

OSWESTRY TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Monday 2nd March 2020 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, the Guildhall, Oswestry.

PRESENT: Councillors M Coppock, R Evans, N Hughes, V Hunt, M Isherwood, M Jones, D Kerr, S Mason, D P Milner, R Radford, O Rose and C Schofield

In the Chair: Councillor C Schofield

In attendance: A Roberts – Town Clerk
12 members of the public

97. PUBLIC SESSION

Jools Payne spoke in support of *Item 6* on the agenda – *Dame Stephanie Shirley Blue Plaque*. She highlighted professional achievements and the approach taken to support women into and in employment. The Oswestry connections were explained as were the reasons why the Heritage England and the Jewish Council schemes were not currently appropriate. Jools Payne concluded by requesting that the Town Council consider the request as set out on the agenda.

98. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

The Mayor - Councillor J Price – illness
Councillor Best – prior engagement
Councillor Cherrington
Councillor Edwards – work commitments
Councillor Moore – work commitments

RESOLVED apologies be accepted.

99. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

To receive declarations under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 s32 and The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

Councillor Vince Hunt declared an interest with respect to *Agenda Item 7- Grants and Donations (D)* and stated that he would leave the room when that item was being discussed.

100. SPEAKER

Ingrid Knowles and Richard Banks from the Regal Project Group were in attendance to bring Members up to date with the plans for the development of the former Regal Cinema.

A presentation was provided which gave an overview of the project, the outline plans for the use of the building, and the ambitions and vision of the Project Group. Ingrid Knowles introduced the Committee members who were also in attendance and set out the work undertaken so far and the current position. This included the establishment of a Community Interest Company and the plans for a flexible cinema and theatre space. The project has received some funding to date from the Bright Ideas Fund which has supported the early work and the development of an outline plan. Richard Banks highlighted the complexity of the project and the structured approach to project development and project planning being taken. The next steps were highlighted which included an architect carrying out a spatial analysis.

The Chairman thanked the Project Group for their attendance and praised their enthusiasm. A number of questions were asked, and observations made with regard to the project. The buildings highlighted are for sale and the estimated cost of the project is in the region of £10m. The Council encouraged the group to look at the cinema provision believing this to be an important aspect of the overall offer.

101. MINUTES

Minutes of a meeting held on 13th January 2020 **FGP/06/20** were confirmed and signed.

102. GRANTS AND DONATIONS POLICY

Copy report **TC/3872/20** from the Town Clerk set out a review of the Grants and Donations policy. It was noted that the review had been requested by the elected Members and had also been recommended by Internal Audit. The Committee discussed a number of issues which had been included in the review and highlighted in the report. A discussion ensued and a number of questions were asked in particular with the level of evidence required by the Council from applicants. It was noted that the Council needed to consider each application on its merit and therefore the Council should not discount applications from individuals or charities but would adopt a principal of preferring not to fund or support an individual or national charity.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the Grants and Donations policy as follows:

FGP/07/20

- The Council agree a budget for grants and donations at the January meeting and, if it so wishes at this point, it should determine its priorities and encourage applications accordingly.
- The scheme will be promoted primarily via social media and split into 3 streams:
 - o £9,000 round 1 summer;
 - o New ideas fund £2,000 autumn;
 - o £9,000 round 2 winter.
- Any unspent budget from rounds 1 and 2 will be rolled forward into the next funding round
- All applications considered by Finance Committee. Applicants will be invited to a pre-meeting to allow elected Members to ask questions on points requiring clarification. Without attendance the application will not be considered.
- Any grant under £100 to be available for revenue purposes such as room hire, etc. but any grant in excess of this amount to be looking towards capital funding on a one-off basis with no upper limit but recognising the overall annual allocation for grants and donations;
- No year-on-year funding to be committed from the free resource budget;
- A written report on the benefits of the funding to be supplied by the successful applicant as a condition of grant after a period of six months;
- The Council has a preference not funding or supporting an individual or national charity;
- Interest or low-cost loans will not be provided;
- The existing flexibility continue whereby any organisation making application should supply appropriate financial information to the level of grant requested but that may include assets, audited accounts, constitution, etc. for the larger requests.
- Bodies must have a bank account in their own name.
- The Council reserves the right to reclaim funds not spent in accordance with the approved grant application, left unspent after one year of receipt or in full/partially for breach of conditions.

- Recipients are expected to positively promote the Council and acknowledge the financial support received from the Council in press releases and publicity.
- The Council may apply any additional conditions it deems necessary as part of the grant award.
- Applications will not be screened by officers but checks, as currently, will be undertaken to ensure that all information required has been provided.

It was also **RESOLVED** to amend all promotional material and application forms accordingly.

It was further **RESOLVED** to:

- Provide a donation of £100 to the Gatacre Allotment Society for their Annual Show;
- Provide £900 from the Commissioning budget for the Oswestry Community Games.

103. DAME STEPHANIE SHIRLEY BLUE PLAQUE

Appendix A set out details of a request received from Jools Payne regarding a potential plaque recognising the work of Dame Stephanie Shirley. The information provided set out a number of reasons for the proposal which would recognise the contribution of the World War 2 refugee who went to school in Oswestry and who was Britain's first Ambassador for Philanthropy.

