

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Monday 11th March 2019 at 7.00pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: S Hirst (Chair), S Ball, K Painter, A Walsh and J Williams

Officers: S Holley (Town Clerk)

Members of Public: None

FS01. 3/19 Apologies for absence:

Received from Councillors Easterbrook and McCorkell.

FS02. 3/19 Public Consultation:

None.

FS03. 3/19 Declarations of Interest:

(a) Agenda/Minute Item 11 – Councillor Williams declared an ‘Other’ interest in the stage payment of the grant to St Mary’s Playgroup due to a personal acquaintance with the applicants.

(b) Agenda/Minute Item 14 – Councillor Painter declared an ‘Other ‘ interest in the proposal to use the Community Hub to house a Comic Workshop, which was a personal proposal that did not give rise to a pecuniary interest.

FS04. 3/19 Minutes:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2019 were approved as a correct record.
Record of Voting: For – 5, Against – 0, Abstentions – 0, Absent/Apologies – 2.

FS05. 3/19 Action points arising from the minutes:

The circulated report on action taken since the last meeting was NOTED. In particular:

(a) FS12. 4/18 – Defibrillators – The Committee was pleased to note that orders had been placed in February for four machines (two under the District Council scheme, with match-funding from the Tetbury Lions Club and two 100% funded by Tesco). Arrangements had been made for three training sessions in April, with more likely. Councillor Painter reported that he, with other members and Officers, had taken up the offer to visit the Steepleton development on Cirencester Road. While there, he had taken the opportunity to suggest to Pegasus Life that they install a defibrillator for residents and this had been agreed.

(b) FS08. 1/19 – TAYCT (Youth Club) request for £3,500 ‘top-up’ grant - Councillor Hirst confirmed that Cotswold District Council would provide £1,000 of the sum requested, and he was hopeful that Gloucestershire County Council would be able to provide a further £2,000.

FS06. 3/19 Payments for March 2019 and Bank Reconciliation for February 2019:

(a) The Committee unanimously APPROVED the following schedules detailing receipts and payments for March (Month 12):

	£
Town Council Receipts	Nil
Town Council Payments	28,457.68
Visitor Information Centre Receipts	Nil
Visitor Information Centre Payments	549.03

Later in the meeting it was acknowledged that the figure for Town Council Payments would be increased by the cost of renewing the contract with Rialtas for the RBS Omega accounting system (£370 plus VAT) and the stage payment of the grant to St Mary’s Playgroup (£11,600).

(b) The Bank Reconciliation dated 1st February 2019 was NOTED (Total Balances - £368,042.99). The Committee also noted the balances of the Council’s Earmarked Reserves (£322,368.30) and that the Town Clerk and the Deputy Chair had implemented the Council’s Resolution to open a second Deposit Account for the Dolphins Hall S106 money (£179,733 had been placed in a Three Month Fixed Term Deposit Account at 0.9%).

(c) The Committee agreed to the Town Clerk’s request that, to assist with cashflow for the final payments in 2018/19, Officers now implement the Council’s resolution to return to the General Fund 90% of the Allotments Earmarked Reserve and 90% of the Market Place

Reserve. Cotswold District Council had agreed in principle and Members were confident that the Council could provide the necessary development plan. An alternative was the £38,912 balance of the Earmarked Reserve for Pre-School Provision, which the Council had agreed could go into the General Fund at the year end.

FS07. 3/19 Accounts for 2018/19 – Income and Expenditure (Month 11):

The Committee NOTED the circulated report and gave close attention to the amended figures (following the RBS Technician's work and report) in the light of the Council's recent discussion on its financial position.

FS08. 3/19 Renewal of Contract with Rialtas for RBS Omega Accounting Software

The Committee was requested to consider whether to renew the contract for the Council's accounting software system, or to move to another system. RBS Omega had provided the cheapest quote (£370 plus VAT) but the Committee was asked to consider whether, in the light of recent problems with financial reporting, a slightly more expensive system might be more cost-effective. On reflection, the Committee felt that other systems bespoke to Local Government were likely to report in a similar format to the RBS Omega system and the recent issues might be addressed by training for Officers and improved monitoring by the Committee and the Council. Consequently, it was unanimously RESOLVED to renew the contract with RBS Omega; however, the Committee would pay close attention to the system and its proper use over the next Financial Year.

