing at Oakwood and Tucker Parks.*
- Cllr. Mrs. Boulton explained that the fencing at both locations was in urgent need of replacement, and that the estimate of £5864 was the lowest of three which had been considered. It was proposed by Cllr. Hickmore, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Boulton to release up to £6,000 from reserves for this purpose, and this was CARRIED.

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members considered a request from the Joint Environment Trust to consider a donation towards the cost of tombstone refurbishment in the 2010/11 financial year. Members supported the project in principle and agreed to consider a donation at the November meeting when setting their budget. A request for the Town Council to act as the client for the project was AGREED.

61/09 Purchase of New Computer System

- (a) The Clerk informed members that one of the office computers had suddenly failed, and this had required urgent action. Following consultation with Cllrs. Wise, Hickmore, Price and Leniec under S/Order No. 77(a), a decision was made to purchase a replacement machine and upgrade the monitor for the sum of £1010, including installation. The Clerk's action was APPROVED.
- (b) Following complete loss of data on the failed computer, members were asked to consider various options for backup systems including online backup which had been suggested by the Council's IT advisor. Members were concerned at the cost of the options put forward, and asked the Clerk to investigate the purchase of external hard drives with automatic back-up software. It was AGREED to defer this item and to hold an Extraordinary Meeting on Tuesday 28th July at 6.30 p.m, prior to the Planning & Highways Committee meeting, to discuss the matter further.

The Chairman stated that he had raised a query at the recent ROS meeting concerning the Council's right of access to the triangle of land adjacent to Willes Close, through Willes Close and felt that the Council should take legal advice on this matter. It was AGREED to include this item on the Agenda of the Extraordinary meeting.

62/09 Staff Matters

- (a) To receive notes of meeting of Staffing Structure Working Party held on 17th June (attached) and to receive estimated costings for additional staff hours and training to implement the proposals agreed by the Working Party.*

The Clerk stated that she had not yet carried out the consultation with the staff on the proposed new staffing structure, but would do so before the next ordinary meeting.