

Sevenoaks Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held on 26th September 2022 in the Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, TN13 3QG

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

https://youtu.be/OpQf_IXaWE

Meeting commenced: 7.34 pm

Meeting Concluded: 8.59 pm

Present:

| | | | |
|--|-----------|--|-------------------|
| Cllr Tony Clayton, Chairman | Present | Cllr Victoria Granville-Baxter | Present |
| Cllr Keith Bonin, Vice-Chairman | Present | Cllr Roderick Hogarth (to 8.05 pm) | Present |
| Cllr Libby Ancrum | Present | Cllr Mrs Rachel Parry, Mayor (ex-officio) | Apologies |
| Cllr Sue Camp | Apologies | Cllr Richard Parry | Remote attendance |
| Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet | Present | Cllr Simon Raikes | Present |
| Cllr Andrew Eyre | Apologies | | |

| Substitute | | For |
|-------------------|---------|------------------|
| Cllr Nick Busvine | Present | Cllr Andrew Eyre |
| Cllr Claire Shea | Present | Cllr Sue Camp |

In attendance: Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer (remote attendance) and Senior Committee Clerk.

Representation received from Member of the Public:

Melissa Barcroft, Fundraising Manager at the Stag Community Arts Centre, addressed the meeting in relation to the Stag Theatre's request for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding towards Solar Panel installation (Agenda Item 7).

311. Apologies for Absence

As noted above.

312. Dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

313. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Clayton declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 insofar as it related to the grant application from Sevenoaks Counselling Services and withdrew from the meeting during consideration thereof. Cllr Bonin took the chair for consideration of this matter

Cllr Raikes declared a pecuniary interest in respect of street lighting matters included in Agenda Item 12, Current Matters, insofar as they related to Woodside Road. He also placed on record that, in his role as a District Councillor, he had written to the

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CIL Board in support of the Stag Theatre's bid for funding (now the subject of a bid to the Town Council at Agenda item 7).

Cllr Shea advised that she had been lobbied in respect of the grant application by Baby Umbrella, included at Agenda Item 8.

314. Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 18th July 2022

RESOLVED: to receive and sign the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 18th July 2022 as a true record.

315. Finance Reports

315.1 Management Accounts to 31st August 2022

The Committee received and noted, for the period ended 31st August 2022, the Responsible Finance Officer's Report with Variance Analysis, Income and Expenditure, Working Capital Summary, Statement of Fund Balances and Capital Expenditure and funds.

It was noted that the year-to-date position at the end of August gave a revenue deficit of £33,395. Adjusted for required Bat & Ball Station Management & Maintenance Reserves movement to be actioned at year end, which offsets the Bat & Ball Station year to date deficit of £43,867, the adjusted position was a surplus of £10,472.

The Responsible Finance Officer commented that there would be a lot of challenges in the coming months with rising inflation and high energy costs and advised that a number of contracts would be coming up for renewal.

The Responsible Finance Officer proposed that contingency funds be used to meet the following:

- £6,817.72 to cover the cost of the Casual Vacancy election
- £2,150 to cover the cost of the Carbon Footprint appraisal
- £1,402.90 to cover the cost of professional fees relating to the illegal encampment at Greatness Recreation Ground

This would leave £33,229 contingency budget remaining. If £26K was required for energy costs, this would leave c£7K for other purposes.

Councillors commented on the positive performance of the Bat & Ball Centre income and congratulated the new manager of the Café on the Vine on the recent financial improvements for the venue. Councillors asked that their thanks be passed to the manager.

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the Management Accounts 1st to 31st July 2022 and 1st to 31st August 2022; and
- 2) To approve the following expenditure from contingency:
 - £6,817.72 to cover the cost of the Casual Vacancy election

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- £2,150 to cover the cost of the Carbon Footprint appraisal
- £1,402.90 to cover the cost of professional fees relating to the illegal encampment at Greatness Recreation Ground

315.2 Unprecedented Energy Cost Increases

The Committee received and noted a report prepared by the Responsible Finance Officer on the impact of the unprecedented energy cost increases on the Town Council's buildings, setting out an indication of the energy consumption of each and the cost estimate for the year. It was noted that this report had been prepared in advance of the Government's announcement of an energy cap for businesses between 1st October 2022 and 31st March 2023. Information was awaited from suppliers regarding the effect of this on charges.

It was also noted that the carbon audit of the Town Council was underway, with the report due in a few weeks. The outcome would be considered ahead of the budget setting for next year.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council was working with the District Council and the other three town councils in the District on the Warm Spaces initiative. She also advised that a survey across local councils had considered the provision of Christmas Lights this year and had concluded that, given the minimal cost of LED lights and the great benefit to businesses and the community, they should go ahead.

RESOLVED:

That the Responsible Finance Officer's report on the potential impact of the unprecedented energy cost increases and potential mitigations be noted.

