

**MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON  
MONDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 7.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Ambler, Biscoe, Mrs Carlyon, Mrs Eathorne-Gibbons, Rabey, Roden (Chairman), Mrs Stokes, Mrs Swain (Mayor), Unwin, Wells

Also in attendance: Mr Richard Budge, Proper Officer  
Mrs Joanne Trevelyan, Financial Officer  
Councillors Wetherill and Southcombe

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies of absence were received from Councillors Rich and Webb

**151 DISCLOSURES OR DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Item 5 (Grants) (Min no: 154, page no: 44)

Councillor Swain declared an interest in the above item as she was attending a concert of the Choir and her ticket had been provided to her by the Choir.

**152 OPEN SESSION FOR THE ELECTORS OF TRURO**

Ms L Isaacson attended and asked the Committee the following question:

Does the Committee feel that you are ready for the impact of climate change?

The Chair thanked Ms Isaacson for her question and responded that the Council had taken positive steps in readiness for and to tackle climate change in that it had declared a climate emergency and following this had appointed a Zero Carbon Officer.

**153 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES MINUTES**

**Accuracy Minutes**

Councillor Unwin requested that the minutes be amended to show his apologies. It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor) and;

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Monday 10 July 2023 are signed as a correct record.

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**RESOLVED** that the confidential minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Monday 10 July 2023 are signed as a correct record.

**154 GRANTS**

As Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor) declared an interest in the application, she left the room and did not vote or take part in any discussion. The Chairman informed the Committee that one grant application had been received.

City of Truro Male Voice Choir

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Carlyon, seconded by Councillor Biscoe and;

**RECOMMENDED** that the £500 requested is approved.

Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor) rejoined the meeting.

## 155 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS APRIL – AUGUST 2023

### i) **DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

A Member queried the cost for cleaning and waste management on Lemon Quay and the Proper Officer advised that this service was provided by Biffa under contract to the City Council.

A Member referred to the forecast variance in the budget at the end of the year and was advised that more work was needed on the projected figures, in particular salary costs, to provide further assurance in the end of year position. The Proper Officer assured Members that cost savings were being sought across all areas of revenue spend, and he was working with the Financial Officer to help identify savings. He added that in some areas spend had been brought forward and would balance out by the end of the year but also that income was down in some areas due to reduced spending by many of the Council's customers and efforts were being made to generate more income. It was explained that the energy costs for Lemon Quay were recharged to the users and over the year should be cost neutral.

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Biscoe and;

**RECOMMENDED** to note the draft statement of accounts from April – August 2023

### ii) **TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE**

The Mayor advised that following a request at the previous meeting she had worked with the Financial Officer and prepared a comparison of the accounts for the TIC for the previous years at August. In August 2021 costs of items purchased for sale was £23k against sales of £28 but at the end of the year the figures were purchases of £54k and sales of £89k giving a cost of sales figure of 61% against a target of 60%. At August last year purchases were £20 against sales of £30 and at the year end purchases were £46 against sales of £85 with cost of sales at 54% performing better than 2021. In her view the outcome for this year would be similar.

Discussion took place regarding the reporting to the Committee of the activities and commercial aspects of the TIC. The Chairman explained that there had been a sub-committee dedicated to the TIC, however its work had been replaced by regular reports to this Committee. For various reasons reports have not been submitted but he would invite the Manager of the TIC to regularly attend future meetings and present a written report on their activities to Members who would be able to ask questions. Members requested that in future the stock in hand value for the TIC and the Café be reported as part of the management accounts.

### **BOSCAWEN CAFÉ**

The Mayor advised that the café figures were not as positive as they would hope and that there would be a loss at the end of the year. She recommended that a full business plan be drawn up for the café which detailed the gross profit on all the lines and help the team make it more profitable. The Chair of the Parks and Amenities Committee asked that any

such plan should take account of the fact that the café was not yet fully operational as originally intended, with a hot food offer.

Following discussion, the Mayor advised that the business plan would help the Council to decide whether to continue running the café or consider alternative operating models. The Chairman explained that the premise behind the Council running the café was that following an agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association, the café should generate a profit to create a fund to provide for any renewal of the tennis courts. He agreed with the view given by Members that public money should not be used to subsidise any public businesses and that action needs to be taken.

Members were advised that the fact that the café could not currently take card payments had resulted from an issue with the card reader and the supplier had despatched a replacement. This occurred during the transition to a new payment system and urgent steps were being taken to resolve the issue and a back-up system would be investigated.

The Financial Officer referred to the overall project spend and reminded the Committee they had received a report in January 2023 setting out the issues and reasons for the projected shortfall of funding of £252k. This was because costs had exceeded the budget by £246k. She advised that a further loan may be required to cover the shortfall.

