

UNADOPTED

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MALVERN TOWN COUNCIL
held remotely via Zoom on
Wednesday 3 June 2020 at 6.00 pm

Councillors

Participating

C Hooper (Chairman)
N Houghton (Vice Chairman)
J Dallow
R McLaverty-Head
N Mills
J O'Donnell
P Tuthill

Absent

L Lowton (apologies)

In attendance

Linda Blake - Town Clerk
Louise Wall - Minute Clerk
N Morton

In the absence of a Chairman, the Vice-Chairman Cllr Clive Hooper took the chair and opened the meeting.

74. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Clive Hooper was elected Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for 2020/21.

Cllr Hooper continued as Chair of the meeting. He noted his thanks to the previous Chairman, ex-Councillor Jeremy Thomas, for his hard work on the Policy and Resources Committee, and he asked the Town Clerk to send a letter of thanks on behalf of the Council.

75. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Cllr Nick Houghton was elected Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for 2020/21.

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from Cllr Lou Lowton were **NOTED**.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Cllr Mills – allotment holder.

78. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the following meeting be approved and adopted as a correct record of the proceedings, to be signed by the Chairman in due course:

- Policy and Resources Committee meeting 26 February 2020

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no Public Participation.

79. QUARTERLY ACCOUNTS – FOURTH AND FINAL QUARTER, JANUARY TO MARCH 2020

Management Accounts for the Fourth and Final Quarter ending 31 March 2020

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Report PR01/20 was received and accepted and the Town Clerk presented the quarterly accounts for the fourth and final quarter of the 2019/20 financial year.

Committee received the management accounts.

The Town Clerk then gave a brief summary of the accounts, which showed that there was an overspend against budget of £19,279 for the final quarter of the 2019/20 financial year. This was not of concern however, and was mainly due to an overspend against Asset Renewal and Refurbishment for the quarter, as some projects previously delayed had been completed during the final quarter.

Cemetery income had continued to be lower than budgeted throughout the entire financial year, but April 2020 had then seen income above budget.

Members questioned the high charges for electricity at Victoria Park and the Town Clerk replied that regular meter readings had been taken to keep track of this but there did not seem to be an obvious reason for the high usage. As the pavilion is to be redeveloped shortly, it was agreed not to pursue this.

The Town Clerk also highlighted that rental income for the flats to the rear of Belle Vue Terrace was very low due to the flats being unoccupied whilst renovation works were carried out, as seen in the asset renewal and refurbishment expenditure. It was hoped that these works would be finished soon and that the flats could be re-let at the end of June.

In summary, there is an underspend against budget of £28,796 for the financial year 2019/20, which was considered to be a healthy and reasonable figure for the year end. An additional appendix A had been included in this quarter's accounts to inform committee members of the main variances for the year as they stood at year end.

All other questions were answered and Cllr Hooper and Cllr Tuthill thanked the Town Clerk for her thorough and clear accounts.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Council approves the Quarterly Accounts for the fourth and final quarter, ending 31 March 2020.

Cash report CR1 January to March 2020

Committee **NOTED** the cash report for January to March 2020.

Bank payments schedule January to March 2020

Committee **NOTED** the bank payments schedule for January to March 2020.

80. REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL GRANTS SCHEME – SMALL GRANTS, LARGE GRANTS AND SPECIAL GRANTS

Report PR02/20 was received and accepted.

The Town Clerk explained that the last review of the grants scheme had been a 'light touch' review carried out in June 2019 and that it was now time for a full and detailed review to be undertaken, as identified in the Annual Review Process at Full Council on 20 May 2020.

It was therefore for members of the committee to discuss the points listed in the report and decide what, if any, changes should be recommended to Full Council. A full discussion resulted in the following recommendations:

A. TIMING OF THE SCHEME

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

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- i. The small and large grants scheme should be run twice during the year, once in its current time slot with grants being awarded in September and then again in February/March.

Reasons

To enable more organisations to apply to the scheme, including those which may miss the summer timetable and deadline. This would also reduce the need for and demand for a special grants scheme as organisations would be referred to the nearest available time slot.

