

REPORT of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee
held on Thursday 5 March 2020

Present: Cllr Jayne Stansfield (Chairman)
Cllr Helen Harrison (arrived late)
Cllr Clive Parkinson
Cllr Guy Rawlinson
Cllr Matthew Stringer
Cllr Angela Symonds
Cllr Maggie Tyrrell

Louise Powell (Town Clerk)
Wendy Sydenham (Minute Taking)

(Cllr Ashley Bijster – absent)

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Chris Davies (another commitment)
Cllr Benj Emmerson (indisposed)
Cllr Bob Griffin (out of Thornbury)
Cllr Shirley Holloway (indisposed)

2. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBER'S DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No member's interests were declared.

3. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

4. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON AND CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING OF 23 JANUARY 2020 NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

The report of the Finance and Policy Committee meeting of 23 January 2020 had been circulated and was noted.

(Cllr Helen Harrison arrived at the meeting.)

5. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON POLICING MATTERS

The Chair welcomed representatives from the Police to the meeting who presented an update to the Committee on policing matters in Thornbury. Incidents of anti-social behaviour were down and crime was generally down compared to the previous year. Reports of theft, including retail theft, were down, although criminal damage was around the same. The use of direct messaging to officers on duty through Facebook was proving successful. There had been a number of reports of "homeless" people, although the Police reported that they believed they were not technically homeless and were advising the public not to give them money. A new PCSO was now in place. The Police accommodation at the Town Hall would shortly be extended and refurbished. Speed watch volunteers would

be receiving a Pride Award next week.

Cllr Maggie Tyrrell reported that at a recent Police briefing, there had been some acknowledgement that their approach to crime in Thornbury last year should have been different. Cllr Helen Harrison asked that the Police increase their interaction with youth groups, and the Police representatives confirmed that they would be doing this and also that work with Castle School had been successful in helping prevent youth crime. The Chair thanked the Police representatives for attending the meeting and for their update.

(The police representatives left the meeting.)

6. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FINANCIAL MATTERS:

(a) To approve the Accounts for Payment

The Accounts for Payment were tabled and Cllr Matthew Stringer proposed that they be approved for payment. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Guy Rawlinson and unanimously agreed. Cllr Matthew Stringer and Cllr Guy Rawlinson signed the master copy of the Accounts for Payment.

ACCOUNTS PAID OUT OF MEETING

*TV Licensing	TV Licence	154.50
Armstrong Hall	INV 18436 & INV 90	4549.00
Nina Flint	Locum RFO	958.40
EDF Energy	Electricity Bill	339.76

ACCOUNTS NOW DUE FOR PAYMENT

Central Services

MCL House	Copier Charges	138.95
Pitney Bowes	Franking Charges	107.00
Corona Energy	Gas Charges	866.40
Water 2 Business	Water Rates	19.31
Water 2 Business	Water Rates	409.46
Consortium	Stationery	52.06
***Pitney Bowes Finance	Lease for Franking Equipment	94.93
Ellis Whittam	Insurance + Admin Fee	126.23
Ellis Whittam	H&S Services	2490.00
MSP Group Ltd	Phone Lines & Broadband	77.98
MSP Group Ltd	Phones & IT Contract	419.93
ALCA	Annual Subscription	1415.10
Consortium	Envelopes	12.59
Biffa	Waste Disposal	68.23
Hawkins of Thornbury	Woodstain	19.99
British Telecommunications	Telephone Bill	480.96
Horders Thornbury Press	Consultation Plan & Posters	125.00

Playing Fields & Cemetery

**Holy Mowers	Expenses	55.00
Water 2 Business	Water Rates	385.08
Sullivans	Drive Belts	43.08
Alan Price Grave Digger	Grave Digging	1340.00

Amicus AHS	Tree Surgeon	3665.00
Ford Fuel Oils	Gas Oil	537.60
Corona Energy	Gas Charges	171.05
Bowcom	Pitch Marking	381.60
Sport & Play	Outdoor Inspection	114.00
Mole Country Stores	Wellington Boots	18.99
Matrix BES Ltd	Electric Works	96.00
Biffa	Waste Disposal	74.78
Biffa	Waste Disposal	257.96
British Telecommunications	Telephone Bill	70.44

