

REPORT of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee
held on Thursday 28 January 2021, virtually by Zoom

Present: Cllr Chris Davies (Chairman)
Cllr Jayne Stansfield (arrived late)
Cllr Clive Parkinson
Cllr Matthew Stringer
Cllr Maggie Tyrrell (arrived late)
Cllr Bob Griffin
Cllr Guy Rawlinson
Cllr Shirley Holloway

Louise Powell (Town Clerk)
Minutes done from recording by Hannah Cornford

Absent: Cllr Eva Fielding

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Benj Emmerson – indisposed
Cllr Helen Harrison – another commitment

2. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBER’S DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Parkinson declared an interest in one of the items considered in item 16, being a nearby resident.

3. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

5. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON POLICING MATTERS (taken out of order)

The committee was joined by PCSO Sheryl Drewitt who gave a comprehensive report on what was happening in the town. Things were better than they had been over the autumn, with antisocial behaviour having fallen. There had been 1 burglary in December and 2 damaged sheds, but a lot of work was being put into COVID-19 breaches. Most of them were being dealt with by education and a few warnings, as there was still a lot of confusion over what people are allowed to do.

They had spent a lot of time tracing a missing person who had links to the area and was vulnerable. This person had been successfully found. They had also managed to identify a shop lifter who was guilty of a number of crimes across the Town. Sheryl was thanked for her time and left the meeting.

4. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES AND DISCUSS MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FINANCE & POLICY MEETING OF 26.11.20

Cllr Shirley Holloway had become a Trustee for Volunteer Link, a role which the late Cllr Clare Fardell had previously held. The minutes were proposed to be a true record by Cllr Matt Stringer, seconded by Cllr Clive Parkinson and all were in favour.

6. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FINANCIAL MATTERS

(a) To approve the Accounts for Payment

Cllr Stansfield proposed the accounts for payment, seconded by Cllr Stringer and unanimously agreed.

Accounts paid out of meeting:

Lloyds Bank PLC	Credit card payment (DD)	434.42
Pitney Bowes Finance	Franking machine – quarterly rental (DD)(110)	94.93
Octopus Energy	Electricity – Chapel (DD)(130)	25.65
Thornbury Museum	Grant payment (180)	3450.00
South Gos Council	Rates – November (DD) – Town Hall	1310.00
South Gos Council	Rates – November (DD) – Cemetery	334.00
**HSQE.co.uk	Online training courses – TTC Staff (CC)(130)	192.00
		Total expenditure: 5841.00

Accounts now due for payment – 28th January 2021

Central Services (110):

Avon Local Councils Association	Budgeting for Local Councils Course	30.00
Avon Local Councils Association	Internal Financial Control Course	60.00
Biffa Waste Services Consortium	Waste disposal – Town Hall	108.05
Pitney Bowes/Purchase Power	Stationery	102.43
South Gos Council	Franking machine – meter rest	107.00
	Payroll charges	194.34
		Total expenditure: 601.82

Playing Fields and Cemetery (130):

Matrix BES Ltd	Refurbish existing spotlight – Thornbury Church	30.00
Almondsbury Garden Centre	Persian Carpet wall flowers	399.60

Andersons Waste Management Ltd	Drainage Maintenance	150.00
Biffa Waste Services	Waste disposal - cemetery	104.63
Biffa Waste services	Waste disposal – Pavilion (credit of £45 applied)	282.06
Matrix BES Ltd	Install flood lights	408.00
SJ & VJ Howell	Hedge trimming/telegraph pole	684.00
Sullivans	Machinery	1797.00
Sullivans	Machinery maintenance	87.60
Sullivans	Machinery maintenance	73.72
T H White	Machinery equipment	676.80
T H White	Machinery maintenance – rotary mower	1392.67
T H White	Machinery maintenance - tractor	841.45
Yate supplies/disposables	Black refuse sacks	125.06
Good Energy	Gas supply - MPF	824.31
		Total expenditure: 7996.90

Land and property (160):

JPS Property maintenance	Bakery Annex roof repairs	1431.60
		Total expenditure: 1431.60

Environment (150): no expenditure

Armstrong Hall (170):

Ecotricity.co.uk	Electricity – Thornbury Museum	277.73
		Total expenditure: 277.73

COVID (190): No expenditure

Grants and contingencies (180): No expenditure

** Credit card payment

- (b) To receive the income and expenditure report for December 2020 and any matters arising

The Clerk reported that a number of grants had now been paid out, but as predicted the accounts remained underspent largely due to COVID-19. The new RFO was settling in well and will start do a report each month, from the new financial year.

- (c) To receive and approve the reconciliation report for December 2020

The report was received and proposed for approval by Cllr Matt Stringer, seconded by Cllr Guy Rawlinson and the majority were in favour, with 1 abstention.