In response to a question the Proper Officer explained that the resurfacing of the car park had been delayed until the completion of the café due to heavy vehicle movements during construction. The resurfacing would be finance by the Towns Deal funding.

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor) and

**RECOMMENDED** to note the report and instruct the Proper Officer to commission an urgent report on the operation of the café for consideration by Full Council to include options to meet the budgeted financial return to the Council

## 156 RESIDENTS SURVEY

A Member queried the use of an electronic link to the survey in the agenda and the lack of transparency for the public and the Chair agreed that in future he would ensure that full transcripts were included in the agendas.

The Chair advised he had been informed best practice for Councils was to survey residents regularly and gauge their views on Council performance. The Council already had the necessary software to carry out surveys and used it for certain aspects of its work. The Committee were being asked if they supported a resident's survey.

Members expressed concern about the content of the survey and wording of any questions. They were also concerned with the ability of any survey to get a range of responses from residents of different age groups and not just those who have strong views on the performance of the Council. Any survey would have to be able to be completed 'offline' for those residents who were not computer literate. Members also noted that the interpretation of the results and resulting communication issues may put current staff under more pressure.

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor) and;

**RECOMMENDED** not to progress a residents survey

#### 157 **COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair introduced the report explaining that the Council had commissioned three draft communications policies for the Committee to consider. He advised that the consultant who produced the reports was not able to attend the meeting.

Members discussed the options of adopting the policies at this meeting and having a discussion at a future meeting with the Consultant present. Councillor Biscoe proposed that the policies be adopted in principle and ratified at the next meeting of the Committee. The proposal was not seconded and was not put to the Committee. A Member advised that they would appreciate the opportunity to ask questions of the Consultant prior to detailed consideration of the report.

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Mrs Carlyon and;

**RECOMMENDED** to defer consideration of the communications policies to a future meeting

#### 158 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Council had received communication from the Community Link Officer for Truro and Roseland Community Area Partnership regarding the anticipated date for completion of works on the Clock Tower in October 2023. The Chair advised that they have not had any communication from Cornwall Council regarding the charges which would be made to the City Council on completion of the works. He was concerned regarding the liability to the City Council.

During discussion Members expressed concerns regarding the impact of the works of the Clock Tower refurbishment on the Municipal Building. There was a lack of clarity on who was responsible for the water ingress and would therefore be responsible for remedial works to the Municipal Building.

Members discussed the options to engage with Cornwall Council in a proactive manner prior to the completion of the works and whether a specialist survey should be conducted on behalf of the City Council on the Municipal Building.

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Mrs Carlyon and;

**RECOMMENDED** to note the correspondence; to delegate the Proper Officer to start a dialogue with the appropriate officers of Cornwall Council to discuss the matters arising from the work and to consider commissioning specialist advice

#### 159 **CCTV**

Councillor Biscoe informed the Committee that the Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service would be withdrawing the CCTV service from the towns in Cornwall who commission this service from them. He advised that there were three options. First to stay with any back-up service that Cornwall Council Offer or to join with Falmouth and other West of Cornwall towns in a new CCTV service or to join with Newquay's existing CCTV service. He advised that the Police thought highly of Newquay's service and Newquay were already providing CCTV services for St Austell and understood a

partnership approach. A successful bid for funds had been made to the Home Office to replace the CCTV cameras in Truro but this would be postponed until a decision is made on future provision.

It was proposed by Councillor Biscoe, seconded by Councillor Wells and;

**RECOMMENDED** to delegate the Proper Officer to contact Newquay Town Council to discuss the possibility of them providing CCTV services and consider a report on CCTV services at a future meeting

#### **160 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE WORKING PARTY**

The Chair introduced the report from the working party and advised that their recommendation was for more time to consider the purpose, aims and responsibilities of the working party. The Chair felt this could be discussed in public session.

During discussion a Member acknowledged that a draft structure had been presented to the group and asked if this could be implemented as soon as possible. The Chair advised that the only report from the working party was that they did not have sufficient time to produce a report for this meeting.

A discussion took place regarding the terms of reference for the working party and whether these were wide enough for it to consider a draft organisational structure.

It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Stokes to extend the terms of reference of the Organisational Change Working Party to consider any draft organisational structure and report back to the next meeting of the FGP Committee. On a vote of 4 votes for, 5 against the proposal was lost.

It was proposed by Councillor Biscoe, seconded by Councillor Roden and;

**RECOMMENDED** to note the report of the Organisational Change Working Party

#### **161 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, seconded by Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor), and;

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with s1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item by reason of its confidential or special nature.

#### **162 ORGANISATIONAL REVIEW**

Members considered the above item below the line, in a confidential session.

#### **163 READMITTANCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was proposed by Councillor Roden, Seconded by Councillor Mrs Swain (Mayor) and;

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be invited back to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm