

TRURO CITY COUNCIL



CITY OF TRURO

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MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD 14 OCTOBER 2024 AT 1900

- PRESENT:** Councillors Webb (Chairman), Wells (Vice-Chairman), Swain (Mayor), Rabey (Deputy Mayor), Biscoe, Mrs Carlyon, Nolan, Rich, Sunderhauf, Southcombe, and Stokes.
- APOLOGIES:** Councillor Eathorne-Gibbons – personal.
- ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** David Rodda MBE (Town Clerk) and Esther Greig (Deputy Town Clerk & RFO).

1 COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

The apologies were **noted**.

F/24/664

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

F/24/665

3 OPEN SESSION FOR ELECTORS OF TRURO RELATING TO ITEMS ON THIS AGEND VERBAL QUESTIONS

None.

F/24/666

4 MINUTES

- a. The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 16 September 2024 were considered for accuracy. It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Swain, and **RESOLVED** that the minutes were considered a correct record and signed. **F/24/667**
- b. The Minutes of the Grants sub-committee meeting held on 16 September 2024 were considered for accuracy. It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Swain, and **RESOLVED** that the minutes were considered a correct record and signed. **F/24/668**

5 RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER (RFO) REPORT

The RFO gave a verbal report to the Committee including:

- a. Recruitment to the position of facilities manager was completed with a start date in December, and one full-time visit Truro assistant who had already started as well as a part time Truro City Council comms role due to start in the following week.
- b. Minor flooding at the café had occurred caused by the site topography, specifically the height of the car park in relation to the café building. Two torrents of rain had sent leaves into the drains subsequently blocking them. Resolved within hours by the efforts of the café staff, maintenance team and the building supervisor so that it was ready to open by the next morning; mitigation measures

being investigated. The Town Clerk added that sandbags were deployed as an immediate approach and was considering doorway flood barriers for a long-term solution. No lasting damage had been done to the building fabric by nature of the sealed flooring.

- c. Green Street toilet's water usage was reported to be £8,000.00 a month – well above what had been budgeted for. This figure was confirmed, using the footfall counters as well as the flow rates of the provisions, and found to be accurate.
- d. The municipal building site visit had been attended by TCC's building supervisor, Keir, Cornwall Council, and Hall for Cornwall. The Town Hall has been cleared of furniture so that the committee chamber and the council chamber have now been reinstated. High level cleaning still to be done. All pipes were flushed and tested for legionella, fire extinguishers to be purchased at a cost of between £1,000.00 and £2,000.00, and boiler service completed ready for tenant use in November.

The Town Clerk added by reporting on the height of the banister too low and gaps in between the baluster being too wide to meet current building regulations and therefore presented a risk. The planning permission previously secured by Cornwall Council to resolve these issues at a cost of £83,000 had not been implemented and had now lapsed. The council was to decide if they are prepared to accept the risks or install a temporary measure that would address the issue whilst not causing any damage to the existing structure. Councillors were in general agreement with this approach, accepting that a more aesthetic solution would cost considerably more and would therefore have to form part of a longer-term investment in the building. The Accommodation working Group were to meet and assess this in person the following week.

- e. £2,942.00 of S106 monies had been received for Redannick play areas and £47,188.00 CIL money had been received to be spent on community infrastructure. The RFO / Deputy Town Clerk suggested that she write a recommendation for consideration at Full Council for specific repairs to the library and other community buildings. Councillors concurred with this.
- f. The Mayoral chain had been repaired and regilded paid for using the Mayoral allowance.
- g. Q2 internal control checks to be undertaken 15th October by Councillors Biscoe and Mrs Carlyon.
- h. An AGM was to be called for the Furniss Coal Distribution Charity.
- i. Officers had made contact with the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall regarding a meeting of the Elliot Exhibition Foundation.

F/24/669

The verbal reports were **noted**.

6 CHAIRMANS REPORT

None.

F/24/670

7 CORRESPONDENCE

None.

F/24/671

8 AGENDA ITEMS

a. Q2 Expenditure Budget

F/24/672

Councillors asked the RFO questions on items from within the report.

Firstly the reason for the size of the utility bill at Moresk. It was reported that this was a historic sum totalling four to five years of unbilled use and standing charges. As the energy deal had run out during this period the standing charge had reverted to a standard tariff which explains the high charge. This change had been challenged but to no avail. It was further questioned that these may be that of the previous tenant and Cornwall Council; the Town Clerk stated he would confirm the dates of the billing line up with ownership periods.