- (d) To consider an issue with a small grant payment

The Clerk had a letter from an applicant who had only been awarded part of their grant, due to COVID-19 impacting their operations. They reassured Councillors that the money was being spent on Thornbury residents and requested the money originally granted still be permitted to be used on other things. Cllr Stansfield proposed this be allowed, seconded by Cllr Stringer and it was unanimously agreed.

- (e) To consider a request for expenditure from the Playing Fields & Cemetery Committee

Cllr Parkinson, Chair of the Committee explained to Councillors that surveying works for Thornbury Cemetery were continuing. A maximum of 7-8 years was left in the existing area and following a viability report, it was possible that it could be even less. The new land needs further investigation. The Environment Agency wanted to see bore holes dug and measurements taken over 12 months, to assess water levels.

The request for funding was £6600 to be taken from the budget allocated within the CIL programme, which covered a range of services needed next, including production of site plans and pre planning application advice. The request for funding was proposed for approval by Cllr Rawlinson, seconded by Cllr Griffin and unanimously agreed.

(Cllr Tyrrell joined the meeting during this item)

- (f) To receive an update on any further financial matters

The Clerk had received a request from Krunch to use their unspent rent money (due to lockdown) on other costs to help support their operations. Agreement to this was proposed by Cllr Griffin, seconded by Cllr Stringer and all were in favour.

7. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR RENT RELIEF DURING LOCKDOWN AND ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Clerk had received the request from the Volunteer Centre. Councillors discussed that the request could be offered, but this would also mean a reduction in the grant issued for rent, which would have to be paid back. Cllr Griffin proposed this offer be made, seconded by Cllr Stringer and all were in favour.

8. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM COUNCILLORS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr Stansfield had been to a local plan meeting for CEF members. She had asked about the delay with the Neighbourhood Plan and they would be getting back to her.

Cllr Parkinson had been to a stakeholders group meeting for Berkeley and Oldbury power stations. One partner of Horizon Nuclear had pulled out, which called into question their capability to go ahead with current plans at the Oldbury site. There were however still plans for the South West to develop a fusion reactor. The South West has the expertise to deal with a project of this scale. Cllr Tyrrell added that

South Glos Council have put money aside to deal with planning issues, as the permission for this would be granted by government, rather than South Glos. Cllr Parkinson had also attended a Krunch monitoring meeting. Krunch were doing very well in difficult circumstances and were using their cooking facilities to help in town. Cllr Tyrrell continued that they were dealing with a number of young people who were struggling with the current situation, with many feeling high anxiety levels.

9. TO CONSIDER ADOPTION OF THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:

i) Equality and Diversity Policy

This was a revised policy, broader in scope than the original presented. Cllr Tyrrell proposed to adopt the policy, seconded by Cllr Rawlinson and unanimously agreed.

ii) Press and Media Policy

Cllr Griffin proposed to accept the revised version, seconded by Cllr Stringer and all were in favour.

iii) Freedom of Information Policy

Cllr Stansfield proposed to adopt the policy, seconded by Cllr Tyrrell and unanimously agreed.

10. TO CONSIDER COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING CONSULTATIONS:

a) South Gloucestershire Council's Family Group Conference Service Decommissioning Proposals Consultation

Noted.

11. TO DISCUSS A REQUEST FOR MEMBERSHIP AND SUPPORT OF CPRE

Cllr Griffin proposed to support CPRE, seconded by Cllr Stringer and the majority were in favour, with one abstention.

12. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY

There were none.

13. 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 following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Resolved.

14. TO DISCUSS THE COUNCIL'S BUILDING CONDITION SURVEY AND MAKE DECISIONS ON THE WAY FORWARD/FUTURE FOR COUNCIL PROPERTIES

Following a meeting with the surveyors, a sub-group had split the works needed up into different timescales. It was agreed that at this time, one of the properties would continue to be supported by the Council rather than consider alternative options at this stage. It was noted that the prices were estimates and full costs would be known after the works are tendered.

Cllr Stansfield proposed to tender for maintenance works on the agreed list, to Council properties through a contract with the surveyors. This was seconded by Cllr Matt Stringer and all were in favour.

15. TO RECEIVE FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT REPORTS FOR THE COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND AGREE ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM

Cllr Griffin proposed that responsibility be delegated to Cllrs Stansfield and Davies to make decisions, once costs have come through from the Council's fire safety company, in order that the actions can be carried out within required timescales. The majority were in favour with one abstention.

16. TO DISCUSS AND AGREE OPTIONS FOR STAFF WORKING FACILITIES

Cllr Stansfield proposed that the Council commission a feasibility study on areas the Council own that would be suitable, Cllr Griffin seconded this and all were in favour, with one councillor unable to vote due to having an interest. It was agreed that a decision about a request from the football club for storage space would have to be delayed until the results of this study are known. Space may be required by the Town Council for its own staff and storage space.

17. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUOTATIONS:

a) Garage doors at the Pavilion

Cllr Stringer proposed to proceed with the cheapest quote once all received. Cllr Griffin seconded this and the majority were in favour with one abstention.