



MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING ON TUESDAY 18th JULY 2023 AT THE OFFICES OF
BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL, THE OLD COURT HOUSE,4
SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE COMMENCING AT 7.00PM



PRESENT:

Cllr D Strachan (Chairman)
Cllr I Agnew (Deputy Chairman)
Cllr D Albone
Cllr M Foster (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr M Knight (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr M North
Cllr S Sajid
Cllr C Thomas

Mr P Tarrant – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Mr R Youngs – Finance Manager
Ms F Gumush – Meetings Administrator

Members of the Public – 0

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 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 G Barrett, Cllr M Russell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No member of the public wished to speak.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

No guest speaker was invited.

6. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were no questions.

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

No amendments were made to the minutes.

The Minutes were **APPROVED** as an accurate record of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 21st March 2023.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

9. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **New Financial Reports**

The Finance Manager presented the report and indicated that although the process had been long, it was their aim to present the reports in a more concise and succinct manner.

The Chairman indicated that all the information will still be available to Members and to the public via the website.

Members discussed the reports and noted that Option A, which shows income and expenditure per cost centre with a summary commentary was very useful. The projected outturn is added as an additional column to indicate the current position.

Members indicated that the commentary notes were also helpful for the public when examining the financial reports.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation to approve Option A.

b. **Sourcing of Growth Items**

The Finance Manager presented the report which noted that Officers have identified several new budgetary cost pressures for which virements will be required to source funding.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive noted that there are other emerging growth items which Officers are not yet ready to offer a solution for. He added that these will be monitored, and a further report put forward to determine which budgets can be vired to cover the emerging items.

Members questioned the higher bank charges due to the use of three credit card machines and asked about the possibility of reducing the number of machines in use and as an alternative suggested purchasing a credit card machine outright.

Members also noted the £1,500 cost for the website and asked whether this was for business as usual or to fund some additional functionality which required consultancy.

The Town Clerk & Chief Executive highlighted that there is an ongoing maintenance agreement with the IT provider and there has been price inflation associated with that. However currently there is not any additional project work going on. Therefore, Officers will come back to the Committee with recommendations in a detailed report.

Members queried the emerging cost of the Councillor training and indicated that in four years' time maybe this could be budgeted so that there isn't a need for virement.

The Deputy Chairman suggested that ahead of the next F&GP Meeting, a meeting of the Chair, Deputy and Officers could be organised so that quotes and a better understanding of the emerging costs can be ascertained.

Members **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation to approve the four requested virements with a view to Officers,

- investigating the banking charges regarding the credit card machines and seeing if there was an alternative to reduce these,
- looking into further detail regarding the website before reporting back to the Committee.

10. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Finance Review Update.**

The Finance Manager presented the report which was an overview of the continued progression of the Finance Review and that the Appendix provided gave a full breakdown of each review plan item.

Members **NOTED** the report.

b. **Unity Trust Bank Update**

The Finance Manager presented the report which noted that the move to Unity Trust Bank had been successful and the monthly BACS run was running smoothly. The report set out the success and challenges.

The Finance Manager advised that on balance the positives of the move to Unity Trust Bank significantly outweighed the challenges.

Members **NOTED** the report.

c. **Bank Signatories Update**

The Finance Manager presented the report and indicated that all new Member signatories would be receiving details over the next 14 days to complete the registration process application.

Members **NOTED** the report.

d. **Quarterly Bank Reconciliations**

The Finance Manager presented the report and thanked Cllr Woodhead for giving his time and assistance with approving the reconciliation of the bank statements to the accounting reports for the quarter end to 30th June 2023.

It was noted that assistance with approving the reconciliation of accounts and statements were carried out on a rotating voluntary basis of Members from the F&GP Committee.

Members **NOTED** the report and the supporting documentation.

e. **Virements Quarterly Report**

The Finance Manager presented the report and noted there had been two virements only during the short time frame and expected that there would be several more in the second quarter as spending patterns became clearer.

Members **NOTED** the report.

f. **Risk Management Update Report**

The Finance Manager presented the report and advised that the live Risk Management document is now on the Councillor Sharepoint page for viewing.

Of the three highlighted risks, Officers consider that the ICT security risk is being mitigated by the introduction of IT training to Staff and Members.

With regards to the Bank data risk, Officers will be presenting a report on this to Town Council on 25th July which will include recommendations for mitigation.

With regards to Public Realm fleet age and condition, it should be noted that the fleet is old and ageing. As mitigation, the Council has set aside funds sufficient for repairs and maintenance.

The Finance Manager noted that Officers will continue to monitor fleet usage and condition and assume there will be further calls on repairs and maintenance for vehicles and equipment.

Members **NOTED** the report.

g. **New Internal Auditor**

The Finance Manager noted that the new Internal Auditor, Heelis & Lodge, would be conducting their first visit on 11th October to review the accounts and procedures.

The Chairman requested that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Deputy Chairman of the Committee note the date so that along with the Chairman, they can meet the Internal Auditor in the interests of good governance.

Members **NOTED** the report.

h. **Contracts Database Update Report**

The Finance Manager presented the report and advised that the database was a live document which Councillors could view on Sharepoint and shared the significant progress

Officers had made to cleanse the database, leaving two contracts which had approaching expiry dates.

The two remaining relate to telephony which expires in October 2023 and waste removal which expires in April 2024.

The Finance Manager advised that Officers are presently tendering for the VOIP telephony offer and a report will go prior to October 2023 on this topic.

Members **NOTED** the report.

11. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No member of the public wished to speak.

12. **EXEMPT**

(None)

The Chairman closed the meeting at **7.36pm**