

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Finance & General Purpose Committee Held at Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Monday 04 February 2019

PRESENT

Councillors A Mosley (Chairman), P Adams, Mrs H Fraser, I Jones (substituting for Ms J Mackenzie), N Laurens, Mrs P Moseley, A Phillips and H Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Andy Watkin (Responsible Financial Officer), Rebecca Oliver (Committee Clerk) and 7 Grant Applicants.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms J Mackenzie.

63/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Twin-Hatters	All twin-hatted Councillors declared a personal interest in all matters relating to Shropshire Council.
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64/18 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 14 January 2019 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 14 January 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

65/18 MATTERS ARISING

65.1 Ref: Min 62/18 Legal Proceedings

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Judicial Review proceedings have been rejected by the High Court Judge. The applicant has a right to renew his application within 7 days.

66/18 GRANTS

66.1 Update on Community Grant Funds & Councillor Grant Funds

The Responsible Finance Officer reported that the applications to be considered totalled £14,475. Funds of £1,750 which were previously awarded to Home Start Town have been recovered leaving a total Community Grant budget to spend of £7,250 for 2018/19.

The current spend of Councillor Grant Funds to date is £6,300 out of a total budget of £12,750.

66.2 Applications for Community Grants

(a) Shrewsbury Athletic Club – requested £1000 for the purchase of a replacement High Jump Landing Bed which costs £3000 plus VAT. A grant for £1500 has been secured from the Shropshire Athletic Association and a contribution of £500 has been given from the Athletic Club's Presidents Appeal. Shropshire Council Leisure Services have offered to pay the VAT.

The club caters for 200 members, most of which are children, and has a waiting list of 100 people. A further 300-400 children with Special Educational Needs are involved in an annual relays competition at Salop Leisure organised by the Athletic Club.

Each member pays an annual subscription of £1900 plus £1 per session. Increasing the membership would run the risk of losing members.

RESOLVED:

That £750 be awarded to Shrewsbury Athletic Club.

(b) Shrewsbury Morris Dancers – requested £5000 for a cross discipline street theatre piece featuring a giant cobbler puppet (from the Wrekin Giant story). The puppet will stand around 3.5 meters tall, be launched at an event in the square featuring music, dance and processional flags. Following this event the puppet will be exhibited somewhere in the town, the venue of which is to be confirmed. The project is being run with Thingumajig Theatre who will hold workshops for building the puppet, which is expected to take two weeks.

An application for Arts Council Funding is being prepared for submission this month. Members felt £2000 venue hire was expensive and suggested considering the Flaxmill Dye House as a cheaper alternative.

RESOLVED:

That £2000 be awarded to Shrewsbury Morris Dancers subject to the Arts Council Funding being secured.

(c) Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew – requested £1000 towards various Crucial Crew activities catering for 1000 children from Shrewsbury Schools who will join 500 children from Oswestry. In celebration of Crucial Crew having been run for 25 years, a second

event will be held this year which will see 28,500 children who have previously attended a Crucial Crew event reunited. Planning for this event will commence tomorrow and it is hoped that Shrewsbury Town Council and its Mayor will be involved.

The event is expected to cost £20k and so far this year £15,900 funds have been secured. Applications for funding have been made to other Councils and a generous donation of £1500 was received from a local business. The organisers are required to maintain reserves for a further two events at all times.

RESOLVED:

That £1000 be awarded to Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew

- (d) **Meta4 Dance Company** – requested £750 towards a ‘21’ project aimed to promote movement and dance activities in order to support mental and physical health to people in and around the Shropshire area. There was no representative to answer Members questions who had concerns about how much the event supports *Shrewsbury* residents. Due to a lack of clarity, Members agreed to defer this application.

RESOLVED:

That this application be deferred and £0 be awarded to Meta4 Dance Company at this time.

- (e) **Shrewsbury Street Pastors** – requested £2300 for training and equipping 9 new Street Pastors with the total cost being in the region of £3790. Funds of £500 have been raised by the Friends Group and £990 from donations from the churches but funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner has been withdrawn.

