

CIRENCESTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Finance Committee held in Suite 3, Dyer House, No. 3 Dyer Street, Cirencester, at 6.05 p.m. on Tuesday, 8th November 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Leigh – Chairman
Councillor Dr P A Hedges – Deputy Chairman (6.10 p.m. arrival)

Councillors: G T Adams
Mrs M T Eccles
B D Hudson
D J Nash (6.08 p.m. arrival)
N E Whereat

Andrew Rennie Crook - Town Clerk
Clive Sherwood – Deputy Town Clerk
Johan Newman – Personal Assistant

80.06 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor R Bourne.

81.06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

82.6 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th July 2005 be received and noted (the Minutes having been approved by Council on 9th August 2005).

83.06 BUDGET REPORT 30/09/05

Members received a copy of the Budget Report for the half-year ended 30th September 2005, together with notes for guidance (copies of which are appended to the signed Minutes).

Mr Sherwood, the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer, drew attention to the amendment to the carried forward figure on page 2 and the brought forward figure on page 3, which should have identified the figure £233,005.

After some debate, it was agreed that a new column after the actual expenditure showing any underspend/overspend to-date should be included in future reports as well as bringing forward the headings to each page in full.

84.06 DRAFT ESTIMATES 2006/7

Members received a copy of the Draft Estimates for 2006/7, together with notes for guidance (copies of which are appended to the signed Minutes).

Members received and noted the questions submitted by Councillor B D Hudson, together with responses (copies of which are appended to the signed Minutes).

Issues highlighted were as follows: -

Council Offices – Telephone (£2,400) – The Deputy Clerk advised that this item included the telephone charges for the grounds telephones.

Miscellaneous – Councillors’ Allowances – It was noted that there would be no change to the legislation relating to co-opted members during the current term of the Council.

Christmas Lighting (£9,500) – It was suggested that the Town Council should only pay for the Christmas tree and not the lighting as no contributions were received from other parties such as the Cotswold District Council (from the Local Business Rates) or the Cirencester Chamber of Commerce.

Corn Hall Subsidy (£10,000) – It was suggested that this contribution be discontinued. Members noted that the original agreement with the Cotswold District Council in 1992 was for only 3 years and to-date, the Town Council had made contributions of £310,000. The Officers advised that the Cotswold District Council’s support costs had increased from £30,000 to £130,000 in 2 years and that they had not received a response to requests for information, which have been made at meetings of the Corn Hall Joint Management Committee. It was accordingly **RESOLVED** that the Clerk write to the Chief Executive of Cotswold District Council advising that the Town Council is very concerned about the level of support costs and that the Town Council is considering withdrawing its subsidy, a detailed explanation is accordingly required for consideration at the next meeting.

Play Equipment (£25,000) – A Member stated that the figure should be considerably increased, as he believed that the current policy to update play areas over three years was too long a period, taking into account the state of some of the play areas. It was believed that consideration should be given to obtaining funds from the Public Works Loan Board, which would give the Council more flexibility. **RESOLVED** that the Officers obtain details about Public Works Loans for consideration at the next meeting.

Abbey Grounds Paths – The Deputy Clerk advised the Committee that certain areas, especially in the area of the balustrade, were in need of repair. He anticipated the need for heavy expenditure. **RESOLVED** that the Officers obtain quotations for consideration at the next meeting.

Norman Arch – Members noted that if the Council decided not to sell the same, then ongoing costs of repair, etc., would need to be identified.

Personnel Issues – These were dealt with in confidential session.

85.06

MARKET TOWNS HEALTHCHECK

Members received, as an emergency item, the following questions from an Officer of Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum, as a response was urgently required: -

- Is the Town Council prepared to take on a role with regard to re-energising the Market Towns Healthcheck process?
- If yes, what role will the Town Council be prepared to play in the process?
- If no, what position is the Town Council taking, with regard to the process?
- Also, if the Town Council is not able to be involved, Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum would like the £3,000 paid to the Town Council for the process, returned with immediate effect, so that other organisations may benefit from the subsidy.

RECOMMENDED that the Council: -

- a) consider advising the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum that the Council were unable to lead the process but wanted to be a participant;
- b) consider repaying the £3,000 back to the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum;

- c) **consider items a) and b) at a Council Meeting to be held on 6th December 2005, taking into account the resolution made at the Council Meeting held on 11th October 2005, namely, "RESOLVED that a working group be established, comprising Councillor D J Nash as lead Councillor, together with the Mayor, to consider recommendations on taking the Market Towns Healthcheck forward and report back to Council on 10th January 2006."**

PART TWO
CONFIDENTIAL

C86.06 DRAFT ESTIMATES 2006/7

See Confidential Minute Book.

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest, that the public and press be excluded and they were instructed to withdraw.

The meeting closed at 8.47 p.m.

Councillor J D Leigh
Chairman