Minutes of the Finance Committee

A meeting of the **Finance Committee** was held on **Tuesday 9th July 2024** at **19:00hrs** at **The Chamber Room, Bicester Town Council, The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester Oxon, OX26 6PS.**

Present:
Cllr Alisa Russell (Chair)
Cllr Tom Beckett (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Donna Ford
Cllr Dan Hallett
Cllr Sam Holland
Cllr Les Sibley
Cllr Paul Wheatley

In Attendance:
Helen Pool, Responsible Finance Officer
Jodi Clarke, Finance Assistant

22/2425 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies were received from the following Committee Members:

- Cllr Rachel Mallows
- Cllr Nick Cotter

23/2425 Declaration of Interest

RESOLVED that no declarations were received.

24/2425 Minutes of the Finance Committee

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the following minutes:

- **FIN01/2425** – Tuesday 4th June 2024 at 19:00hrs

25/2425 Public Session

RESOLVED that no public were present.

26/2425 Finance Report

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** & **REVIEWED** the Income, Expenditure and Variances Report to **Month 2.**

A query was raised on whether ledger code **102/4210 (Civic & Democratic/Mayor's Fundraising Expenses)** had budgeted funds – the Responsible Finance Officer explained that no budget is put to the code as the money spent for the mayor's events is offset by income received and recorded under **1013/102** code **Inc Civic Miscellaneous** which balances off the expenditure.

A query was raised as to why budget **106/4039 (Garth House/Waste Removal)** was 145.2% overspent – the Responsible Finance Officer explained that this was due to an invoice received in March 2024 that should have been paid in the previous financial year.

Signed:.. Date:..

Responsible Finance Officer is to investigate the following:

- **Expenditure 110/4314 (Projects/Town Centre)** £587.00 was spent on for budget and update Cllr Ford.
- Look into the position of the Lease with for Whitelands, and whether rent can be acquired from the Café.
- **Budget 308/1028 (Whitelands Sports Village/Inc Pavilion & Pitches)** was budgeted for £93k last year but no budget is presented for the current financial year.
- **Budget 308/101 (Whitelands Sports Village/Inc Whitelands Room Hire)** Bicester Town Council doesn't take bookings for the Function Room, but money is put against the budget.
- **Budget 308/1016 (Whitelands Sports Village/Inc Whitelands Café)** £4,500 budgeted but Bicester Town Council do not charge rent currently.
- To check that the budget for the current financial year has been uploaded.

27/2425 Bank Balances

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** & **REVIEWED** the bank balances at the end of **MAY 2024** and **NOTED** that Cllr Russell has signed the monthly bank reconciliation for the year to 31st May 2024.

A query was raised as the Bank Statement and Closing Balances did not match. The Responsible Finance Officer explained that the Bank – Cash and Investment Reconciliation Report was printed after 31st May and further transactions had been entered into the cashbook resulting in a difference between the bank and cashbook balances. Rialtas does not facilitate a specific date range so the Cash and Investment Balances reports will always show all current transactions on the date of printing. Going forward, where possible, until month end is completed, transactions will not be entered to prevent this from happening. The Responsible Finance Officer did have the Bank Reconciliations present to show the matching balances between the Cash Book and Bank Statements as of the 31st May 2024.

28/2425 Payments

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the payment schedules, totalling £171,645.64 for 28/05/2024 to 10/06/2024 for payments made since those agreed at the meeting on the 04/06/2024.

29/2425 Age Creditors

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the age creditor report.

Another member raised a query about the position with the Rugby Club and the outstanding money. Cllr Wheatley explained that this was still an ongoing process, the club are unable to pay the invoice and are currently paying for 3G use per booking. The Town Clerk has sent them an offer and is awaiting a response.

30/2425 Aged Debtors

Concerns were raised with the overall position between the Rugby Club and the Council.

Town Clerk is to provide a report to update the Finance Committee with the current position regarding the rugby club, the following must be included:

- Amount proposed

- When emails/communication have been made
- Who has made communication.

