

## Sevenoaks Town Council

### Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in the Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, TN13 3QG

Livestreamed and available to view on YouTube until approved by Council:

<https://youtube.com/live/KuxdHNg8E3s?feature=share>

Meeting commenced: 7:37 pm

Meeting Concluded: 9:14 pm

#### Present:

Cllr Tony Clayton (Chair)	Remote Attendance*	Cllr Victoria Granville	Apologies
Cllr Nigel Wightman (Vice-Chair)	Remote Attendance*	Cllr Chloe Gustard	Present
Cllr Libby Ancrum	Present	Cllr Claire Shea, Mayor (ex-officio) <b>In the Chair</b>	Present
Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Present	Cllr David Skinner OBE	Present
Cllr Dr Peter Dixon	Apologies		

Substitute	For
Cllr Claire Shea	Cllr Tony Clayton
Cllr Lionel O'Hara	Cllr Dr Peter Dixon
Cllr Catherine Daniell	Cllr Victoria Granville
Cllr Lise Michaelides	Cllr Nigel Wightman

*\*Councillors attending via Zoom may take part in the discussion but are not permitted to vote on matters under consideration.*

**In Attendance:** Cllr Sue Camp, Cllr Sally Layne, Cllr Nick Varley, Cllr Gareth Willis, Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer/Deputy Town Clerk, Senior Committee Clerk and Planning Committee Clerk.

**Members of Public in Attendance: 1**

**Representations received from Members of the Public: None**

**702 Apologies for Absence:** As noted above.

#### **703 Dispensations**

Noted that all Councillors who were also Stag Trustees had a pre-approved dispensation, reference Minute 714.3 below insofar as it related to the grant application from the Stag Community Arts Centre.

#### **704 Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Sally Layne declared an interest in Agenda Item 13.3 Grant Applications (Minute 714.3 below), insofar as it related to Art in June, and did not vote thereon.

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**705 Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**RESOLVED:** to receive and sign the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 as a true record.

**706 Finance Reports to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024**

**706.1** The Committee received and noted, for the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, the Responsible Finance Officer's (RFO) Report with Income and Expenditure, Variance Analysis, Working Capital, Statement of Fund Balances and Capital Expenditure and funds.

It was noted that the year-to-date position at the end of January 2024 gave a revenue surplus of £56,487, allowing for adjustment required for Bat & Ball Station Management & Maintenance Reserves movement to be actioned at year end which offsets the Bat & Ball Station year to date deficit of £76,190 YTD.

Income & Expenditure variances were noted: in particular, the favourable variances at the Bat & Ball Centre and interest on investments.

The Committee noted the disposal of IT assets following the completion of the server decommissioning project, together with items of Open Spaces equipment,

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the report of the Responsible Finance Officer and Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024 be received and accepted; and
- 2) the disposal of assets set out in the report be noted.

**706.2 Finance Reports to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

The Committee received and noted, for the periods ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, the Responsible Finance Officer's (RFO) Report with Income and Expenditure, Variance Analysis, Working Capital, Statement of Fund Balances and Capital Expenditure and funds.

**706.3** The Committee received and noted the following:

**Suppliers' Accounts**

- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, total gross invoices £96,255.65
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, total gross invoices £58,383.18
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, total gross invoices £65,322.60

**List of Payments - Sevenoaks Town Council Nat West Account:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, total £215,373.01
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, total £353,771.80
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, total £211,803.46

**List of Payments – Mayor's Charity Account**

- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, total £-58.00
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023: None

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- 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023: None

**Payroll Account**

- 1st to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, total £80,288.83
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31st December 2023, total £90,114.78
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, total £87,843.76

**Petty Cash Account**

- 1st to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, total payments £361.77
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 31st December 2023, total payments £382.06
- 1<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, total payments £373.62

**706.4 Hospitality and Gifts Register**

Noted the following hospitality or gifts received by Councillors or staff for the period 1<sup>st</sup> November to 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024:

Date	Event	Nature of Hospitality	Approximate value
04.02.2024	Sevenoaks Chinese School – Lunar New Year event	Gifts to the Mayor - a hand-written calendar scroll, a wooden fan, Chinese New Year window stickers and a silk scarf	£50

**707 Fidelity Guarantee**

The Committee noted the comment of the Internal Auditor that the Town Council’s fidelity cover was insufficient to cover funds over £2m in the bank which could put funds at risk. Fidelity insurance cover protects the employer against the theft of money, property, forgery or fraud by an employee.

