

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, St Ives Town Council, held virtually via Zoom on Thursday 1 April 2021 at 7.00pm

PRESENT

Chairman – Councillor Andrew Mitchell

COUNCILLORS

Burton P

Henry R

Nicholls N

Dale A

Messenger K

Tulley R

Harris T

IN ATTENDANCE

Williams T

Wells J

OFFICERS

Town Clerk

Responsible Finance Officer & Corporate Services Manager

F&GP.64 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor K Arthur

F&GP.65 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman confirmed that the Town Clerk had previously advised that she would be providing a verbal update on the devolution of the town benches for decision under the relevant item of the Clerk's update report.

F&GP. 66 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Chairman signs as a true and correct record the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 28 January 2021

F&GP.67 PUBLIC SPEAKING

None

F&GP.68 DECLARATIONS OF COUNCILLOR AND OFFICER INTERESTS

None

F&GP.69 OFFICERS' UPDATE REPORT

The Town Clerk presented an update report and responded to queries as follows:

F&GP.55

There was a verbal update on this item. A formal response had been received from Cornwall Council. It had proposed that a capital sum of £30,000 be made available for the benches and that the benches officer could provide assistance for a transitional period – not yet defined. However, they were unable to update the benches data and, subject to the Council's agreement, the transfer would be permanent. The Committee welcomed the increased sum and supported taking ownership of the benches. But it was concerned to understand the

resource implications of doing so. It was agreed that local councillors could assist in updating the survey. But more information was required on the cost of renovating and maintaining them. Some information about the cost and arrangements for future dedications would be a matter for Council decisions – new policies would need to be developed. Cornwall Council had also consulted the Council on another asset and so it was proposed that the Clerk seek to convene an urgent devolution meeting on Thursday to consider benches in more detail and the additional asset with a view to a detailed report being prepared for Council. An interim response to Cornwall Council state that the proposal and been favourably received

F&GP.37 Craze Hunkin Trust – In response to a query regarding VAT advice, the Clerk explained that advice was that the Council needed to take care in commissioning works for the almshouses as the Council could recover VAT but the charity could not. This would be set out in the business case. Other tasks were underway or complete – building surveys, the draft management agreement etc ready for the Council to make a decision.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above comments and agreed actions, the report be noted.

F&GP.70 INSURANCE UPDATE

The Town Clerk provided the Committee with a verbal update. She advised that it was necessary for the Council to review its insurance cover annually and confirm that it had appropriate and adequate cover in place. The Council was in a multi year contract with Zurich municipal so it was not possible to switch provider but it was still good practice to complete an annual review. The review considered the Council's commission of new insurance valuations for some of the Council's buildings and also any implications for more performance events at the Guildhall. In addition, to consider any adjustments required for the new skate park facility and computer acquisitions. Final confirmation from Zurich was awaited but it was likely that there would be an increase in the Council's premium amounting to a few hundred pounds for the 2021-22 year. The new policy would be reported at annual Council.

RESOLVED – that the Committee note the officer report and approve the adequacy and level of the Council's insurance arrangements for 2021-22.

F&GP.71 REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The RFO and Corporate Services Manager introduced a review of two key policy documents. He explained that these were essential to the operation of the Council and were reviewed annually in order to report any amendments to annual Council. A detailed review was completed last year and, as a result, this year's amendments were relatively minor in nature. They reflected the roles and job titles of new managers and new procedures for approving payments – the Council now had a system where electronic payments were the norm and payments were approved by Councillors through emails with in-bank approvals being kept to a minimum. This introduced additional controls in managing risk and reducing human error.

The RFO shared the changes page by page with Councillors.

RESOLVED – that the Committee RECOMMEND to Council that it approve revisions to the financial regulations and scheme of delegation as set out.

F&GP.72 **GRANT APPLICATIONS**

The Committee considered three grant applications as follows

Harbour Lights Association – the Committee were concerned that the applicant didn't provide any detailed financial information to support the application. It was accepted that accounts might not be possible but it was possible to submit detailed information (invoices or receipts) of what had been received and expended the previous year.

Resolved – that the request for £500 be approved but that the confirmation letter advised of the need to submit detailed receipts and information of how funds were expended and any future application *must* show some form of accounting – expenditure and income.

St Ives Community pantries – members of the Committee debated the efficacy of the pantry system and whether it was the best way to support low income families in food poverty. Some felt that these were community projects which should be resourced by the community. But others emphasised the level of need and the importance of showing the Town Council's commitment in a difficult time.

Resolved – that the request for £2,500 be approved.

Cornish Pilot GIG association – the Committee considered the application and noted that the accounts submitted demonstrated a healthy level of funds, albeit it was accepted that the funding requested was for a specific purpose. In the light of this, it was resolved that a reduced grant of £500 be offered to the club.

RESOLVED – that the grant applications be approved as set out and that the £3,000 underspend in the 2020-21 community grants budget be carried forward into 2021-22.

F&GP.73 **FINANCE REPORT**

The RFO and Corporate Services Manager introduced the report and appendix C as a snapshot of the Committee's detailed position and the Council's position as at the 26th March. There was also an extract of the skate park earmarked reserve, as requested. In response to questions, officers confirmed that £393,000 of the skate park grant funding awarded from Cornwall Council had been drawn-down before year end. Approximately £57,000 was outstanding. However, Cornwall Council had found additional flexibility for the remaining £57,000 to be claimed by the end of April.

The report also identified a number of balances to be carried forward into 2021-22 and the reason for each.

RESOLVED – that the Committee note the report and approve the carry forward of balances into the 2021-22 budget, as set out.

F&GP.74 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED - that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following matters by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

F&GP.75 PROPERTY PORTFOLIO UPDATE REPORT

The Town Clerk introduced an update report on actions relating to the Council's property portfolio:

- An update on the negotiation of a lease at the Guildhall was given. Draft heads of terms have been issued and solicitors instructed. It is hoped that a new lease could be concluded shortly. The Committee noted the progress to date.
- One of the Council's tenants occupying a small office has given notice, because they needed more space. This space will need marketing but the approach will depend upon the outcome of the other decisions in relation to this report.
- A further update on a commercial property was given. In the light of the update, the Town Clerk was asked to seek confirmation from the tenant how they wished to proceed. If it was not possible to obtain a response, it would be necessary to issue a friendly s.25 notice on the basis that the lease has expired.
- Tenants at a further Council owned premises have confirmed that they would like to enter into a new lease and, given the Committee's previous approval, the Town Clerk would now instruct the Council's solicitors to draw up terms for a two year lease.

RESOLVED – that progress and the update be noted and the Clerk follow a course of action as set out, reporting back from the Committee and, if no further communication was received to issue a friendly s.25 notice.

F&GP.76 DEBTORS AND CREDITORS

Members considered the report. Some concern was raised about the number of invoices owing after 60 days. The RFO explained that the majority were weddings or concert hall events postponed due to COVID.

RESOLVED – that the schedule of debtors and creditors is noted.

DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Meeting closed at 8.40 pm

Chairman