

SANDBACH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held at 7.15 pm on 14 September 2006 at the Sandbach Literary Institution, Hightown.

PRESENT

Councillors: M R Sherman, Chairman
 J J Moore, Vice-Chairman
 Mrs D E Alcock
 D Lloyd-Griffiths
 N T Price
 W W Scragg

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors: D K Atkin
 P J Darnes
 J Iddon
 B E Moran, Chairman of the Council

2. FINANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The delegated powers are defined in standing order 48 and a copy was handed to members. The Clerk had looked at previous meeting's proposals and asked the meeting to reconsider the proposals. In practice there is no difference in approach whether the proposed expenditure was a donation under section 137 powers, a donation under other powers or expenditure on a project. The Finance Committee would expect to make a recommendation. Members were firmly of the view that it should be for the Finance Committee alone to decide whether there were funds available and that in this area the Town Council was subservient.

RESOLVED: that the amendment of Standing Order 48 is deferred for further consideration.

3. ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 2005/6 – INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The following report had been received from the internal auditor.

ISSUE 1

A renovation grant was paid to the Sandbach Literary Institution for £69,735. There was no supporting documentation (invoice, correspondence etc.) to support this payment.

RECOMMENDATION 1

We will need to see supporting documentation for this payment before we can sign the Internal Audit section of the Annual Return.

ISSUE 2

Financial Regulations document provided at audit states the level at which three estimates are required as £1,000. The Standing Orders state this level is £2,500.

One contract tested in year with 'Woodward & Co' for £4,186 for which no evidence of estimates could be found.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Council need to confirm which de-minimis level for the purchase of goods and services is relevant and amend the Standing Orders/Financial Regulations as appropriate.

Payments for goods and services should be in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council.

Members were surprised at the first comment since the grant to the SLI had been fully debated and minuted by the Council. The Clerk had written to the auditor stating that an invoice was an inappropriate document for a grant request. Copies of the SLI grant application form together with minutes of meetings and copies of correspondence had been sent. The fact that the Annual Return had been signed suggested that the internal auditor had found this documentation satisfactory.

With regard to the second comment, it would appear that a discrepancy had crept in during the review of the Finance Regulations and the Standing Orders. The matter would be followed up and recommendations made on how the two documents should be brought into alignment.

Three competitive quotations had been obtained for the office renovation work but not filed with the receipts and vouchers. In future they would be filed together. The use of quotations instead of tenders had been sanctioned by members for this particular project.

The Clerk reported that the external audit was at the more detailed intermediate level due to the Council's expenditure exceeding £100,000 last year. The necessary papers were still with the external auditor.

RESOLVED: that the report be received and that the appropriate follow-up work is carried out.

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR APPROVAL

RESOLVED: that the attached statement be approved.

5. CASH PROJECTION

RESOLVED: that the attached projection be approved.

6. CONFIRM STATEMENT OF 'EAR MARKED' RESERVES

A summary of all payments associated with the Sandbach Literary Institution was presented. Of the outstanding work required the Clerk commented that he felt that improvement to the egress into the yard from the Council Chamber was a high priority. Comment was made that most if not all the cost should be carried by the Trustees.

RESOLVED: that the summary be received.

RESOLVED: that the attached statement of earmarked reserves be approved.

7. PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL

7.1 Advertising costs for the Assistant Town Clerk

RESOLVED: that expenditure by the Clerk and the Recruitment Panel on advertising be approved.

7.2 Finance Regulations

RESOLVED: that any project that is presented to Council for approval should have a budget attached that has been approved by the Finance Committee.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council approval of a project is subject to the Finance Committee's confirmation that funds are available.

RESOLVED: that there should be no immediate increase in the £200 emergency authorisation for the Clerk but that a review is carried out later in the year.

7.3 Direct Debit

Finance Regulation Paragraph 6.6 allows the Council to use Direct Debit facilities.

RESOLVED: that Direct Debit arrangements are made to settle the British Telecom accounts.

7.4 Cheques for approval

Heads (Congleton) advert	59.22
St Mary's Churchyard Maintenance	400.00
St John's Churchyard Maintenance	200.00
St Peter's Churchyard Maintenance	200.00
Christ Church Churchyard Maintenance	200.00
Ettiley Heath Methodist Churchyard Maintenance	200.00
B R Thompson, September salary	1487.30
Inland Revenue, September NIC & PAYE	609.61
British Legion, Wreaths for remembrance parades	75.00

RESOLVED: that the payments be approved.

8. ASSISTANT TOWN CLERK

A selection panel under the chairmanship of Cllr Scragg had placed the adverts and several applications had been received. The interview questions had been prepared taking into account current employment legislation. The short listing was to be carried out on 21 September. It was hoped to carry out the interviews on 10 October.

RESOLVED: that the report be received with thanks.

8.1 Assistant Town clerk Job Description

A slight change was needed for legal reasons.

RESOLVED: that the insertion of the words in italics in item 6 of the Job Requirements be approved as follows.

To progress through personal development and job training, to *be eligible* for the Town Clerk's position.

9. LETTERS OF THANKS

9.1 Sandbach Striders and Strollers

They had sent an email of thanks to the Council Chairman following their first use of the new timer.

RESOLVED: that their email be received.

10. APPLICATIONS FOR DONATIONS

10.1 Sandbach Talking Newspaper

They requested a grant of £500 to purchase chairs to enable them to hold their Monthly Executive Committee Meetings at their own rented studio instead of paying more rent on a Meeting Room.

Cllr Alcock declared an interest.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £500 is made.

10.2 Clean Team

They ask for grants towards two separate projects.

1. Make a Difference Day Saturday 28th October

They request a grant of £300 towards their project cost of £800 to involve as many people as possible to plant daffodil bulbs in open areas throughout Sandbach.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £300 be made but add comments about the Council's wish to see a sustainable planting regime.

2. Part time employee

They request a grant of £6,000 towards their total cost of £16,000 over the next two financial years to employ a person to work for two days a week during the financial year 2007/2008 with the businesses of the town to enhance the appearance of the town and to minimize any harmful environmental impact they might create. This project was not liked by members because of our policy not to provide core funding and the belief that this is already a CBC responsibility.

RESOLVED: that the Council does not support the project.

10.3 Nadine Thornton – 21st World Scout Jamboree

She sought financial support towards her once in a lifetime experience. The Clerk said that the Council's powers were restricted when helping an individual and he could not recommend payment.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £50 be made.

10.4 Lions Youth Brass band

They sought a grant of £150 towards the cost of a competition they propose to hold for local young musicians.

Cllr Scragg declared an interest.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £150 be made.

10.5 Leighton Hospital Prostate Cancer Support Group

They seek a grant of £1,000 towards the £30,000 required to purchase a new camera to improve the hospital's surgical equipment. It was thought

that this type of donation was best made through individual Chairmen's charity funds.

RESOLVED: that no grant be made.

10.6 CBC Gypsy and Traveller Arts Project

The project co-ordinator wonders whether the Council would like to contribute. Members noted that the Gypsy and Traveller Community were reported as not wishing to participate in this project.

RESOLVED: that no grant be made.

11. CORRESPONDENCE

11.1 Bank of Scotland

They offer attractive rates for Local Government deposit accounts.

RESOLVED: that alternative arrangements such as the above be investigated.

12. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: that the next Finance Committee Meeting will take place on Thursday, 9 November 2006 at 7.15 pm in the Sandbach Literary Institution.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.

M R Sherman
Chairman

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