It was noted that current cover with the Town Council’s insurers, Zurich, was for £2m. Zurich had suggested querying the need for higher level of cover as the Town Council had internal controls/processes in place to stop the full amount of the bank accounts being taken.

Having considered this issue, the Committee felt that the risk was minimal, the Town Council’s internal controls were strong, and the existing cover was satisfactory.

**RESOLVED** that:

Sevenoaks Town Council retain its current level of Fidelity Insurance cover at £2m.

**708 Sevenoaks Town Council Internal Audit Report – Visit 2**

The Committee considered the Town Council’s Internal Audit Report Visit 2 and the issues raised therein, together with progress on previous issues raised.

The Responsible Finance Officer advised that one new issue had been identified as there wasn’t a process in place for reporting outstanding debts to the Town Council.

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It was agreed that a summary of debts over £50 which had been outstanding for more than 3 months, be included in the Responsible Finance Officer's Reports to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the Town Council's Internal Audit Report Visit 2 be received and noted, together with the new issue raised and progress on previous issues.
- 2) a summary of debts over £50 which had been outstanding for more than 3 months be included in the Responsible Finance Officer's Reports to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

**709 Review of Internal Controls: Financial Regulations**

The Committee received and considered the amendments to the Town Council's Financial Regulations; in particular, the increase in the level of emergency expenditure delegated to the Chief Executive/Town Clerk from £5000 to £10,000. (paragraph 4.5)

**RESOLVED:** To adopt the updated Financial Regulations 2024/2025.

**710 Sevenoaks Town Council Risk Assessment, Annual Review**

The Committee received and considered the Town Council's Risk Assessment.

The Responsible Finance Officer advised of Action Plans in place in relation to three risks:

- Computing (Cyber Security) – actions taken and ongoing.
- Financial Management (risk of County or District Council going bankrupt) – Town Council aimed to increase its revenue reserves by £20,000 per year.
- Markets (ensure charges reviewed as part of budgetary process) – completed, market charges included in annual review of all charges.

**RESOLVED:** that the Sevenoaks Town Council Risk Assessment be received and accepted, progress on Action Plans noted, and market risk be removed as addressed.

**711 St John's Hill Car Park Public Toilets: Refurbishment Update**

Progress with the refurbishment of the St John's Hill public toilets was noted.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the budget for the refurbishment of the St John's Hill Car Park public toilets be increased from £40,000 to £46,000 to enable improved specification.
- 2) That the additional £6,000 be allocated from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds.
- 3) Transfer of CIL £28,546 be moved from "Otford Steps" CIL Budget to Public Toilets CIL Budget.

**712 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Report**

The Committee received an update on CIL income and expenditure.

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It was noted that Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) had recommended that £28,546 originally allocated to a project that had been unable to progress, be retained by the Town Council and allocated to an alternative project by the end of 2024.

It was noted that the unallocated CIL balance, taking into account the current SDC CIL balance due to be paid April 2024, and allocation of CIL funds to projects, was £86,234.10.

The commitment for future CIL funding, together with priorities allocated for Open Spaces projects, were considered. It was noted that the cemetery garage roof repairs had been funded otherwise.

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) the update on CIL income and expenditure be received and noted.
- 2) the Open Spaces & Leisure Committee current future requirements for CIL funding, together with the allocated priorities, be agreed.

**713 Christmas Lights Switch On Event 2024: Trialling Afternoon Event**

The Committee received and considered a review of the Christmas Lights Switch On Event 2023. It was noted that the event was traditionally held on the evening of the last Friday in November, and over the last 15 years had grown from attracting a few hundred people to large crowds up to 10,000.

Unfortunately, with large crowds it seems almost expected that there will be a small but significant element of anti-social behaviour. In 2023 this was more pronounced and included a large gathering on the Vine.

