

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE **FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE** HELD ONLINE
WEDNESDAY 13th JANUARY 2021 AT 7.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C N Parker (Chairman) Presiding
D Corney-Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors P Bullivant R Jenks (Mayor)
Mrs C Bunday Mrs A Jones
R Hayes M Joyce (Dep Mayor)
M Hocking M E Ryan
D Howe Mrs L Sheffield
C Jenks

Officers in Attendance: Phil Rowe – Town Clerk
Sam Scott – Deputy Town Clerk and RFO
Sally Henley – Town Development Manager
Alex Robinson – Principal Administrator

600. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs Karen Crout and Ryan Hall.

601. **INTERESTS**

None.

602. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Audit Committee held on 26th February 2020 were received and signed as a correct record, subject to it being noted that under Minute 20/02(458) that consideration had been given to budget implications associated from the rise in costs of the Street Cleansing Bin Emptying service provided by Teignbridge District Council.

603. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

604. **INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

A. INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENTS

The Committee received the Income and Expenditure Statements for October and November 2020 (previously circulated). The RFO advised that there had been some minor queries in advance of the meeting. The Chairman invited further questions from Members.

31st October 2020

Opening Balance	£ 674,716.79
Heritage Lottery Fund Payment	£ 8,193.00

Misc. Income	£	6,159.52
Total Income	£	689,069.31
LESS:		
Expenditure	£	179,471.12
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£	179,471.12
BALANCE as at 31st October 2020		
Business Call & Current Account:	£	509,598.19

Balances as at 31st October 2020

Current Account	£	100.00
Business Call Account	£	509,498.19
Petty Cash Account	£	200.00

Total Cash in hand at bank **£ 509,798.19**

Total: **£ 509,798.19**

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30th November 2020

Opening Balance	£	509,598.19
Misc. Income	£	28,321.68
Total Income	£	537,919.87
LESS:		
Expenditure	£	144,406.58
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£	144,406.58
BALANCE 30th November 2020		
Business Call & Current Account:	£	393,513.29

Balances as at 30th November 2020

Current Account	£	100.00
Business Call Account	£	393,413.29
Petty Cash Account		£200.00

Total Cash in hand at bank **£ 393,713.29**

Total: **£ 393,713.29**

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The Chairman invited further comment on the statements and reports. Members raised the following key points:

- Land adjacent to Newton’s Place and parking arrangements with Teignbridge District Council;
- Safety harness for the Lethbridge Diving Bell in the Museum exhibition;
- Snagging and Completion Works for the Newton’s Place Project;
- Town Council Street Cleansing Device; and
- Storage Yard and Workshop for Council equipment.

Following discussion among Members, accordingly, it was,

RESOLVED that the statements of income and expenditure for October and November 2020 as submitted to the Committee be hereby approved and signed by the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee.

B. FINANCIAL BUDGET COMPARISON

The Chairman referred to the Financial Budget Comparison summary and report which detailed Income and Expenditure for the Finance and Audit Committee for the period 1st April – 30th November 2020 (previously circulated). The Chairman noted that there had been no questions in advance but invited questions from Councillors. There being no further questions, accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED that the Financial Budget Comparison Summary Income for the Finance and Audit Committee for the period 1st April – 30th November 2020, be hereby, approved and signed by the Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee.

C. GRANTS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Chairman reminded Members that due to the current Government Restrictions that delegated authority had been granted to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee to review and approve the applications for Grant Funding or Financial Assistance, reference Minute 20/11(596).

Members were invited to note the substantial list of applicants for 2020 an acknowledgement of the current economic situation faced by many local organisations during the pandemic; a summary of which had been previously circulated. The differing financial contribution was clarified as a Grant being awarded for a specific project or task and Financial Assistance to support ongoing running costs.

The Committee noted the following Applications for 2020:

Grants

1. Horsemanship for Health	£250.00
2. The Station (formerly the Junction)	£250.00
3. All Saints Marsh Academy -PTA	£250.00
4. Canada Hill Primary School – PTA	£250.00
5. Tissues & Issues	£250.00
6. Newton Abbot Community Mutual Aid	£250.00
7. Veteran’s Farmable Foundation	£250.00
8. Decoy Primary School PTA	£250.00

Financial Assistance

9. Citizens Advice Teignbridge	£3,000.00
10. Newton Abbot Community Transport	£3,000.00
11. Home-Start Teignbridge	£1,000.00
12. Meadowside	£1,000.00

Members endorsed the decision of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to approve the applications for 2020 and noted the significance of such funding to the local organisations given the current economic circumstances. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED that

- (a) Applications for **Grants** listed as 1-8 be hereby noted as approved;
- (b) Applications for **Financial Assistance** listed as 9-12 be hereby noted as granted; and
- (c) The RFO to provide a summary of historical applications for Grant Funding or Financial Assistance approved over the last five years.

605. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2019/20

The Chairman referred Members to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20. The RFO referred Members directly to the Final Report and highlighted that in section two, the External Auditor had recorded that no matters had been drawn to their attention that would affect their decision. The RFO then added that in Other Matters the External Auditor had highlighted two points, which had been challenged by the RFO on more than one occasion as incorrect. Ms Scott advised Members that she had made repeated attempts to supply the required evidence of actions taken on behalf of the Council but that these attempts had been ignored by PKF Littlejohn. Members expressed their concern and recorded in the strongest terms that they wished to challenge the procedure by which the External Auditors formed their final report. Further to which Members suggested that a letter be prepared by the RFO on behalf of the Town Council seeking an explanation. The External Auditor had been satisfied that the Town Council was compliant in accordance with Proper Practices and had issued the Certificate of completion for 2019/20. Following a discussion among Members, accordingly, it was:

RESOLVED that a) the Council at its meeting to be held on 27th January 2021 be **RECOMMENDED** to approve and adopt the **Annual Governance & Accountability Return for 2019/20** and b) the RFO send a letter to PKF Littlejohn, External Auditor to the Council to seek clarification on the serious concerns raised by the RFO in the determination of the Other Matters made in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019/20 and to report back in due course.

606. BUDGET AND PRECEPT 2021/22

A. SUB COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES/FORUMS

(i). STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM – 11th NOVEMBER 2020

Arising from the consideration of the report of the meeting it was,

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strategic Planning Forum – held on 11th November 2020 be hereby approved and adopted.

(ii). STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM – 2nd DECEMBER 2020

Arising from the consideration of the report of the meeting it was,

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Strategic Planning Forum – held on 2nd December 2020 be hereby approved and adopted subject to it being noted under 20/12(SP51) that a constructive and informative meeting had been held with Councillor Alan Connett, the Leader of Teignbridge District Council on 6th January 2021 and further discussions would be held in due course.

B. TOWN CLERK REPORT – PRECEPT & BUDGET REPORT 2021/22

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to brief Members on his report on the Budget and Precept 2020/21 (previously circulated), as recorded under Minute 20/12(SP51) which contained a recommended Budget and Precept for 2021/22.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council had a statutory obligation to put in place a budget and precept that would deliver the Council's objectives, vision and priorities.

The Clerk noted the familiar format of the Financial Budget Report and highlighted that it was the culmination of three meetings of the Strategic Planning Forum, the first having been held in September 2020 and the latter two in November and December 2020. The results of Councillors deliberations and aspirations for the Council over the forthcoming year were summarised in section 4. of the report. Mr Rowe guided members through the document and explained that the budget made provision for the delivery of all the Council's statutory and non-statutory commitments and services could be delivered.

Members were reminded that a recommendation from the Committee was required to be submitted to the Council for approval at its meeting to be held on 27th January 2021. Members noted their sincere thanks to the Town Clerk for the excellent report and the high degree of clarity that it offered Members in giving their consideration.

Arising from a lengthy and detailed discussion on the report, Members recorded that they were committed to assisting in the economic recovery of the town following the severe affects of the COVID-19 Pandemic and to continue to deliver activities and services that the Town Council provided to residents and visitors alike. Accordingly, it was;

RESOLVED that the Council at its meeting to be held on 27th January 2021 be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt a Precept of **£914,707 for 2021/22** representing an increase of £5.70p p.a. (0.11p per week) or 5.6% for a Band D property in Newton Abbot and that Teignbridge District Council be therefore requested to collect on the Town Council's behalf the **sum of £914,707**.

607. BUCKINGHAM PALACE GARDEN PARTY NOMINATIONS 2021/22

The Chairman reminded Members that further to Minute 20/01(376) that Councillor David Howe's name had been submitted to DALC as the Town Council nominee and although he was not selected by DALC last year his name would be resubmitted until he was selected. However, it was further noted that Buckingham Palace had cancelled the Garden Parties for Summer 2021 due to the Coronavirus Pandemic therefore, accordingly it was;

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk be authorised to resubmit Councillor David Howe as the Town Council nominee eligible to attend a Buckingham Palace Garden Party once they resumed in 2022 and for his name to be put forward to DALC to be included in their selection process.

608. **LATE CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

609. **CHAIRMAN CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chairman closed the meeting in acknowledging the difficulties faced by all due to the ongoing implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic. He noted the large number of fatalities reported daily and was pleased that the vaccination programme gave hope during these unrepresented times. Councillor Mike Hocking added that following a meeting of the DALC Board a decision had been made to retain online meetings including the AGM Conference until a further review later in the year.

610. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be Wednesday 24th February 2021.

Chairman