

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 SEPTEMBER, 2018

TOWN CLERK'S OPEN REPORT

1) To Consider and Determine Grant Requests Over £20,000

- **Members are requested to consider and determine the following grant applications, following a short presentation by each organisation**

Attached as **Appendix 'A'** is a list of grant applications that have been received for consideration by Council.

a) Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights

Attached as **Appendix 'B'** is a grant application from Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights Company requesting Council considers £30,000 of grant funding towards the Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights for the year 2019/2020, with supporting documentation including financial summary for 2018, forecast for 2019 and options for 2020 depending on whether Stratford BID potentially become more involved in the management of the Christmas Lights, subject to winning the vote for BID3 which will not be known until the end of September 2018.

Members are requested to note that the application for funding from the Town Council remains unchanged from £30,000 awarded for 2018/2019.

b) Stratford-in-Bloom

Attached as **Appendix 'C'** is a grant application from Stratford-in-Bloom requesting Council considers £35,000 of grant funding for the year 2019/2020, with supporting documentation including an Ongoing Improvement Project Plan for 2018-2022 and actual, current and forecast financial summary for 2018-2020.

Members are requested to note that the application for funding from the Town Council sees an increase from £25,500 to £35,000.

2) To Consider and Determine Grant Requests Under £20,000

- **Members are requested to consider and determine the following grant applications**

Attached as **Appendices 'D' to 'I'**, six applications have been received, five requesting nominal 'free of use' room hire in the Town Hall for regular monthly meetings/events, and one for 'free of use' room hire for an annual tea party.

These applications have a total nominal value of £5,780 at the current financial year's hiring tariff rates. Successful applicants will not receive a cash payment, but the nominal value of the 'free use' should be considered as a grant. The applications are for ongoing use from the 6 organisations which have benefited from this in the past.

3) External Audit and Annual Return for the year 2017-18

- **To note the report**

The External auditor certificate and report 2017-18 from PKF Littlejohn is expected before the end of September 2018 and will be tabled at the meeting, assuming it has been received by then.

If available, Members will be requested to note the report, and recommend any response, if required, which the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk will have prepared on behalf of Council.

4) To receive the Management Accounts for the Period 1 April 2018 – 31 August 2018

- **Members are requested to note the report**

The Management Accounts for the period 1 April 2018 – 31 August 2018 are attached as **Appendix 'J'**.

The most significant variance not due to timing of income and expenditure during the year is the deficit in Cemetery Fees.

Members are requested to note the report.

5) Use of the Building Maintenance Reserve for additional Town Hall expenditure

- **To recommend to Council the use of the Building Maintenance Reserve to fund additional Town Hall expenditure**

Members are aware of the appointment earlier this year of Council's new Architect and Building Consultant, Mr Mark Evans. He has now completed his Condition Survey Report of the Town Hall and is prioritising the work required, alongside the other matters raised by the Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel to consider office space, storage facilities and other related requirements.

Some urgent work has already been scheduled for the end of September to inspect and replace roof tiles, repair and clean guttering and unblock drainpipes, which has required extensive coordination between the various contractors and ensuring relevant licences are obtained from the County Council for use of a temporary structure on the public highway to gain access to the roof and guttering. The costs required for these works were not included in the original budget for 2018-19, as they were unknown at the time. The total estimated cost for this initial work is approximately £2,600, in addition to further professional fees for consultancy, project management and health & safety advice. Fees relating to the condition survey and subsequent follow up work to date are approximately £3,000.

Further items are being investigated and costed for review, as prioritised and recommended by the Building Consultant, and details will be provided for review by the Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel on an ongoing basis, for recommendation at future meetings.

As the Building Maintenance Reserve currently stands at £168,718, this can be used to cover additional expenditure on Town Hall maintenance in the current financial year and beyond, though Members should be mindful that many aspects of the maintenance of a listed building will be expensive and estimated costs for all the work identified to date indicate additional funds will be required in the long term and Reserves will need to be replenished at some point.

Members are asked to recommend to Council that additional Town Hall maintenance expenditure in the current financial year, including associated professional fees, which has been reviewed and agreed by the Town Hall Income, Facilities and Wellbeing Panel, should be covered at year end by a virement from the Building Maintenance Reserve.

6) Budget Strategy for the year 2019-20

- **To consider the Council's budget strategy for the next financial year to give guidance to the other Standing Committees**

Members are requested to consider the guidance that should be given to the spending Standing Committees and management when compiling the budget requirement for the forthcoming year.

For many years now, Members have stressed the importance of adopting a policy of tight and substantiated budgeting, avoiding the inclusion of 'just in case' funding requests, and subsequently requested that budgets be compiled on this proven need basis.

Unless directed otherwise, the officers will continue on this basis and will draw up preliminary budgets with the assistance of the Standing Committee members, to bring proposals to the two spending Standing Committees in the October / November round of meetings, for review as part of the budget process at the next Finance & Scrutiny Committee meeting in November.

The principles recommended by the Finance & Scrutiny Committee in compiling the draft budget for 2019-20 should be adhered to by all departments. This will endeavour to ensure that the budget will be, as far as possible, a true and accurate reflection of Council's projected costs for the forthcoming year and will, in turn, form the basis of the precept request from Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

When deliberating its precept requirement, Members should also be aware of any new projects or spending requirements that may occur in the next few years. As previously mentioned, there is likely to be considerable expenditure on items identified by the Town Hall Condition Survey. However, given the number of items which will need to be addressed, and the time it will take in costing, reviewing and undertaking much of the maintenance, it is proposed

that cost estimates will be prepared on an ongoing basis as part of a five year cycle of planned preventative maintenance, as well as addressing other building risks and wellbeing issues.

Council is fortunate to have a significant level of Reserves, achieved through careful budgeting over many years and a rise in the overall Precept amount due to substantial housing development in Stratford-upon-Avon and the increase in the Tax Base as a result. However, Members should be mindful of the potential increase in the Precept request which may be required to replenish these Reserves at some point in the future. For reference, Members should be aware that calculations during the preparation of the 2018-19 Budget indicated that a 1% increase in the Precept request would raise the income received by approximately £5,000.

7) Town Council Aims and Objectives Workshop

- **To consider issues relating to the Finance & Scrutiny Committee which should be included on the agenda for the forthcoming Town Council Aims and Objectives Workshop**

Members are aware of the Town Council Aims and Objectives Workshop which is scheduled to take place as part of the Town Council Meeting on 27 November, 2018.

In order to help prepare a meaningful agenda to facilitate a productive meeting, Members are asked to consider whether there are any issues relating to the work of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee which should be included. As a starting point it is recommended that the Finance & Scrutiny Committee review its current Terms of Reference, attached as **Appendix 'K'**.

One matter already identified by the Governance & Policies Panel is the Standing Committee Structure and the role of Subgroups.

Deputy Town Clerk
5 September, 2018