Land & Property

Thornbury Citizen's Advice Bureau	Swift Removals	420.00
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Grants & Contingencies

**The Wheatsheaf (Steamers)	Toilet Scheme Grant	150.00
**The Swan	Toilet Scheme Grant	250.00
**The Armstrong Hall	Toilet Scheme Grant	250.00
**Papilio	Toilet Scheme Grant	250.00
**The Malt House	Toilet Scheme Grant	150.00
**Thornbury Comm Composting	Grant	1000.00

Environment

Thornbury Motors	Diesel Fuel	41.68
South Glos Council	Dog Waste, Grass Cutting	6626.88
Thornbury Motors	Diesel Fuel	12.69

- *Credit Card Payment
- **Cheque Payment
- ***Direct Debit

(b) To receive the report for January (month 10) and any matters arising

The Detailed Income and Expenditure by Budget Heading report for month 10 had been circulated and was noted by the Committee. The Clerk reported that a number of adjustments needed to be made on RBS to correct some budget lines that were currently showing incorrect expenditure on the report. The Clerk confirmed that there were no concerns about the true expenditure and that once the transfers were made, the reports would be correct. The adjustments needed on RBS were mainly transfers from reserve accounts and CIL funds.

The Clerk tabled a Bank Reconciliation report for January 2020 and confirmed that these reports would be a standing items on future Committee agendas. These would need to be signed and dated by the Chair of the Committee at each meeting. The Clerk highlighted that there was a written amendment to the January 2020 report due to a transaction on RBS being made in the wrong month. The report was noted by the Committee and the Chair signed and dated it.

The Clerk reported that it was an audit requirement for a Councillor to come to the office regularly and check the physical bank statements against the reconciliation reports. This would need to be a Councillor who was not a Chair of a Committee. Cllr Helen Harrison nominated Cllr Clive Parkinson for this task. This was seconded by Cllr Matt Stringer and

unanimously agreed. It was further agreed that this would be carried out on a monthly basis.

- (c) To consider a request from the Armstrong Hall Trust for up to £6000 towards plans for Miss Saises' Cottage

The Clerk confirmed that she had received confirmation from ALCA that it was within Council's powers to loan money to the Armstrong Hall Trust on whatever terms it felt were appropriate. The Committee agreed that Council would lend the Trust up to £6000 towards the costs of progressing its plans for Miss Saises' Cottage with the amount lent to be repaid by the Trust on completion of the plans and receipt of proceeds.

- (d) To consider spend on tree works

The Clerk reported that the Committee needed to consider agreeing to move the budget for tree works from the Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee to the Environment Committee as it was the latter Committee that was monitoring the works. The Clerk also asked them to consider agreeing the additional tree works that had been carried out on top of the original list of works. The additional works totalled £1075 and would need to come from reserves. The nature of the additional works were discussed and it was agreed that these could be met from reserves, and it was also agreed that the budget be moved to the Environment Committee. It was however noted that this meant that the Environment Committee was therefore responsible for all tree works, including those in areas looked after by the Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee.

- (e) To decide actions about debtors to Council

A list of current debtors was tabled and the Clerk talked through the circumstances of these debts. A number of these were invoicing errors on the previous financial system. The remaining debts had been investigated and, where appropriate, chased by the current RFO. It was agreed that all of these debts should be written off, with the exception of one debt (invoice number 8953) which would continue to be chased.

The Clerk also reported that another debt needed to be considered. This had arisen due to an error in how credit card transactions for purchases at the Armstrong Hall had been processed. The Clerk reported that she and the new RFO had changed how such transactions would be processed from now on to avoid this situation arising again (they would be charged and paid monthly instead of annually). Cllr Jayne Stansfield proposed that this debt be written off. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Helen Harrison. The Committee voted in favour of the proposal, with one Councillor abstaining.

