

# **CIRENCESTER TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES** of a Meeting of the Finance Committee held in Suite 3, Dyer House, 3 Dyer Street, Cirencester, at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs M S Rickman – Chairman  
Councillor R Bourne – Vice Chairman

**Councillors:** Mrs S A Alexander  
G T Adams  
Mrs M T Eccles (departed at 8.25 p.m.)  
Dr P A Hedges  
B D Hudson  
J B Leicester (arrived at 7.05 p.m.)  
Mrs R A Leicester (arrived at 7.05 p.m.)  
Mrs S A le Noury  
J D Leigh  
R G Lock  
D J Nash  
Mrs B A Potter

Andrew Rennie Crook - Town Clerk  
Clive Sherwood – Deputy Town Clerk

## **116.07 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor N E Whereat (Mayor) and Miss J C Newman, Personal Assistant.

## **117.07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None were received.

## **118.7 NORMAN ARCH AND COTTAGE**

The Clerk introduced the timeline as presented by The Vivat Trust (a copy of which is appended to the signed Minutes).

Members expressed concerns over the extension of the period of time for raising funds, which in turn would give rise to a delay in The Vivat Trust taking a lease of the Norman Arch. The Members, having expressed their disappointment with the timeline, stated that they were under the clear impression that the Feasibility Study would be by now well advanced and that The Vivat Trust would have been able to give the Council a clear indication as to whether they were able to proceed by the spring of 2007.

The Clerk advised that a tenant had entered into an Assured Shorthold Tenancy that would run for 12 months subject to a break clause at six months.

In view of the information presented by way of the timeline and the disquiet expressed by the Members in the debate, it was **RESOLVED that the Clerk: -**

- a) **write to The Vivat Trust advising that the Council is most concerned about the uncertainty concerning finance and the turn of events that have given rise to apparent delays on completion when the Council had expected completion of the lease by the summer of 2007;**
- b) **present a formal report to the February Council Meeting;**

- c) on behalf of the Council, extend an invitation to the Chief Executive and Chairman of The Vivat Trust to attend the February Meeting and to make a presentation prior to that meeting.**

## **119.7 ESTIMATES 2007/8**

The Deputy Clerk as Responsible Finance Officer, introduced Item No. 4 by reference, initially, to the Notes for Guidance (copies of which are appended to the signed Minutes). Councillor Mrs S A Alexander indicated under the heading "Administration" that she wished to introduce information relating to benchmarking and associated matters being dealt with by the Personnel Working Group in confidential session.

The Deputy Clerk drew attention to the points raised in the Notes for Guidance and made amendments in respect of the reference to "Equipment". The Committee were advised that one Kubota Estates Mower was required not two. The Groundstaff had, however, indicated that there would be great benefits in the purchase of a "Chipper". It was anticipated that the cost of such equipment would be between £7,000 and £8,000 as opposed to £4,500 anticipated for a Mower. The Deputy Clerk accordingly suggested that this item in the Estimates be increased by £2,000.

By reference to "Interest" in the Notes for Guidance, the Deputy Clerk informed the Committee that if the interest from the Kingshill Lane Sports Development Site monies was to be introduced into the general computation, then there would be need for a change in policy.

The Estimates as presented and contained within three pages were referred to by reference to those items that necessitated specific consideration. Members were informed that the audit fees had been reduced owing to the new form of audit.

In respect of the Abbey Grounds, the Deputy Clerk advised that the item for "Professional Charges – Tree Consultant" had been increased as a result of a recent court case. In discussion, it was acknowledged that there would be great difficulty in identifying the true costs generated by the requirements of this case and that in the circumstances, the figure could be greater.

Abbey Grounds – It was suggested that the title be altered to "WC's in the Abbey Grounds" and that the Estimates as presented remain, thus enabling the Council to determine whether these works were justified and if not to seek to identify alternative provision of such facilities.

Play Areas – It was requested that these be re-designated and the title changed in the Estimates to "Recreation Areas".

Members discussed the possibility of utilising some of the funds accrued for the Abbey Grounds Recreation Area with a view to avoiding delays in relation to Scheduled Monument Consent and the appointment of a contractor. This was left in abeyance.

Miscellaneous – Christmas Lighting – It was explained to Members that the current contribution of nearly £10,000 had been cut back to £5,000. There was a substantial debate on the part of the Members over this item with the Clerk being requested to contact other towns of a comparable size and identify how the provision of Christmas Lights was dealt with. The Clerk was also requested to identify alternative provision of lights at a lower cost

and to ensure that the Chamber of Commerce was made aware of the need to come forward with proposals.

Projects – The Deputy Clerk advised Members that there were no suggested projects included in the Estimates for the coming year and in the circumstances, this represented a reduction to the precept. £2,000 had been kept in for the Market Towns Healthcheck, as this matter was now being progressed, hopefully for the benefit of the town and its community. Currently, within the Norman Arch funds earmarked, there was held the sum of £32,000.

Interest – After discussion, it was decided not to include the capital interest as revenue income.

A Member suggested that some additional expenditure could be made which could provide a clear benefit to the community. His suggestion was that working in partnership with the Cotswold and Stroud Division Constabulary, the Town Council could make a contribution towards a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO). The enquiries that the Member had pursued suggested that to contribute to a full-time PCSO would cost £30,000, thus, if 75% of that were paid over there would be great benefits to the community with a very small uplift in the precept of 4.3%. The Clerk was accordingly requested to pursue investigations with Chief Superintendent Walker and his Officers with a view to identifying whether the appropriate agreement could be entered into. The Clerk is to report to the next meeting of Council on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

As Members perceived that this was the time to introduce additional lines of expenditure, another Councillor suggested that £2,500 be set aside for the purposes of providing two issues in the new year of a newsletter. The number of issues was kept down owing to the changes that would be taking place within the office with the introduction of a new Clerk.

**PART TWO**  
**CONFIDENTIAL**

**C120.07 ESTIMATES 2007/8**

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 9.45 p.m.

Councillor Mrs M S Rickman  
Chairman