FS09. 3/19 Claim for Loss and Damage – Police Museum:

The Committee noted a report that the claimant had rejected the initial offer of £2,000 and had suggested £3,000 against the initial claim of £3,130. The Committee felt that this was not much of a drop and AGREED a course of action for the Town Clerk to follow. Unanimous.

FS10. 3/19 – Budget for 2019/20:

The Committee received a report outlining progress with the Budget for 2019/20, including the Council's Resolution approving a Base or Skeleton Budget (with various financial control measures), progress against that Resolution, and the Heritage and Regeneration Committee's work on its own Budget the previous week. The Committee had already noted in Agenda Item/Minute 6 the creation of a new Fixed Term Deposit Account for the Dolphins Hall S106 money. The Committee advised the Town Clerk/RFO that, as the District Council would split paying the Town Council's Precept (April and October) the increase to the General Reserve (formerly known as the Emergency Reserve) should be in corresponding stages, initially to 20% and then to the agreed 25%. Unanimous.

FS11. 3/19 – Stage payment of grant to St Mary's Playgroup:

The Committee RESOLVED to pay an itemised claim for a stage payment of £11,600 comprising £6,600 for equipment and £5,000 for staff training. Payment would be from the Pre-School Provision Earmarked Reserve. The Town Clerk was requested to provide the Mayor with a date for the Playgroup's Open Day at the new Forest School. Record of Voting: For – 4, Against – 0, Abstentions – 1, Absent/Apologies – 2.

FS12. 3/19 Revised Grants Policy for 2019/20:

The Committee was requested to recommend a new Grants Policy and Process to the Council. It was RESOLVED that the process be adopted, subject to the following amendments: (i) the Council should advertise two one month 'windows' for receipt of applications – the whole of June, for the Council to make decisions in its July meeting (in the light of recommendations by this Committee at its July meeting) and November, for the Council to make decisions in its January meeting (in the light of recommendations by this Committee at its January meeting); (ii) the Grant application form should be amended to make clear that the Council expected to give full publicity to the grants it awarded; and (iii) the recipients of minor grants would be declined assistance the following year unless the

Council accepted that there were special or peculiar circumstances. Unanimous. It was suggested that the maximum value of level of grant determined by the Committee return to £500 from the new limit of £750 but this would remain for later consideration. It was AGREED that a list of recipients of grants from the Town Council should be included in the Annual Report.

FS13. 3/19 Policy for use of Council buildings and open spaces

The Committee was requested to consider a draft Policy for the organised use of the Council's buildings and its open spaces. It was explained that the Policy was not intended for casual use by friends and family. The Committee noted the comments of the Heritage and Regeneration Committee and AGREED that (i) the Council should not apply a charge for use of its buildings or open spaces and (ii) Officers should consult the Tetbury Feoffees to see if a common approach to use of the Rail Lands could be reached. The Committee RECOMMENDED the draft Policy to the Council subject to a number of amendments and that the proposed Notice of Regulations for public use of the Rail Lands should be posted without seeking formal bylaws, because the application process was burdensome and bylaws did not provide much greater weight for enforcement. Unanimous.

FS14. 3/19 Comic Workshop in the Community Hub

Councillor Kevin Painter explained his wish to create a Comic Workshop based in the Community Hub. As Councillor Painter was the Chair of the Heritage and Regeneration Committee, which had given initial approval, the Town Clerk had suggested he put the proposal to this Committee for independent scrutiny. Councillor Painter explained that he wanted to display comic art and art from graphic novels on the walls of the Community Hub, to use it for occasional Comic Workshop events and perhaps for a Comic Convention. In response to members' questions he made clear that there would be no personal gain. The Committee APPROVED the proposal unanimously.

FS15. 3/19 Correspondence:

The Committee noted a letter suggesting the installation of CCTV to cover the Chipping Car Park, in order to record drug-dealing near the United Services Club. The Committee was sympathetic to the situation, but felt that the installation of CCTV would simply drive the problem a few yards away out of camera range.

FS16. 3/19 Brief Councillor Reports:

None.

FS17. 3/19 Agenda items for future consideration:

Members were requested to contact the Clerk and/or Chairman with suggestions.

FS18. 3/19 Date and time of the next meeting:

7pm, on Monday 8th April 2019.

The Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Chairman Dated