Pitchbooking Debtors:

Cllr Ford requested confidential papers for the next meeting with all outstanding debt from Pitchbooking.com so that councillors can see what clubs/users are accruing debt.

While trying to recover the debt, officers are asked to complete the following:
- Send 3 emails with 'read' receipts: 1st, 2nd and 3rd reminders for payment.
- Save read receipts.
- Send any debt recovering letter by signed post.

The Council **RESOLVED** and **AGREED** that the finance officers are to collect all debt before 31st August 2024, any debt remaining will have their accounts put on stop until all debt is cleared. If the debt is still outstanding, then eventually debt recovery will be enforced to collect any outstanding monies owed. Ten working days have been given for the debt to be cleared before the accounts are turned onto a 'pay-as-you-go' option.

19:56 – Helen Pool left the meeting.

19:57 – Helen Pool returns to the meeting.

Officers are **REQUESTED** to look at the Booking Policy & Sports Rules and Regulation for any amendments/changes that may be needed considering the debt that has been found on the system. Officers are to take the policies to the Policy Committee for approval of changes.

31/2425 Bad Debt

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the Bad Debt report.

A query was raised that the outstanding amount owing to us for OALC should have been deducted from the invoice paid for the OALC membership.

Officer is requested to take the OALC room hire debt to the next Full Council meeting on the 14th October 2024 as the debt is £208.33 and the Finance regulation section 9.4 states:

"Any sum found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts over £200 shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year. The RFO shall have the authority to write off debts below £200 subject to having taken appropriate steps to recover such debts."

32/2425 Fees and Charges

Community Sports Working Group are to discuss the price increase at their next meeting with a report to follow.

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** with the following:

i. Increase to sport pitch fees' by £1.00 per hour. The Committee asked the Sports Work Committee to complete an annual review of the fees.
ii. Introduction of separate rate for UK State Pension Age for Whitelands 3G pitch, discounting the adult price by 25%. The Committee amended the wording to state UK State Pension.

33/2425 Direct Debit Mandate

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the following direct debit mandates to be set up:

i. HMRC Land Registry
ii. O2 Telefonica

34/2425 OALC Budget

Councillors voted on the recommendation for approval.

1 Councillor abstained & 6 Councillors voted for the approval of the recommendation.

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the decrease in the budget for **801/4083 (Street Scene/Pedestrian Scheme)** and increase the budget for **105/4024 (Central Service/Subscriptions)** by £5,000.

35/2425 Earmarked Reserves

RESOLVED that the Committee **DEFFERED** the item to the following meeting on 24th September 2024 at 19:00hrs.

Further clarification is needed before a decision can be made. Councillors asked for the total costs of the Parks and Grounds contract, including employees for 2023/2024 and for 2024/2025.

36/2425 Grant Aid Applications

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the following Grant Aid Applications with the following amendment to one:

- Churches in Bicester Refugee Support Group
- 3rd & 7th Bicester Brownies
- 1st Heyford Park Scout Group – **AGREED** that £250 be given as only 10 of their 40 members are from Bicester.

37/2425 Garth Park Play Area

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the installation of a destination park with £440K to be funded from **901/9011 (Earmarked Reserves/Play Areas and Open Spaces)**

38/2425 Whitelands Defibrillator Installation

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** that the funding totalling £2,100 for the Defibrillator is to be taken from **901/9020 (Earmarked Reserves/BTC Premises).**

RESOLVED that the Committee **NOTED** the report.

39/2425 Partitioning of Whitelands Function Room

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** the installation of a folding screen/door system in the Whitelands function room by **supplier A**.

RESOLVED that the Committee **APPROVED** that the funding £20,000 is to be taken from **901/9042 (Earmarked Reserves/Sports Village Contribution)**.

40/2425 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 24th September2024 at 19:00hrs

CLOSE OF MEETING: 20:41hrs