The Street Pastors work is focussed on reducing river deaths, working with people with additional needs such as mental health problems, and working less with drug and alcohol misuse cases, and carrying out preventative work in schools. They work in partnership with The Samaritans and are increasing work with university students.

Where possible they are trying to cover weekends but have a staffing shortage. The Town Clerk suggested that the Town Council’s Youth Service could provide the training in place of Shropshire Youth Association.

RESOLVED:

That £1500 be awarded to Shrewsbury Street Pastors.

- (f) **Shrewsbury Food Hub** – requested £1000 for expanding the frozen food service enabling the 70 volunteers to collect more surplus food frozen by the stores on its use by date including meat, ready meals, milk etc. This would go towards purchasing chill boxes and freezer blocks, covering staff time and purchasing cleaning materials. The Co-op Midcounties have funded the project with £1500. The pilot scheme this year has been a success and is ready to expand.

A Community Liaison Officer at Tesco has committed to expanding the fruit and vegetable project. The working capital funds were explained.

RESOLVED:

That £1000 be awarded to Shrewsbury Food Hub.

- (g) **Shrewsbury Book Festival** – requested £1100 towards the Square Event which is part of the May Festival. This annual event which has increased in popularity, has involved children and families annually since 1998. Between 12-16 primary schools are involved and last year the trail around town involved many businesses which was a huge success.

Previously, the Town Council has supported Bookfest by awarding £1k for the purchase of a 6m x 3m tent. This has been very useful and used at the Flower Show but a bigger marquee is required in the square in case of inclement weather.

RESOLVED:

That £750 be awarded to Shrewsbury Book Festival

- (h) **The Hive** – requested £750 towards The Hive Weekender; a fundraising weekend in May and the money would subsidise elements such as the bands and workshops. The whole event is expected to cost £3080. The project has received £830 funding from Shropshire Council's Arts Revenue Fund and £1500 has been received from Big Lottery, Youth Music & Arts Council England the latter of which has agreed to match fund what is raised. There was no representative from the Hive present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That £500 be awarded to The Hive.

66.3 Grant Funding Programme for 2019/20

Members considered how the funding should be organised for the 2019/20 financial year. Regularly Councillor Grants are unspent and the Community Grant Fund is always oversubscribed. Currently each Councillor is awarded £750 a year.

Members agreed that any unspent Councillor Grants after a two year period, will be reinvested into the Community Grant Fund. The Community Grants are considered twice a year; February and July. Members wished to continue with this format.

RECOMMENDED:

That all Councillors are reminded that unspent Councillor Grants will be moved into the Community Grant Fund after two years.

67/18 PAYMENTS

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 1 December 2018 – 31 January 2019. No comments were received.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 1 December 2018 – 31 January 2019 be approved.

68/18 QUARTER 3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) presented the Statement of Accounts for Quarter 3 of the 2018/19 financial year and the Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2018.

The RFO reported that overall there are no concerns with the finances of the Council and income and collection is in line with expectations.

When comparing Income & Expenditure to the budget there is an overall negative variance of £2,749. Within expenditure there is a negative variance of £20,277 largely due to capital purchases and increased wage costs (due to recruitment and job evaluation). There is a positive variance on income due to sums received in respect of grants for Youth Services from Shropshire Council.

When comparing the second quarter to the same period in the previous year there is an overall negative variance of £618,767 due to the Greenfields receipt.

RECOMMENDED:

- i) That the Quarter 3 Management Accounts be accepted and approved.**
- ii) That the recommendations in the Statement of Accounts report be noted.**

69/18 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Town Clerk reported that as part of the Accounts & Audit Regulations the Town Council is annually required to conduct an assessment of Risk. Most risks can be mitigated against but the most significant risk is safeguarding young people within the Youth sector. This causes concern to Officers and training has been carried out and work will continue in schools to highlight the risks to the youngsters.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the welfare of staff is covered in the Health and Safety Risk Audit. This risk assessment is more about the loss of staff and how this may impact the Council. She also confirmed that most key staff have received Mental Health Awareness training and two members of staff have been trained as Mental Health First Aiders. The Town Clerk agreed to consider Contingency Management in the event of a catastrophe. Having looked into aspects such as plant production, obtaining fuel and procuring equipment the Town Clerk does not anticipate any significant impact from a possible Brexit "No-Deal" on the Council's operations.