One member requested that reports be given by revenue supported organisations, specifically Young People Cornwall.

It was also asked why TCC was liable for the entire utility bill at 30 Boscawen street despite being tenanted. The Town Clerk noted that these costs are included in the Visit Cornwall tenancy agreement as part of the annual rental charge.

Finally members requested clarification on the income at Hendra car park. Rental income for approx. 10 spaces paid bi-annually under current procedure. Usually transferred in October.

The report was **noted**. It was proposed by Councillor Webb, seconded by Councillor Swain and **RESOLVED** to approve virement of budgets as set out in the report. [£30k to remain in Legal fees with the balance to staff costs to offset slight overspend. £50k Town Deal expenditure into Marketing and Events cost centre as appropriate. £15k to communications from staff costs to cover contractor payments.]

F/24/673

Members thanked the RFO for the report and its level of detail, giving previously uninformed members an understanding of the councils' finances but thought that there was still a balance to be found with regard to the degree of detail taken to committee. The Town Clerk added that this could be changed within the scheme of delegation by raising the levels of delegation, but he also acknowledged his wish for transparency.

b. Boscawen Park Sports Hub – VAT Options

The Town Clerk introduced the report summarising the two options and the reasoning behind the recommendation. These were to operate the hub as purely a sports site so that all the VAT could be reclaimed, proportion the costs between those associated with sports and those associated with wider community/business use and be obliged to pay £132,000.00 in VAT on the non-sports portion of use or as recommended opt to tax so that all VAT may be reclaimed.

Councillors were concerned with passing on the VAT cost to community groups so wished to consider this when setting the charges and operating policies.

The contents of the report was **noted**.

F/24/674

It was proposed by Councillor Biscoe, seconded by Councillor Wells and **RESOLVED** to **recommend** to Council to approve "option to tax" for VAT

F/24/675

purposes for all expenditure relating to the construction and operation of the Boscawen Park Sports Hub as identified in Map A.

It was proposed by Councillor Wells, seconded by Councillor Swain and **RESOLVED** to **recommend** to Council that the starting date for the "option to tax" is set at 1st November 2024. **F/24/676**

c. TCC Website

It was proposed by Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor Sunderhauf and **RESOLVED** to put £6000.00 + VAT into the 2025/26 budget for a new website. **F/24/677**

d. 2025/26 Revenue Budget

The RFO started by explaining the budget lines and reminding the committee that they had asked for zero based budgeting. It was also warned to be mindful during this exercise to not look to change the councils vision as the next year had elections and would be the appropriate point for that.

The discussions for budget lines were thorough, notably:

1. Insurance premium increases of 100% as a result of recent sociopolitical events, shorter agreement terms, significant previous claims, and lack of insurers experienced in parish council portfolios.
2. A rise of audit fees to accommodate Town Deal projects.
3. The need for legal fees to cover condition surveys and contract renewal.

[Councillor Rabey entered the meeting at 2021.]

4. No pension changes expected from central government's budget due to TCC's current contribution level.
5. Public Works Loan Board interest rate assumed at 5% on the £1.3 million repair cost of the municipal buildings for 25 years repaid at £91,188.00 per annum. The Town Clerk confirmed he is in negotiation with Cornwall Council regarding this.
6. All underspends would go into reserves.
7. The RFO suggested that any bank changes be made on completion of the Town Deal projects.
8. The Town Crier is currently insistent on self-funding.
9. While the mayor hadn't drawn any allowance, the hour potential was calculated against the TCC staff minimum to maintain viability for the future Mayor regardless of personal circumstance.
10. Subscriptions were considered useful for advice, training, and updates.
11. It was proposed to set aside a total of £36,000.00. Calculated from £12,000.00 per contested election in an anticipated three wards.
12. Wedding licence for the Town Hall not to be budgeted for.
13. Money market interest expected to be £40,000.00 next year.
14. S106 and CIL money not budgeted for as the amount is unknown and there are conditions on spending.

At this point in the exercise members expressed their wish for an alternate management method to be designed suggesting the form of a workshop - in December - to discuss project or significant maintenance costs for budget.

F/24/678

9 BANK BALANCES AND SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS

At 30th September as follows:

Current Account	£402,482.45
Public Sector Deposit	£565,267.87
Money Market	£3,100,000.00
Petty Cash	£300.00
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Total	£4,068,050.32

Noted.

F/24/679

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 11th November 2024.

F/24/680

11 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

None.

F/24/681

The meeting closed at 2103.

Chairman