

## ON TOWN COUNCIL

### **Minutes of a Finance & Audit Committee meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at 7.15 p.m. in the Council Chamber, the Corn Exchange, Faringdon**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs. S. Leniec (Chairman)

Mrs. M.J. Barker

Mrs. J. Boulton

Ms. J. Farmer

A.V. Hickmore

A. Marsden

D. Price

M.L.H. Wise

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

#### **01/10 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr. N. O'Keeffe.

#### **02/10 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made at this time.

#### **03/10 Minutes of Last Meeting : 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

The Minutes were signed as a correct record.

#### **04/10 Matters Arising**

*Min. 97/09 (90/09):* The Clerk confirmed that the VWHDC had agreed to contribute £1420 towards the rates bill for the Corn Exchange, but payment had not yet been received.

#### **05/10 Public Speaking Time & Public Question Time**

There were no members of public present, and no questions had been received.

#### **06/10 Faringdon Community & Tourist Information Centre**

(a) Members received Mrs. Thurston's quarterly report, which was NOTED. Mrs. Thurston highlighted an increase in the sales of charity Christmas Cards, but a reduction in sales of the Faringdon calendar, which she thought was as a result of less publicity.

(b) *To receive estimates for improved signage to the T.I.C. (these will be available at the meeting.*

Mrs. Thurston stated that she had received estimates for various types of signage, including a hanging sign and some brass plaques for the main entrance door. Cllr. Leniec proposed that Mrs. Thurston be authorized to spend up to £500 on signage, the funds to be taken either from the TIC revenue budget, or the TIC relocation budget, and this was seconded and CARRIED.

## by Town Council staff

of the number of queries handled by Town Council staff since the closure of the VWHDC Cash Office. She stated that, in the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2008 to 18<sup>th</sup> December 2009, there were in excess of 400 personal callers, with many more telephone enquiries. This had been particularly noticeable over the recent bad weather, with enquiries about waste and recycling collections, and gritting of roads and pavements. There had been additional queries handled by the F.C. & T.I.C. staff, but they had only recently started keeping a log.

Some members felt that a charge should be made to the VWHDC for the service, but Cllr. Price pointed out that the work involved in proving the situation would cause even more work for the Council staff. It was AGREED that the staff would continue to keep a record of the number of enquiries and the matter would be raised at the Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February which would be attended by both the Chief Executive and Leader of the District Council.

### 08/10 Precept 2010/11

*To consider any further amendments required to the following budgets:*

(a) *Office & Establishment*

Reductions were made in the Grants Budgets and Capital Expenditure, resulting in an amended total of £179,742.

(b) *F.C. & T.I.C.*

Various amendments were made, but the total was unchanged at £20,800.

(c) *Direct Council Expenditure*

A reduction in the Nottingham Declaration Fund was made, resulting in a new total of £15,100.

(d) *Venues Committee*

The Venues Committee had already made some amendments to their budget since the last Finance Committee meeting, and further amendments were made by the Finance Committee, resulting in a reduction from £83,354 to £17,754.

*Recreation & Open Spaces Committee*

Amendments were made to the ROS revenue budget and Capital Expenditure budget, reducing the overall total from £17,360 to £14,194.

*Planning & Highways Committee*

Amendments were made to the P&H budget, including a second Salt Bin to be located in Marlborough Place, and the addition of £1,000 for planning consultants fees, increasing the Committee's budget to £2,340.

As a result of the above amendments, the Council's Precept requirement had reduced to £250,930.

Cllr. Leniec was keen to maintain the current Council tax levels, in view of the continuing difficult economic climate, and it was agreed that capital projects removed from the precept could only progress following a successful committee bid and sufficient reserves in the second half of the financial year. Based on the Council's tax base, the above figure would represent an increase of 1.2% on a Band D household.

The Clerk expressed her concern at the continued reduction of reserves and pointed out that, although the estimated end of year reserves stood at approx. £90,000, in the current financial year, last year almost £20,000 of reserves had been used for items which were outside of the capital expenditure list. She warned that another similar year could reduce the Council's reserves to a dangerously low level.

to full Council for total amount of precept required for

2010/11.

Cllr. Leniec proposed that a recommendation be made for a 2010/11 Precept of £250,930, which was seconded by Cllr. Hickmore and CARRIED.

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

- (a) *Recreation & Open Spaces Committee request the release of up to £200 from reserves to fund additional Solicitor's advice re land adjacent to Willes Close.*  
This request was withdrawn by Cllr. Mrs. Boulton, following recent advice from the Council's Solicitor.
- (b) *Venues Committee request the release of £2,254 for architect's fees for the Corn Exchange refurbishment.*  
Cllr. Leniec proposed a transfer from reserves of the sum requested, which was seconded and CARRIED.
- (c) *Venues Committee request the release of funds for planning application fees for the Pump House platform lift.*  
An estimate of £850 for this work had been received, and Cllr. Leniec proposed that up to £1,000 be released from reserves for this purpose, which was seconded and CARRIED.
- (d) *Planning & Highways Committee request the release of funds for the employment of a planning consultant to advice on the VWHDC Draft Core Strategy.*  
In the light of the inclusion of £1,000 for a Planning Consultant in next year's budget, Cllr. Hickmore withdrew this request.

#### **10/10 Staff Training**

Members were asked to consider sending the Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Assistant Clerk on a 2 day training course being held by S.L.C.C. entitled 'Working with your Council' at a total cost of £480. This course is recommended for all Clerks, Deputy Clerks and Administrative officers, particularly those wishing to obtain their CiLCA qualification. The course venue is Swindon. It was AGREED that the 3 members of staff outlined above should attend the course.

#### **11/10 Oxfordshire Pension Fund – Funding Strategy Statement**

The Clerk had circulated the consultation document for the above to all members, and the Clerk was asked to respond to the questionnaire as directed by the Committee.