The Risk Management Strategy and Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy were circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the existing Risk Management Strategy be re-affirmed**
- ii) That the existing Counter-Fraud & Corruption Strategy be re-affirmed**
- iii) That members note the updating of all Risk Assessments**
- iv) That the Risk Assessment Action plan be approved and signed by the Chairman**

70/18 INTERNAL AUDITOR

70.1 Effectiveness of the Internal Auditor

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 require there to be an annual review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit. Therefore, the Responsible Financial Officer presented his report which looked at the key standard areas in terms of the expected standards and characteristics of effectiveness.

The RFO reported that there were no areas of concern with the current internal auditors who are well qualified, expanding, effective workers and have capacity to carry out the work. The new 5-year plan will incorporate extra focus on capital and expenditure in line with future spending plans.

70.2 Five-year plan for Internal Audit

The RFO confirmed that the five-year plan for the Internal Audit will be presented at the next F&GP committee meeting.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report into the Effectiveness of the Internal Auditor be accepted,**
- (ii) That Auditing Solutions be retained for the 2019/20 financial year,**
- (iii) That the 5-year plan be presented to the next F&GP committee meeting.**

71/18 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Investment Strategy was circulated prior to the meeting and is the guidelines followed by the Town Council when investing surplus funds held on behalf of the community. The Council currently has £7.43m of investments which were itemised in the report. The non-specified and non-financial investments are those that increase in value and whilst the RFO gets a better return than Shropshire Council, advice will be sought from external advisors to consider if it can be improved upon.

The capital plan will be presented at the next F&GP committee meeting as well as details of expected S106 and Neighbourhood Funds.

Out of this £7.43m, around £3.4m are earmarked reserves and £4m capital.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Investment Strategy for 2018/19 and 2019/20 be approved

72/18 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN & PROGRESSING THE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

A report on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) was circulated and detailed both a 2-year corporate plan and a capital plan. A working group consisting of the group leaders and the senior management team will take forward the MTFP which Members agreed with.

The Town Clerk agreed to look into using Gaant charts to present the Capital Programme and confirmed that the elections are not expected to impact on this plan.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the Council develops a 3-year Medium Term Financial Plan for the Financial Years 2019/20 – 2021/22 and that each year the MTFP is expanded by a further year.**
- (ii) That the Council develops a 2-year Corporate Plan leading to the May 2021 Elections with a view to developing a 4-year Term Corporate Plan thereafter.**
- (iii) That a Working Group is established involving the Group Leaders and Senior Management Team to develop a draft Corporate Plan and MTFP.**
- (iv) That the Finance & General Purposes Committee and Recreation & Leisure Committee be updated regularly as to progress of the Capital Programme.**

73/18 FUTURE OF HIGH STREET FUND

The Government has launched a Future of High Streets Fund which will support and fund local areas' plans to make their high streets and town centres fit for the future. They are inviting expressions of interest from interested towns to bid for this support.

Shropshire Council has invited all Town Councils in the County to submit a bid to be considered as the preferred town centre to be submitted to Government. The Town Clerk would work with the Executive Director of the Business Improvement District to prepare Shrewsbury's submission.

Given the potential significance of Future High Street Funding, Members requested that a special meeting of Council be convened to ratify the Shrewsbury submission.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Town Clerk work alongside the BID to prepare a submission to Shropshire Council for Shrewsbury to be the preferred town for a bid to the Future High Street Fund;**
- (ii) That a special meeting of Council be convened for Tuesday 12th February to agree the submission.**