B. SPECIAL GRANTS SCHEME

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- ii. The Special Grants scheme should be removed and replaced with an Emergency Grants scheme. Emergency grants would be for exceptional circumstances only, where the need for funding could not have been foreseen.
- iii. Applications to the Emergency Grants scheme should be scrutinised and scored by Officers in a similar way to small and large grant applications before being considered by Full Council.

Reasons

Emergency grants would be for emergency funding given in exceptional circumstances only and the name change would reflect this.

Although special grants can be for large amounts of money, they are not currently evaluated and scrutinised by Officers in the same thorough way as small and large grants and it was felt that this was an important part of the approval process which should be undertaken with emergency grants to ensure consistency.

C. AMOUNTS OF AWARDS

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- iv. Small grants should remain for amounts up to and including £500.
- v. Large grants would have an advisory limit of between £501 and £2,500 inclusive unless there was a specific reason for this to be exceeded.

Reasons

Members felt that £500 for small grant applications was in line with grant schemes available elsewhere.

Having an advisory upper limit on large grants would provide guidance to applicants and keep awards within the annual budget; however, it was felt that larger amounts should not be completely ruled out if special circumstances applied.

D. FREQUENCY OF APPLICATIONS

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- vi. Grant applications should not be disallowed because an organisation has applied for funding previously. Each application should be clearly considered on its merits and the frequency of applications should only be considered if there is a demand for grant funding above the budgeted funds for that year.

Reasons

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Many organisations in Malvern run annual programmes for the benefit of Malvern residents and these are to be encouraged and supported.

E. THE APPLICATION FORM

It was **AGREED** that Officers would consider the application forms for all grants with a view to improving their layout and design, and simplifying them. A draft will be submitted to the next meeting. Members were requested to put forward any ideas for the forms to the Town Clerk as soon as possible.

F. ASSESSMENT OF GRANT APPLICATIONS BY OFFICERS

It was **AGREED** that Officers would review the marking schemes for small and large grants and design a new assessment form for the emergency grant funding scheme if agreed by Council. These would be submitted to the next meeting of Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

G. REVIEW AND MONITORING

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- vii. A formal review of grants awarded should take place at a Policy and Resources Committee meeting rather than just being noted at Full Council so that councillors can play a part in monitoring grant awards.
- viii. More stringent monitoring of emergency grants should take place to ensure the money is spent appropriately.

Reasons

It was agreed that gaining feedback from organisations in receipt of Town Council grants was an important part of ensuring public money is being spent properly whilst also providing a useful insight into local organisations and their activities.

It was the responsibility of all members of the committee to monitor grants.

H. OTHER MATTERS

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- ix. The budget of £7,000 for special grants for 2020/21 now be split between the small and large grants budgets with a recommended budget of £10,000 for small grants (rising from £6,000) and £18,000 for large grants (rising from £15,000).
- x. There will be no budget for emergency grant applications as any applications made to that particular scheme will be determined on merit and the funds would be approved by Full Council to come out of reserves.
- xi. The proposed changes to the Town Council Grants Scheme should be reviewed in twelve months' time to assess their effectiveness.

Reasons

A bi-annual grants scheme may see a larger number of awards and therefore an increase in budget seems prudent. The new emergency grant funding scheme if approved would be for exceptional circumstances only and therefore no annual budget should be allocated and funds taken from reserves with agreement from Full Council.

81. ZERO TOLERANCE ON HARASSMENT AND ABUSE – GUIDELINES FOR COUNCILLORS

Report PR03/20 was received and accepted.

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It was **AGREED** that a set of guidelines for Councillors to refer to in instances of harassment and abuse from members of the public was needed. Guidelines should include clear information on how to deal with such behaviour, where to seek help and what action could be taken.

Committee members considered and reviewed the draft document and made suggestions for additions, amendments and clarification of certain points. It was **AGREED** that the Town Clerk would be make amendments to the draft document and submit this to the next committee meeting for consideration.

82. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting of Policy and Resources Committee would be Wednesday 29 July 2020 at 6.00pm, to be held remotely via Zoom.

The meeting finished at 7.45 pm.

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(Chairman)

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