

**Draft Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting
(virtual, remote) on Tuesday 18th May 2020 at 7:30pm.**

A video-recording of this meeting can be seen on Bruton Town Council's Youtube channel by clicking on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4xQVItjy2o&t=196s>

Present: Councillors Anderton, Crawford, Hood, Jones and Robinson (Chair)

In attendance: Zöe Godden – Town Clerk

The meeting started at 19:33.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded Councillors that this was an informal session to give officers a steer as to how to proceed with various issues and projects and that any officer decisions would be reported to the Committee once face-to-face meetings resumed.

FR21/001 Apologies for Absence

No apologies had been received.

FR21/002 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

FR21/003 2020-21 End of Year Bank Reconciliations

To note the bank reconciliations for Town Council bank accounts

Noted.

The Clerk was instructed to research a more ethical bank to replace the Scottish Widows account.

ACTION FR210518/1: Town Clerk

It was noted that the Unity Trust current account also needed to be reconciled.

ACTION FR210518/2: Town Clerk

FR21/004 2020-21 End of Year Financial Position

To review the end of year outturn figures.

The Clerk talked through the report and Councillors noted the content.

The Clerk was asked to review the recording of income in the accounting software to and make any corrections.

ACTION FR210518/3: Town Clerk

It was noted that the overspend on grants was due to the £3000 grant given to the food drop.

The Clerk was asked to find out whether an invoice had been received and paid for the annual safety inspections at Jubilee Park.

ACTION FR210518/4: Town Clerk

It was noted that several of the sums that were showing as unspent in the Services and Amenities section of the budget were allocated for transfer to earmarked reserves for future spending. Councillor Hood said that the Walls budget should have been spent on maintaining the dry stone wall at Park Wall. The Clerk reported that she had met with the chosen contractor and ascertained that work had not been able to take place during the 2020-21 financial year due to the CV-19 pandemic. However, it had been agreed that the contractor would begin work on 2nd August.

Councillor Hood said that the unspent sums for Library Junction and Silver Street/Plox in the Highways and Transport section were allocated for contributions towards improvements at these locations. The work at Library junction had not yet taken place but the Silver Street/Plox works had been completed. It was expected that SCC would ask for these contributions in due course. Other underspends would be allocated to earmarked reserves so the projects could take place at a later date.

FR21/005 Review of reserves and allocation of 2020-21 underspend

To note the position of general and earmarked reserves and to consider how to apportion any underspend, taking account of ongoing projects, including the replacement of recently removed play equipment from Jubilee Park play area.

The Chair reported that the balances remaining from the various underspent forward reserves from the 2020-21 budget had been transferred to the earmarked reserves list as presented. The General Reserve was shown at £40,000, representing between four and five months of the Town Council's running costs, which was well

within suggested limits, considering that the Town Council was not heavily reliant on income streams.

Other changes that had been included in the reserves list, as agreed at the Finance and Resources Committee meeting on 19th January were as follows:

- Top up Project/Grant fund from 20/21 underspends £10,000
- Climate Emergency Reserve £5000 (£4000 to Retrofit Project)
- Grit Bins £1,000
- Walking/Cycling £1,000
- Noticeboards £1,500
- Footpaths £1,000

It was **agreed** to recommend to the Full Council that the 2020-21 underspend should be allocated to the following earmarked reserves:

- Jubilee Park Play Area £15,000
- Station Road Car park £10,000
- Walking and Cycling £1,500

The small balance remaining would be added to general reserves.

FR21/006 Station Road Car Park

To note receipt of an initial plan from the appointed contractor and receive an update on progress.

The Clerk reported that a diagram had been received from the preferred contractor, which represented the more expensive of the two options that had previously been discussed. The diagram was shown on the screen. The Clerk had asked for a diagram of the cheaper option but the contractor would prefer not to take time preparing this. The Clerk had also asked for costings for the diagram that had been provided but these had not yet been received.

Councillor Anderton noted that the contractor had been asked to remove the cycle parking area and that right of use over two of the parking spaces close to the entrance gate had been retained by the landowner so the Town Council should not be footing the bill to have these resurfaced.

Councillor Hood suggested that the Town Council should consider employing an expert to carry out the client function for the project, to ensure a professional approach and outcome to the project. The Chair agreed and highlighted the fact that the main grant received for the project required completion of the work by the end

of the 2021-22 financial year. The Chair also pointed out that the project could cost up to £120,000 and that Town Council's lease on the site had only 12 years remaining. It was suggested that, the Town Council should open discussions with the landowner over extension of the lease or possible purchase of the site, in order to justify the investment in the project. Councillor Jones agreed to contact the landowner to begin such a conversation.

ACTION FR210518/5: Councillor Jones

Councillor Jones pointed out that the appointed working group had agreed to take forward the project based on the higher of the two specifications and that, while it was necessary to look into the length of lease and/or ownership of the site, it was important not to delay the project because there was significant public desire for the improvements to the car park to be made. However, it was still felt that the Town Council needed to see the cheaper option for comparison.

The Clerk was asked to contact GDW Consulting Engineers to discuss how they might be able to help by carrying out the client function for the project and also to contact the preferred contractor to ask them to provide costings for the diagram already received, so that the figures could be considered at the Full Council meeting on 25th May and also ask them to advise if the cheaper option would still be viable.

ACTION FR 210518/6: Town Clerk

FR21/007 Lease for the Dovecote Building

To review a draft lease from SSDC in respect of the Town Council's use of the Dovecote Building and agree any comments to feedback to SSDC.

Councillor Anderton noted that the front page of the Heads of Term document referred to a building in Ilminster, not Bruton. Regarding the cleaning schedule, the Clerk said that cleaning the fire exit should be added to SSDC's Cleaning Specification. Other points raised by the Clerk in relation to the cleaning specification were:

- Frequency should be weekly to keep the corridor swept and tidy.
- There is currently some confusion about external window cleaning, as two different people seem to be doing it.
- The cleaning specification says SSDC is responsible for window cleaning but the Heads of Term document says the Town Council is responsible.
- The Community Office is open Monday to Friday 10am to 12pm but the spec says closed on Thursdays and gives opening times as 9.30 to 12.30.
- The telephone number is incorrect.

The Chair said that the Town Council should be mindful that it had a duty of care to the other tenants of the Dovecote Building, namely the Museum and the beautician, to ensure that any changes to the lease between the Town Council and SSDC did not have a detrimental effect on either of them.

There was a general discussion about the reasons for having a lease with SSDC because the Town Council was part-owner of the building. It was felt that there should be a discussion with SSDC to ensure that they were aware of the Town Council's ownership and to clarify the need for a lease in its proposed form. Councillor Crawford remembered that a cleaner may have attended fortnightly in the past but only to clean the corridor. It was noted that the public toilet was also part of the communal area and, therefore, SSDC should be cleaning it. The Chair made the point that the Town Council has a limited budget for cleaning, so it was important to ask SSDC to let us know the cost of the recharge for cleaning the communal areas. Councillor Hood pointed out that there were discrepancies between the content of the Heads of Term document and the Cleaning Specification. Councillor Anderton asked if the Town Council should open discussions with SSDC about making the building more environmentally friendly in terms of the lack of double-glazing and the heating system.

The Clerk was instructed to contact SSDC to raise the points highlighted at the meeting.

Action FR210518/7: Town Clerk

Zöe Godden
Town Clerk