- (f) To consider a matter to do with a grant recipient referred from Council

The grant for the Thornbury Volunteer Link was discussed, in particular their request for an increase in their grant from Council. It was noted that a South Gloucestershire Council MAF grant had been awarded to the organisation. It was agreed that Council would await contact from the organisation if they wished to further discuss an increase to their Council grant.

- (g) To consider the Council bank accounts

The Clerk reported that the RFO had highlighted that Council would only be compensated to the value of £85000 in the event that the bank it used went out of business. The RFO had recommended opening two further bank accounts (one savings and one current) to spread this risk as each bank would guarantee compensating to the value of £85000. The Clerk highlighted that to fully cover all Council funds would involve opening an unrealistic number of accounts but that opening two more accounts would reduce the risk significantly. The Committee agreed that the RFO should proceed with this course of action and agreed that it was happy with the degree to which the overall risk was being reduced. It was noted that this could be reviewed in the future.

(h) To receive an update on any further financial matters

The Clerk reported that the internal audit had finished today and that we awaited the auditors report. The Clerk highlighted that a number of issues had been identified by the auditor which had not been raised in previous audits, although practices had not changed. Although it was hoped these would be minor issues, the Clerk wanted to the Committee to be aware of this situation.

7. TO DISCUSS AN ISSUE IN RELATION TO THE GRANTS POLICY FOR THE COUNCIL

The Clerk reported that she had met with representatives from a local church who had not been successful in their recent Council grant application. This was because Council had followed NALC guidance (in line with town and parish council legislation) which advised against awarding grants to churches for "bricks and mortar" applications as they do not have the power to do so. The representatives felt that this legislation was discriminatory. The Clerk had explained that Council had not actively chosen to turn down the application, but rather it did not have the power to make an award to that type of application under the current legislation. It was agreed that the grants terms and conditions should be reviewed and altered to ensure it was clear what type of applications could and could not be considered by Council. It was noted that ALCA/NALC guidelines should be used to do this. It was further agreed that more should be done to monitor whether successful applicants carried out the plans outlined in their applications. The Clerk agreed to review and amend the grants terms and conditions and bring them back to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

8. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM COUNCILLOR SURGERIES

There were no matters to be considered by this Committee.

9. TO CONSIDER COUNCIL'S PLANS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

The Clerk outlined the current situation with regard to Council's plans to address climate change. Council had applied to participate in the BANES pilot project and while we awaited further news on this, South Gloucestershire Council were assisting us in identifying our baseline for carbon emissions and would then help identify actions that could be taken to reduce this. Council would then need to decide on how it progressed this. It was noted that it had already been agreed that a working group would be set up by a number of Councillors and representatives from other interested organisations could join this group. It was agreed that the first meeting of the group should be arranged and that the group would be chaired by Cllr Chris Davies. A member of staff would attend group meetings if workload permitted. The group would report back to this Committee.

10. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY.

There were no matters to be raised on the grounds of urgency.

11. *To resolve under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.*

This was proposed and unanimously agreed.

12. **TO DISCUSS LEASING ISSUES**

The Clerk updated the Committee on issues relating to progressing leases with organisations that were renting premises from Council. Various documents had been tabled, including correspondence from these organisations and also advice received from Council's solicitors. These documents and the issues they raised were discussed in detail by the Committee and the following actions were agreed.

With regard to Lease 1 it was agreed that Cllr Maggie Tyrrell would meet with the organisation involved to talk through the options that had been set out by Council's solicitors.

With regard to Lease 2 it was agreed that we would await further correspondence from the organisation involved following their upcoming Committee meeting.

With regard to Lease 3 an agreement was reached concerning payment of utilities, the length of the lease and repairs to the premises.

The Clerk updated the Committee on progress with the police's refurbishment of the extended accommodation they would be renting in the Town Hall. The police were arranging for a survey of one area of the building and they had also agreed to cover some additional expenses relating to the changes being made.

13. **TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUOTATIONS:**

- (a) Repairs to the fire doors at the Town Hall

The Clerk reported that these quotations were not yet available and they would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.