

FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

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

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

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

84/09 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr. A. Hickmore.

85/09 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

86/09 Minutes of Last Meeting : 29th September 2009

The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

87/09 Matters Arising from 22nd July, 28th July, 2nd September & 29th September

Min. 56/09: The Clerk reported that the grant application from the Faringdon Twinning Association had now been withdrawn, and the Faringdon Cricket Club application from a previous meeting had also been withdrawn.

Min. 59/09: The Clerk gave a progress report on the three items discussed under this Minute.

Min. 68/09: The Clerk reported on the outcome of the legal advice requested, which stated that O.C.C. had failed to ensure that a vehicle and pedestrian access to the Town Council's land was constructed by Falcon Self Building Housing Association under the terms of the Conveyance made in 1987. As a result the land adjacent to Willes Close had become land locked.

The Clerk stated that she had attended a meeting earlier in the day with the Solicitor and C/Cllr. Mrs. Heathcoat with a view to C/Cllr. Mrs. Heathcoat taking up this matter with the O.C.C. on the Town Council's behalf. The R&OS Committee had AGREED to await developments and to discuss the matter further at their next meeting.

Min. 76/09: Cllr. Wise reported that JEFF had agreed to submit the bids to ORCC for SEEDA funding.

88/09 Public Speaking Time & Public Question Time

No questions had been received and there were no members of public present.

members received the quarterly report from Mrs. Thurston, which was NOTED. Mrs. Thurston stated that their move to the Corn Exchange had gone smoothly and that the staff were extremely pleased with the extra space. She drew attention to the need for additional signage and undertook to seek prices and the correct permissions for the relevant buildings.

Mrs. Thurston was pleased to report that, despite the current economic difficulties, stock sales were encouraging. Mrs. Thurston was thanked for her continued hard work and an excellent set of results, and she was also asked to pass on the Council's thanks to her staff.

(b) *½ yearly financial report to 30th September 2009*

The financial report was NOTED.

90/09 Finance

(a) Members received and considered the following $\frac{1}{2}$ year reports to 30th September 2009:

(i) *Office & Establishment*

The Clerk was asked to explain the substantial overspend on the electricity budget. She explained that, since the closure of the Vale Cash Office, the Town Council had become responsible for the whole of the electricity charge for the offices at the rear of the building. Because there had been no indication from the VWHDC concerning the potential costs, it had been difficult to set a realistic budget last year.

The Clerk also reported that three business rates bills had recently been received for the same area, from 30th September 2008 to 31st March 2010 and that these totalled £7,166. She stated that she would be seeking reimbursement from the VWHDC for the area occupied by the old Cash Office, since this had only been released to the Town Council recently.

The Clerk drew attention to other various items of potential overspend, which were also NOTED.

(ii) *Direct Council Expenditure:* NOTED

(iii) *Summary of Council Income & Expenditure:* noted.

(b) Precept 2010/11

Members were asked to consider initial suggestions for capital expenditure for the following, and the Clerk was asked to obtain estimates for the next meeting:

(i) *Office & Establishment*

New computer system for the Deputy Clerk

To enable existing computer equipment to be used for SKYPE

Re-decoration of Mayor's Room/Meeting Room

(ii) *Direct Council Expenditure*

The Clerk reminded members that they had agreed to consider a donation towards the All Saints Churchyard tombstone restoration project, but it was AGREED this should be included in the R&OS budget.

Clr. Price asked that the Climate Change budget be maintained in next year's budget to enable the Town Council to take a more proactive lead on such issues as renewable energy, etc.

Tourist Information Centre

Improved signage was considered for inclusion in next year's budget. The Clerk stated that she felt this was a matter which needed to be addressed sooner rather than later, and it was AGREED to fund the signage from the relocation costs already agreed.

- (c) To consider Auditor's comments contained in Issues Arising Report and to consider plan of action.

The following plans of action were AGREED:

1. Review of the effectiveness of the internal audit : To be reviewed by Cllr. Hickmore and the Clerk as part of the Council's annual risk assessment.
2. Fixed Assets : Chairs of Committees to go through Asset List
3. Incorrect use of S.137 : The Clerk to seek OALC advice when in doubt about grant applications.

- (d) To consider Auditor's advice re amortization.

The Auditor had suggested various valuation bases for the Corn Exchange, and the Clerk suggested that this should be based on an insurance valuation, which was AGREED.

- (e) To review list of reserve funded items

The reserve funded items so far this year totaled £32,296.30, of which £12,800 would be recoverable from VWHDC and the sale of the sit on mower. The Chairman stated that the Committee should continue with its tight control of the Council's finances.

91/09 Applications for Financial Assistance

The following applications were considered:

1. Faringdon Family Centre : £500 towards the cost of the Sunny Mums & Dads Group
It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award £500.
2. Faringdon Town Football Club : £2,500 towards the cost of purchasing new grass cutting equipment.
Members were concerned about the implications of awarding a grant for the purchase of its own grass cutting equipment, and it was AGREED to defer the application to the next meeting and, in the meantime, Cllrs. Mrs. Boulton, Leniec and Marsden were delegated to meet with the Football Club to obtain more information.
3. Bromsgrove Day Centre : £300 towards the cost of specialized transport for outings
It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £300.
4. K.E.E.N. (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now) : £200 towards the cost of hiring venue for Zig-Zag sessions
It was AGREED to defer the application to the next meeting, and the Clerk was ascertain the exact number of Faringdon children they were currently helping.
5. Age Concern (Oxfordshire, City & County) : £112 towards the cost of setting up and running a coffee and information drop-in for older people in Faringdon.
It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to award a grant of £112.

members were asked to consider the closure of the of the F.C. & T.I.C. and Town Clerk's office from close of business on 23rd December 2009 to Monday 4th January 2010. The Clerk explained that, because TIC sales during this period were traditionally low, the F.C.&T.I.C. had always been closed, and it would be impossible for the staff in the Town Clerk's office to man the T.I.C., particularly if only one member of staff was on duty. This would have an impact on the security of T.I.C. stock. It was AGREED that both offices would remain closed to the public for the period, but at least one member of the Town Clerk's staff would be on duty on 29th, 30th and 31st December to deal with telephone calls.

The Chairman proposed invoking S/Order No. 66 to exclude the Press and Public because of the confidential nature of the next item, and this was seconded and CARRIED.

93/09 Staff Matters

(a) To consider the implementation of the NJC final salary award for 2009/10 The Clerk's report on the costs of implementation of the award, with effect from 1st April 2009, was considered. It was proposed, seconded and CARRIED to approve the implementation of the award. The Clerk's recommendations to maintain the current annual leave entitlements and the mileage allowance rate at 0.40p per mile were AGREED.

(b) Future Potential Pension Costs

A letter from O.C.C. setting out the implications of the future potential employer pension contributions, following recent events in the financial markets, was considered and NOTED.