



MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING TUESDAY 5th JULY 2022 AT THE OFFICES OF
BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE,
4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE COMMENCING AT 7:00PM



PRESENT:

Cllr R. Pullinger (Chairman)
Cllr I. Bond
Cllr M. Foster
Cllr M. Knight
Cllr M. North
Cllr H. Ramsay (virtually)
Cllr M. Russell
Cllr D. Strachan

Mr P. Tarrant –Town Clerk & Chief Executive, Biggleswade Town Council (virtually)
Mr K. Hosseini – Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S. van der Merwe – Deputy Administration & HR Manager, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of the Public – 1

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Chairman advised that members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting is being filmed and by being present attendees are deemed to have agreed to be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Chairman advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Chairman asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr D. Albone, Cllr G Fage.

ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGIES

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item

None.

b. Disclosable Non-pecuniary interests in any agenda item

Cllr D Strachan – Item 10b – Apollo Gardens (as declared later in the meeting).

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No member of the public wished to speak.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

None.

6. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

None.

7. **MINUTES OF MEETINGS**

Members received and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting held on **Tuesday 15th March 2022**.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Cllr M Foster requested an update on implementation of the Finance Review. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive advised that 45% of the recommendations have been completed and the project is to be a priority for the new Finance Manager joining the Town Council on 15th July 2022, together with a clear calendar time line for completion.
- b. Cllr M Foster requested an update on the Website project and Cllr Pullinger confirmed it has been included into the Town Council Agenda of 12th July 2022.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Payments Process Unity Trust Bank**

Mr Tarrant updated Members that this report seeks to clarify regular and non-regular payments and Members' roles connected to those online approvals and payments through the Council's new banking account at Unity Trust Bank.

Members debated the proposal to ensure personal computers had the necessary security software and updates before accessing the online banking system. Cllr Pullinger stated the Town Council has a responsibility to ensure that Members' computers undergo IT checks to ensure the equipment is able to safely access the online banking system with appropriate security and/or anti-viral software.

Cllr M Foster recommended that Members' have access to the software on a laptop at the Town Council Offices. Mr Tarrant agreed this could be arranged in the Members' breakout room. Mr Tarrant said Members with sign-off powers will be invited to an in-house training session once the new banking system is implemented.

Mr Tarrant confirmed that online uploading of payment information into the Unity Trust Bank in the event the Finance Manager being out of the office will be performed by the Accounts Clerk, the Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer or the Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships.

It was **RESOLVED** by the Committee that it **ADOPTS** the process as set out in the Internet Banking BACS Payment Process noting the following amendments / actions:

- Amend “As well as seeking to define process the appendices give information around the nature of the ICT/Software that Members will be required to maintain at home to satisfy security and enable online payments.” on page 12 to read “As well as seeking to define process the appendices give information around the nature of the ICT/Software or anti-viral software that Members will be required to maintain at home to satisfy security and enable online payments, or use of Town Council Equipment.”
- That the Process be reviewed at 1, 3 and 6 months after opening of the Unity Trust Bank Account to capture up to date intelligence relating to efficiency of the process.

b. **Christmas Tender Update**

Mr Hosseini said that Officers have reached out to past suppliers for Christmas events and have listed official tenders in the Government Contracts Finder. The tender opportunity expires on 8 July 2022, after which a cost benefit analysis will be undertaken and the results submitted to the next TCM Committee meeting.

Cllr Knight commented as follows:

- He does not support a second light show on 24th December 2022.
- He asked for more resilience for the Santa offer as last year’s Santa took ill, meaning there was no coverage on the final day.
- He asked for the cost for the alcohol licence be included in the costings.
- He does not support the A-Board expense as he believes this adds no value.
- He would like to understand the business cases for the ice rink and the Santa’s Grotto and whether these would be chargeable to the public to offset costs.
- Requested official details on the proposed siting of the ice rink.

Cllr M Foster stated he has concerns about the ice rink’s risk to safety and he stated the cost for three days appears high. He would like to understand what the public views would be on this expense.

Members debated the proposed electrical works in the square and whether these should be a CBC responsibility and that the official report detailing the works required should be shared with members after the meeting. Cllr Pullinger stated any works to the infrastructure on the market square should come from the Capital Reserve or another source to be identified, not from the Christmas events budgets. Members supported Officers to approach Central Bedfordshire Council to discuss responsibility for any works needed to ensure the square can be used safely.

It was **RESOLVED** that Officers would investigate the requirements for the electrical infrastructure on the Market Square for Christmas events, identify what is essential for Christmas events and ongoing logistics and what would be needed for the longer-term future use, and investigate funding sources for each of those categories of works.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Finance & General Purposes Committee **APPROVES** the procurement route taken by Officers and for Officers to provide final supplier selection at the Town Centre Management Committee Meeting of 19th July 2022.

c. **Fire Risk Assessment**

Mr Hosseini advised Members the report covers the fire safety assessments to bring all the Town Council’s buildings into line with current Fire Safety regulations. A number of quotes were presented to the Committee in line with the Town Council’s current procurement process and Financial Regulations.

Mr Tarrant stated that the Town Council voted for growth in the 22/23 budget of £8k for this project as a guide figure. The quotations for this project add up to more than the guide figure

and if Members decide to vote for the project to proceed additional funds will need to be approved.

Members queried whether the fire safety works included in the total cost outlined that were performed in the 2021-22 financial year were correctly accrued, which would negate the need for a virement.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Finance & General Purposes Committee **APPROVES** the following:

- Additional expenditure of £1,389 is to be vired from the Repairs and Maintenance budget to the Fire Maintenance budget to complete all fire safety improvement works and thus achieve full fire safety compliance, subject to confirmation of the accrual from the 21-22 financial year.
- Officers complete PAT testing accreditation for conducting PAT testing for all appliances in the future.

10. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. CCTV Update on S106 Application

Mr Hosseini updated Members that Officers of the Town Council had met with Central Bedfordshire Council's Steve Barratt and Beverley Gaynor to discuss the Town Council's CCTV strategy and the S106 Funding request.

Mr Hosseini received confirmation that the historic Town Centre S106 funding was exhausted and Mr Barratt and Ms Gaynor were investigating additional funding for £33,081.40. Members asked Mr Hosseini to engage with the CBC Officer in charge of the overall pot rather than the "spend officer" to progress this project given the urgency of the switch over, the deadline that has been set and mounting inflation costs for purchasing the equipment. Cllr Knight requested this be escalated to the highest level at CBC given the August deadline that the CCTV needs to be installed by.

Cllr Pullinger requested that Officers start the process to get the equipment on order.

b. Apollo Gardens

Cllr Strachan declared a non-pecuniary interest in this matter.

Mr Hosseini updated the Committee on the progress of the land transfer for Apollo Gardens and potentially up to a further 8 play areas on the Kings Reach estate. Mr Hosseini received a letter from Central Bedfordshire Council confirming that a Deed of Variation is required for transfer of any land from a Developer to the Town Council, and that CBC has initiated that request from its legal team, with an approximate timeline of 3 months. Mr Hosseini has a meeting with CBC, its legal representatives and the developer on 7 July 2022.

Cllr M Foster suggested that the project for reviewing the adoption dates for the Town Council to adopt the existing play areas on Kings Reach should go to a future PLOS meeting.

11. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No members of the public wished to speak.

12. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

13.a. Capital Assets Review

13. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **Capital Assets Review**

Members requested that this item be brought to a Town Council Meeting with further information relating to the registered land.

The meeting was closed at 20:49.