



**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
MEETING ON TUESDAY 19th SEPTEMBER 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 G Barrett
Cllr M Foster (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr M Knight (ex-officio voting Member)
Cllr M Russell
Cllr C Thomas

Mr R Youngs – Head of Finance & Deputy RFO
Mrs S van der Merwe – Deputy Administration & HR Manager

Members of the Public – 13

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 Sajid and Cllr North.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

None.

b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:

Cllr Thomas – Item 9a – he is a member of the Biggleswade Community Garden and they have applied for a grant.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements.

4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The Committee agreed to extend the presentation time beyond the allotted 15-minute time period in order to give all the attendees an opportunity to speak.

Representatives from various organisations that have submitted applications for grants gave a short presentation to Members in support of their grant applications and the intended purpose for the use of those funds.

Those representatives were:

Dr Robert Butcher – St. Andrew’s Church, Biggleswade
 Ms Hazel Clarke – Biggleswade Community Carnival
 Ms Kathy Hindle – BIGG Welcome
 Mr Gwyn Williams – Stratton Community Farm CIC
 Ms Eloise Adger – MIND BLMK
 Ms Sharon May – Veg Box Donation Scheme
 Mr Marcus Bale – Biggleswade Community Garden
 Ms Helen Kingerley – Biggleswade Scout Group
 Ms Monika Carpenter – Biggleswade & Sandy District NCT
 Mr Tim Soden – Biggleswade Arts Collective CIC

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

No guest speaker was invited.

6. **MEMBERS’ QUESTIONS**

There were no Members’ 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 18th July 2023.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

- Cllr Russell – Item 9b – Sourcing of Growth Items: Cllr Russell requested that funding for Councillors should be added to the budget every year to allow Councillors to attend training offered by NALC and the Bedfordshire Association of Town & Parish Council as these cover many aspects of the role of a Councillor.
- Cllr Russell – Item 9b – Sourcing of Growth Items - regarding virements: Cllr Russell said the wording in the Minutes refers only to approving the “four requested virements” but these are not listed. Cllr Russell asked that future Minutes list the requested virements in full to provide clarity on what is being decided on without having to refer back to the agenda.
- Cllr Albone – Item 9b – Sourcing of Growth Items – regarding the IT Maintenance Agreement: The Minutes state Officers will provide further recommendations in a detailed report and he asked when Members can expect these. The Chairman requested Officers advise Members on these details separately.
- Cllr Albone – Item 10f – Risk Management Update Report: Cllr Albone noted that the Minutes reference mitigating ICT security risks for training and asked if Members will be getting training as well. The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO confirmed this will be implemented over the next month.
- Cllr Russell – Item 10f - Risk Management Update Report: Cllr Russell requested a detailed schedule of replacement for the aging fleet for the budget process for the next financial year.

9. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Grant Applications First Tranche

The Chairman noted that there had been an unprecedented number of grant applications for this Grant Application tranche, with the requested amounts far exceeding the funds available. There is a large amount of paperwork associated with each application and Members need further time to review all the applications in order to make a fair and effective allocation of funding.

Members **RESOLVED** to **DEFER** the decisions on the grant applications to an Extraordinary F&GP Committee Meeting to be held on 24th October 2023 at 7pm.

Members of the Committee **RESOLVED** to meet at an informal meeting on 26th September 2023 to scope an objective, considered and appropriate criteria framework for consideration of these grants.

As a result of the resolution to defer this tranche of grant applications, the Chairman requested that Officers put a report to the next Town Council meeting to request the deadline for the second tranche be moved from 31st December 2023 to January 2024, with the decision meeting be moved to March 2024.

Cllr Barrett requested that Members review the Town Council's Grants Policy as this is the guiding document on allocations. The Chairman requested this be circulated to Members before their framework scoping meeting on 26th September 2023.

b. Sourcing Current Year Growth Update

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO presented a report to the Committee related to planned expenditure for the 2024-2025 Financial Year.

Cllr Albone asked if any considerations have been investigated for a non-gas boiler at the Orchard Community Centre, such as a heat pump as they may have longer-term cost reductions. The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO will ask the Place Shaping Manager to consider this. The Chairman noted that there are government targets related to green energy so this would fit those criteria.

Cllr Knight asked if there has been a review of the quality of the products based on the replacement quote values for the boiler for the Orchard. The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO added this was being considered.

Members commented on the need to consider budgeting for longer-term maintenance and replacement costs being included into the budget on a regular basis and the current process of virement of unused funds.

It was **RESOLVED** to **DEFER** the Orchard Centre Boiler decision to the Town Council Meeting on 10th October 2023 for a final decision.

It was **RESOLVED** by the Committee to **APPROVE** the virement to the Town Council website from the Vehicle Leasing Budget of £1,000 as recommended.

10. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Original Estimate Planning Cycle 2024 – 2025

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO presented the report to the Committee.

Cllr Russell noted that the F&GP Meeting of 16th January 2024 needs to be included into the Original Estimate schedule. Also, the meeting of 28th November has been moved back to 5th December 2023. The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO advised he will include these.

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO updated Members that the Finance Team carry out regular scrutiny of each budget code to highlight savings or costs re-allocations and if Members are interested in seeing the detail this could be arranged. He confirmed a full budget review by Town Council Management will be completed by 31st October 2023.

Members **NOTED** the report.

b. Finance Review Update

Members **NOTED** the report.

c. Virements processed July and August 2023

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO presented the report to the Committee.

He advised Members that he is in discussion with Place Shaping Manager regarding virements from the Christmas Budget because there is funding available following an updated requirements list for the Christmas events budget. Cllr Russell stated the Chairman of the Town Centre Management Committee should have final say on these virements but the Head of Finance & Deputy RFO clarified these virements were agreed at a previous Town Council meeting.

The Chairman noted that the approved process of making budget amendments requires consultation with the relevant Committee and sign-off by the Committee Chairman.

Members requested that virement reports include further detail to allow Members a better understanding of how each budget code will be affected over the full financial year. The Chairman of the Committee will consult with the Finance Team on alternatives to virements.

Members **NOTED** the report.

d. Risk Management Update Report

The Head of Finance & Deputy RFO presented the report to the Committee.

Members requested a programme of replacement to assets/equipment mitigate risk. Cllr Barrett requested consistency in recording dates related to resolution or mitigation of risk.

11. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No member of the public wished to speak.

12. EXEMPT

None.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8:11pm