The Committee considered the suggestion, supported by the Police, Town Team and Town Council staff, that the event might be more family friendly if moved to a Saturday afternoon.

**RESOLVED:** that the Christmas Lights Switch On event 2024 be trialled as an afternoon event, on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> November.

**714 Grants Reports and Applications**

**714.1 Reports received from Grant Recipients 2023/24**

The Committee received and noted the reports submitted by recipients of grant awards from the Town Council in 2023/24.

**714.2 Grant Subsidies for Room Hire**

The annual budget and balance for grant subsidies for room hire 2023/24 was noted, together with the list of those groups currently approved to receive free room hire.

The Committee was requested to consider the budget for 2024/25.

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**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) grant subsidies for room hire awarded to February 2024 be noted.
- 2) new residents' associations be offered one free room hire at their establishment.
- 3) budget for grant subsidies for room hire 2024/25 be an increase of 5% on the 2023/24 budget.

**714.3 Grant Applications Received**

The Committee noted the budget for grants to local voluntary organisations for 2023/24 and the balance to date.

Councillors considered the grant applications received. It was agreed that two of the applications, which were youth related, be referred to the Youth Services Committee for consideration.

The Committee noted the difficulties being faced by the Sevenoaks Bowling Club and invited them to attend the next meeting of the Sports Strategy Working Group to discuss this.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That the grant applications received from We Are Beams and Kent Youth Jazz Orchestra be referred to the Youth Services Committee for consideration at its next meeting.
- 2) That grant requests be awarded under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011 Sections 1-8 refers) as follows:

Grant Ref No.	Organisation	Purpose of Award	Grant Application	Grant Approved
5	Friends of Pontoise	Mayor & Consort to attend New Year Lunch in February, Diamond Anniversary gifts to present to Pontoise Les Amis, and contribution to website costs.	£250	£250
9	Friends of Rheinbach	Publicity campaign to increase awareness, promote benefits of town twinning, encourage connections and recruitment.	£250	£250
72	Art in June	Contribution to printing costs of 12,500 booklets featuring all artists.	£500	£500
12	South East Open Studios	Design & production of 2500 Sevenoaks Artists' Trail Map.	£250	£250
6	Sevenoaks Three Arts	Hire of performance space for competition and Cup Winners concert.	£600	£600

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Grant Ref No.	Organisation	Purpose of Award	Grant Application	Grant Approved
17	West Kent Mediation	Contribution to costs, including volunteer training & expenses, hall hire and publicity.	£900	£900
3	Sevenoaks Voluntary Transport Group	To help with costs in 2024/25 to enable SVTG to continue supporting elderly people needing transport for medical reasons.	£1,000	£1,000
70	Sevenoaks Samaritans	To recruit 12 new volunteers via the advertising via Town Council opportunities – Market Stalls, Screens, Town Crier magazine.  Including hire costs of John London Hall for volunteer engagement event (£220)	£1,488	£1,488
67	Baby Umbrella	Towards 6 months funding to serve 76 1:1 support appointments for Sevenoaks Town residents	£3,040	£500
62	West Kent Mind	Towards running costs of Chat Room project for one year	£4,591	£2,500
10	Stag Community Arts Centre	Towards staging costs at The Stag of the Stag Arts Festival 2024.	£10,000	£4,000
79	Sevenoaks Bowling Club	Towards maintenance of the green by a specialist contractor.	£5,000	£1,000
Total grants awarded				£13,238

**715 IT Meeting Equipment Update**

The Committee noted the purchase of the “Owl” sector specific system to far improve the sound quality of live streamed meetings and provide a more professional screening where each speaker’s face is shown on screen at the time of talking rather than just an overview of the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** To note the purchase of the “Owl” sector specific system to improve the quality of livestreamed meetings, at a cost of £2,969.67.

**716 Current Matters**

**RESOLVED** that the updates on Current Matters be received and noted.

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**717 Press Releases**

Agreed that press releases be issued in respect of the grant awards and the refurbishment of the St John’s Car Park public toilets (once completed)

There being no further business the Chair closed the Meeting.

Signed .....

Dated .....

Chair