

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

11 SEPTEMBER, 2018

MINUTES
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Present:
Councillors:

Applin	Fojtik
C Bates	Jackson
T Bates	Jefferson
Bicknell (Mayor)	Lowe
Dowling (Chairman)	

Clerks: Deputy Town Clerk

Press: None

Public: Representatives from Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights
and Stratford-in-Bloom

Prior to acceptance of apologies for absence, the chairman advised that item 7.3 was being withdrawn from the agenda as the External Auditor Report had not yet been received from PKF Littlejohn.

18. To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Short and accepted for the reason given.

19. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs C Bates, T Bates and Lowe declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7.1 (Stratford-in-Bloom grant application), minuted as 24.2 and left the Council Chamber when the matter was debated and voted on.

Mayor Bicknell declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7.1 (Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights grant application) minuted as 24.1 and item 7.1 (Stratford-in-Bloom grant application) minuted as 24.2 as well as item 7.2 (Stratford Town Transport Group) minuted as 25, being an ex-officio member of the committees.

Cllr Jefferson subsequently declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 7.2 (Stratford Historic Buildings Trust grant application), minuted as 25, and did not vote when the matter was debated.

20. To Receive Written Requests for Dispensation for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no written or verbal requests for dispensations.

21. To Grant Any Requests for Dispensation

None were required.

22. Public Participation

There were no members of the public present (other than the Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights Company and Stratford in Bloom representatives) and no one wished to speak during public participation.

23. To Approve the Draft Open and Confidential Minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee

After confirmation that two actions arising from the previous minutes were still outstanding but were in hand, it was

RESOLVED: That the Draft Open and Confidential Minutes of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

24. To consider and determine grant requests over £20,000

24.1 Christmas Lights

Members commented on the exceptional quality of the previous years' displays and commended the work done by the organisation's many volunteers.

A point was raised that if this grant is awarded by the Town Council, it would be on the basis that the current organisation continues to manage the Christmas Lights.

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RECOMMENDED: That Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights Company Limited should be awarded £30,000 for the municipal year 2019/20, which is unchanged and on the same basis as the award for 2018/19.

24.2 Stratford-in-Bloom

A short presentation was made to the Committee to explain the future plans.

A concern was raised at the proposed increase of nearly 40% on the previous year's grant request. It was explained that this primarily related to a one-off project cost to adopt the maintenance of the Greenway roundabout from the County Council, which would require some considerable work as part of the initial set up.

After some debate and consideration of the grant amount in comparison with the expenditure and funding of the Christmas Lights, it was Proposed, Seconded and

RECOMMENDED: That Stratford-upon-Avon in Bloom should be awarded £30,000 for the municipal year 2019/20.

25. To consider and determine grant requests under £20,000

A summary of the grant applications received as at 1 August, 2018 was reviewed.

Free Use of the Town Hall

While Members were happy to consider ongoing 'free use' grant applications to support local not-for-profit organisations, it was noted that this was previously with the proviso that these organisations are aware that this is subject to use during normal working hours when staff are available to provide the necessary events supervision, to ensure no additional operational costs are incurred by the Council. There was some debate as to whether the same terms and conditions should apply to all applicants or whether each should be considered on its own merits and circumstances before a general consensus was agreed.

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RESOLVED: That item 3 - Town Transport Group, item 5 - Historic Buildings Trust, and item 6 - Friends of Lucy's Mill Bridge, all relating to ongoing free use of the Town Hall for meetings during normal working hours, should be approved.

In addition, it was

RESOLVED: That item 4 - Afternoon Townswomen's Guild, relating to ongoing free use of the Town Hall for monthly meetings during normal working hours should be approved. It was further noted that a contribution from the organisation to event supervision costs will be expected, should their AGM be moved to an evening meeting.

It was further

RESOLVED: That item 7 - Dancenights Charities for ongoing free use of the Town Hall for monthly tea dances should be approved, subject to the continued contribution to event supervision costs from money raised in entrance fees.

Finally, it was

RESOLVED: That item 8 - Sunny Side Up for ongoing free use of the Town Hall for their Annual Tea Party should be approved, with the grant award to include event supervision staff costs.

26. Management Accounts for the period 1 April – 31 August, 2018

Members noted the report.

27. Use of the Building Maintenance Reserve to fund additional Town Hall expenditure

Cllr Jefferson, as Chairman of the Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel, gave an update on the actions arising from the meeting of the Panel immediately prior to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee meeting. Notes from the meeting will be issued in due course. There is expenditure required to proceed with urgent repair works to the Town Hall, then other activities require further surveys and investigation in order to confirm scope, options and costs. It was confirmed there are sufficient funds in the Building Maintenance Reserve to cover the costs in the current financial year, and further costs will be reviewed by the Panel before making further recommendations for inclusion in the budget process for 2019/20 and beyond.

It was Proposed, Seconded and

RECOMMENDED: That a virement from the Building Maintenance Reserve is used to cover the additional expenditure on the Town Hall, including associated professional fees, for the year 2018/19.

28. Budget Strategy for 2019-20

Members saw no reason to alter the approach which has been in place for the last seven years. A review of the level of Reserves and future spending needs will be included as part of the Budget process. It was therefore

RECOMMENDED: That the other spending Standing Committees prepare their budget requirements on a proven need basis, and also be mindful of any new projects or spending requirements that may occur in the next few years.

29. Agenda Items for the forthcoming Town Council Aims and Objectives Workshop

The consensus was that the Finance & Scrutiny Committee and its sub-groups continue to work well in overseeing the Town Council's finances and maintaining the Precept level and adequate Reserves, and the status quo should be maintained until the new Council is elected in 2019.

Potential projects have previously been considered by all Council's Members in anticipation of receiving increased funds through the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy, though no funds have been received to date. It was suggested that projects could also be funded from Reserves.

It was AGREED that Members should forward any further ideas to the Town Clerk prior to the issuing of papers for the Town Council meeting on 27 November, 2018.

To defer issues to Confidential Session

The Chairman proposed and it was AGREED that, due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, agenda item 7.8, minuted as 32, be moved to Confidential Session.

30. Deputy Town Clerk's Verbal Report – for information only

A brief verbal update was given on:

- The CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund/Prices – the fund at 01/09/2018 stands at £1.048bn with 227 local authorities investing, and prices continue to edge higher, allowing dividend levels to be maintained.

31. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

20 November, 2018 at 6:30pm at the Town Hall.