315.3 The Committee received and noted:

Suppliers Accounts for:

- 1st to 31st July 2022, total invoices £245,297.03
- 1st to 31st August 2022, total invoices £60,683.69

List of Payments for:

Sevenoaks Town Council Nat West Account

- 1st to 31st July 2022, total £300,202.99
- 1st to 31st August 2022, total £203,850.51

Mayor's Charity Account

- 1st to 31st July 2022, total £4,530.31

Payroll Accounts for:

- 1st to 31st July 2022, total invoices £79,470.54
- 1st to 31st August 2022, total invoices £81,639.14

Petty Cash Accounts for:

- 1st to 31st July 2022, total invoices £953.00

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- 1st to 31st August 2022, total invoices £964.16

315.4 Conclusion of Audit, Year Ended 31st March 2022

The Committee noted the successful conclusion of the audit for 2021/2022. The external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, had raised no matters giving cause for concern. The Responsible Financial Officer was congratulated on the outcome.

315.5 Hospitality and Gifts Register

The Committee noted that the Town Clerk was being hosted by Dutch clerks in Amsterdam the following week.

316 Draft Initial projection for 5-year Financial Review

The Committee received and noted an initial projection for a 5-year financial review for discussion purposes, together with an outline of the next steps towards producing a 5-Year Plan.

RESOLVED: That the initial projection for a 5-year financial review be noted, and Councillors requested to forward any feedback to the Responsible Financial Officer.

317 Stag Theatre Request for CIL Funding

The Committee considered a request from the Stag Community Arts Centre (Stag Theatre) for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding of £19,400, being 27% of the cost of solar panel installation. It was noted that £42,600 funding had also been obtained from Sevenoaks District Council and the remainder was the subject of other funding bids.

It was noted that CIL unallocated to projects was currently £56,331. The funding of this request would result in an unallocated balance of £36,931.

RESOLVED:

That the Stag Community Arts Centre request for £19,400 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding towards the installation of solar panels be approved, subject to the remaining funding required being obtained and the project going ahead.

318 Grant Budget Update & Grant Applications Received

The Committee noted the budget for grants to local voluntary organisations for 2022/23 and the balance to date.

318.1 Grant considered by the Youth Services Committee

It was noted that, at its meeting held on 7th September 2022, the Youth Services Committee had RESOLVED to award the following grant under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011 Sections 1-8 refers):

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| Grant Ref No. | Organisation & Charity Reg No if applicable | Purpose of Award | Grant Application | Grant Approved |
|---------------|---|---|-------------------|----------------|
| 6 | Sevenoaks Three Arts Festival, Young Musician of the Year | Towards cost of hire of venue and competition standard piano for the Young Musician competition | £600 | £600 |

318.2 Consideration of Grant Applications Received

The Committee considered grant aid requests received.

RESOLVED: That grant requests be awarded under the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011 Sections 1-8 refers) as follows:

| Grant Ref No. | Organisation & Charity Reg No if applicable | Purpose of Award | Grant Application | Grant Approved |
|---------------|---|---|-------------------|----------------|
| 68 | Baby Umbrella | Cost of specialist support practitioner fees and venue costs | £1,380 | £1,380 |
| 73 | Sevenoaks History Hub | Contribution to publishing costs of book using historical photos and postcards of Sevenoaks, and oral history, to tell story of the town. | £2,500 | £500 |
| 11 | Sevenoaks Counselling* | To supplement the Bursary Fund which assists clients who are unable to afford the recommended contribution. | £1,500 | £1,500 |
| 62 | West Kent Mind | To deliver 10 x 3-hour mental health awareness workshops over 6 months for residents of Sevenoaks Town | £5,192 | £1,000 |
| 43 | D'Vine Singers | Contribution to enable to meet at Sevenoaks venue and sing at community events. | £500 | £500 |
| Total | | | | £4,880 |

* Cllr Bonin in the chair during consideration of the grant application from Sevenoaks Counselling.

319 Provision of IT Equipment for Councillors

Following recent cyber security training for Town Councillors, consideration was given to the provision of IT equipment supplied by Sevenoaks Town Council. It was felt that this would make the councillor position more inclusive and could help in the move towards reducing reliance on paper copies of agendas.

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RESOLVED that:

- 1) The supply of suitable IT equipment to all Town Councillors be agreed in principle, on a similar basis to Members Allowance and optional for Councillors to accept; and
- 2) Quotations be obtained for supplying Councillors with either laptops or tablets, to be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

320 Bank Street Proposed Permanent Closure for Traffic

Consideration was given to the proposal that the temporary Traffic Regulation Order restricting vehicular access to Bank Street, introduced during the pandemic, be made permanent. It was noted that this had opened up a “café culture” environment, positively received by retailers and the public.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the proposed permanent closure of Bank Street to vehicular traffic be approved in principle; and
- 2) That information on potential costs, when received, be circulated to all councillors via email for consideration with the option of delegating the matter to the Public Realm Group, if felt appropriate at that stage.

321. Minutes of Town Team Meeting held on 3rd August 2022

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Town Team held on 3rd August 2022 be received and noted.

322. Current Matters and Sevenoaks Town Council Priorities

The Committee considered the updates received. It was agreed that in future the progress reports on Sevenoaks Town Council Green Community Investment Plan and Bat & Ball Station Action Plan be submitted to the Community Infrastructure Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED: that the updates on the following be received and noted:

- 1) Current Matters
- 2) Sevenoaks Town Council Priorities
- 3) Sevenoaks Town Council Green Community Investment Plan
- 4) Bat & Ball Station Action Plan

323. Press Release

It was agreed that Press Releases be issued on the awarding of CIL funding to the Stag Theatre for solar panel installation and on the allocation of grants.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting.

Signed

Dated

Chairman