The proposal was supported by the Committee who **RESOLVED** that that the Town Council fund the cost and erection of a plaque and host a civic reception on 2nd April 2020. In doing so Members noted that the plaque would be funded (£350) from the free resource budget and recorded as Section 137 expenditure.

104. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

The Committee considered the applications received noting that the balance in the free resource budget stood at £4,480 and:

RESOLVED to award Hope House Children's Hospice £1000 towards the cost of a protective canopy for the entrance. This commitment to be paid over when the total amount of £52,640 is reached.

RESOLVED to request further information from Shropshire ME in relation to their application. The Committee did not make an award requesting information in terms of numbers in attendance and specific details regarding the request.

RESOVED to award Oswestry Repair Café £100 towards hall hire and costs associated with operating the repair café.

At this point Councillor V Hunt left the room for the next item.

RESOLVED to note the amendments to the application made by Open Space Studios and confirm the award be made.

105. WEST MIDLANDS AMBULANCE SERVICE

It was **RESOLVED** to note that Mr Mark Docherty, Chief Executive Officer of West Midlands Ambulance Service has agreed to attend a future meeting and a suitable date is being organised following the Council adopting a Notice of Motion.

106. SUNDRY CREDITORS

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the below Statements of Accounts approved for payment by The Chairman/Vice-Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

SC/544/20 - 3rd January 2020
SC/545/20 - 17th January 2020
SC/546/20 - 4th February 2020

107. INVESTMENT ANALYSIS

The Committee considered report **TC/3868/20** from the Finance Officer, on Investment Analysis to 31st January 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report and to request that officers consider any risks associated with moving some money from the Barclays account to the Lloyds account and report accordingly.

108. ANALYSIS OF ACTUAL INCOME & EXPENDITURE

It was **RESOLVED** to note report **TC/3869/20** from the Finance Officer in the form of an Analysis of Actual Income and Expenditure to 11th February 2020.

109. BONFIRE & FIREWORK EVENING COMMUNITY GRANT FUND 2019

Report **TC/3871/20** set out details of a meeting held on 11th February 2020 between Council representatives and Rotary Club of Oswestry Borderland to determine applications, as received, in respect of the grant fund for 2019.

It was reported that with delegated authority, the Committee received and reviewed 22 applications and that a total of £5,800 has been

awarded retaining a balance of £1,883.25 that can be used in future years if the event is affected by inclement weather and/or future funds available for distribution are limited. From the £5,800, £300 will be allocated for the Firefighters Charity in recognition of the support that the local fire service gives. A contribution of £1,000 is awarded to Oswestry Borderland Rotary and £500 to The Mayor's Charities, recognising the significant involvement of both parties in arranging and delivering the event. A presentation evening will be held on Wednesday 25th March 2020 to which Councillors and Borderland Rotary will be invited.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

110. BT PAYPHONE – MIDDLETON ROAD

The Committee considered **Appendix 'F'**, a copy letter from the Rurality and Equalities Specialist of Performance, Intelligence and Insight Team at Shropshire Council on BT's notice to potentially remove a payphone located in Middleton Road. It was noted that BT have now launched a formal 90-day consultation on the matter with a closing date of 5th May 2020.

Members considered the matter and **RESOLVED** to object to the removal of the payphone given that it had been used to make 189 calls in the last 12 months and therefore should be retained.

111. SHROPSHIRE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY – SURVEY FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

A copy email **Appendix 'G'**, along with a pdf version of the survey from the Principal Planner of LUC, who have been commissioned to prepare a green infrastructure strategy to inform the Shropshire local plan review, which is currently underway, was considered by the Council. The Town Clerk reported that he had provided feedback on the approach being taken and timescales given the importance of the issue.

It was **RESOLVED** to make the following points relating to the town of Oswestry.

- That the green infrastructure was under significant pressure, it is important that they are/it is used but it needs to be recognised that heavy use requires a maintenance regime which is adequately resourced;
- Play areas managed by Shropshire Council require investment and maintenance and the skateparks require investment;

- With 600 plus homes planned, the green infrastructure is vital and needs to be properly considered during at the planning process and this needs to include how they will be maintained;
- The Parkland surrounding Oswestry is part of the town's heritage and some concerns were expressed with areas such as OS17 being included in the Local Plan as potential development sites;
- The Town Council have recognised the importance of tree planting and protecting trees and the green infrastructure strategy for Oswestry needs to consider how this could be achieved;
- Green networks make an important contribution to health and active lifestyles, the protection and enhancement of these spaces need to be considered as a priority.

112. **COMPASS**

Copy email **Appendix 'H'** from the Pastor of Hope Church, Oswestry concerning Compass – a new supported housing project run by Hope Church Oswestry.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the update and to praise the work of the Church in providing support and shelter for those who need it.

113. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was **RESOLVED** that in view of the confidential nature of business about to be transacted which would involve the likely disclosure of confidential information as defined in the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be temporarily excluded from the meeting and they be asked to withdraw.

Councillor C Schofield
Chairman