

**EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL**

**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 at 7.00pm**

Committee Members: Cllr Farren (Chair)  
Cllr M Belsey (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Visser (Town Mayor)\*  
Cllr Ody (Deputy Town Mayor)  
Cllrs: Barnett\*, J Belsey, Gibson, Whittaker

Others present: Cllr Gibbs (substituting for Cllr Barnett), Town Clerk, & Responsible Finance Officer

\*\* present on zoom = not an official attendance

\*= absent

145. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public present, therefore the Chairman moved along to the next item.

146. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were accepted from:

Cllr Visser	Working Commitment
Cllr Barnett	Personal Commitment

RESOVLED : it was approved that Cllr Gibbs was Substituting for Cllr Barnett

147. MINUTES

The Chairman advised that Cllr Gibbs had been left off of the draft minutes as having been in attendance at the last meeting. This has been corrected.

RESOLVED: the minutes for the 15<sup>th</sup> June were accepted as a correct record and the Chairman bidden to sign them as such.

148. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Prejudicial declarations were made by Cllrs M and J Belsey for Age UK at item 12. They did not take part in the discussion nor vote for that grant application.

Cllrs Farren and Whittaker declared prejudicial declarations for item 14, neither took part in the discussion nor vote and both left the room for the item.

Cllr Ody declared as a trustee for the Town Museum regarding item 12.

149. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

St Barnabas is now being reported to the A&T Committee following the transfer to the Council. There is work to be done and potential users being shown round and pencilled in schedules. There is a degree of governance around business rates, planning and streetnaming which the Clerk is handling.

There has been no further advice regarding the Old Police Station, it is advertised for sale. We have been in discussion regarding any RAAC, but having been assured that the old court house has none, we assume this is the same for the police station. The Police know of our continued interest in the site.

150. TO APPROVE THE LIST OF PAYMENTS

The Committee received the payment lists for June 2023, July 2023 and August 2023

Cllr Whittaker was thanked for his advance questions and the responses were given:

The WSCC streetlighting is an annual bill for the maintenance and the electricity for 232 columns in the town.

The War Memorial has not been cleaned in living memory of the staff (so at least 17 years) and yes the cost is shown, but there was a grant to offset this by the War Memorial Company.

The payment to the public works board for the loan for St Barnabas is over 10 years, it is paid twice a year and yes it went up a small amount between agreement and the actual permission for the loan from PWLB, it also has gone up again since but we are locked in for 10 years on the rate that was the loan when we took it out. fixed at 4.38%. It is more than covered by the allowed budgeted amount.

It was also asked: Is Vat shown as payable on the figures? Yes where VAT is charged

It was suggested that all of the payments for one organisation (eg MSDC) could be grouped together.

It was asked whether the PFI contract for the street lights included the upgrade to LED. It was confirmed that no this would be a separate cost and opportunity to come to the Council after the WSCC upgrades have been carried out. We have no costs but have registered our interest once this becomes available.

RESOLVED: To approve the payment lists for June July and August

151. TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES - POSITION STATEMENT

The committee noted the position statement, The Chair said she was delighted to advise that we have now received our non-qualified audit from the external auditors who look at our accounts and governance annually in relation to 2022/23. Congratulations to all involved in this.

Questions followed as to the payments for the work that comes from the cemetery “wobble tests”, this would initially be met from the maintenance budget but bigger costs would need budgeting next year.

It was asked for a projected out turn for December to assist with budgeting. Mr Chambers explained that central admin cost centre (1100) is redistributed amongst the other revenue cost centres.

The report was noted

152. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee noted the report on the current KPI's for invoices and absence

153. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEE

Amenities and Tourism Minute 139 was tabled. It was clarified that the date for the job fair is likely to be moved to the spring, however this budget can be ringfenced for this event. It was also suggested that QVH should be invited and this will be suggested to the MP's office.

It was asked whether it can go ahead if the event falls during PURDAH. The Clerk said she would find out, but as it is aimed for the spring would hope this will not be around election time.

RESOLVED: To approve the sponsorship for the Meridian Hall rent for the local job fair being organised by the MP's office. This to be met from Business Support initiatives budget.

154. DELEGATED DECISIONS

It was noted that there had been no delegated decisions since the last cycle other than those indicated in the reports.

155. PERSONNEL WORKING GROUP / HR UPDATE

Sarah Mamoany and Chow-Lin Saunders were welcomed to the Council and the report was noted.

156. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL WORKING GROUP

The Clerk apologised for the error in the agenda in misnaming the Sub-Committee.

Cllr Ody spoke to the report stating that the referral to the Council for full Committee status was necessary to ensure that the matter was taken seriously. Progress was being made on the internal document previously drawn up but other initiatives needed to be progressed also. This Committee needed to have access to its own decision making and budget. It was noted with pleasure that Halsford Park School were keen to introduce a Bike Bus and a meeting was planned for next week.

Comment followed that it was important to be cognizant of the WSCC active travel survey and the LCWiP. There were movement on these at County and if we want to get in the mix we need to make sure that we do not miss the boat.

RESOLVED: to support the TOR and status of the Committee for consideration at The Council meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

157. COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Chair introduced the report and her recommendations. Saying that with a significantly over subscribed grant round, she has had to be very stringent in looking at the applications. Where the organisations are not looking to support East Grinstead residents or their constitutions are not our priority areas then she has not been able to recommend an award. It was also noted that those who had applied and already received a standing grant were not able to be helped further, or any additional award is recommended as a small amount.

Cllr M and J Belsey did not vote on the application from Age UK

Organisation	Requested	Awarded
Chess Club	£100	£50
Evergreens	£500	£200
Time 4 Children	£1,000	£500
East Grinstead Art Society	£500	£250
Spun Glass Theatre	£500	NIL – Not Local
Family Support Network	£600	NIL – Not local – Rural & Costal
St Catherine’s Hospice	£500	£300
East Grinstead Community Bonfire	£1,000	NIL – Standing Grant
Greenaway Foundation	£2,000	£1,000
Arise Counselling Service	£1,000	£500
Mycarematters	£1,060	NIL
Age UK	£2,010	£100
Being Neighbourly	£2,040	£100
TOTAL	£12,810	£3,000

RESOLVED: To award the grants as shown in the below table and to recommend that next years allocation be increased to £5,000.

158. INSURANCE 2023/24

The Committee noted with pleasure the small increase which was inside budgets for this year, despite the volatility of the market.

159. VISIT EAST GRINSTEAD

The Chair and Cllr Whittaker left the room for this item

The Vice Chair, Cllr M Belsey took the chair for this item. It was clarified that the site is different to the Town Council site and it is believed that a separate audience are attracted to non council sites. The Tourism staff will update the pages as a priority once training has been delivered on how to do so.

There was some concern that the site should be reviewed after 12 months to determine whether two sites were needed. It was also clarified that the stie would be rebranded to remove EGBA and the business elements of the site focusing on the tourism and events.

RESOLVED: East Grinstead Town Council will take over the running of Visit East Grinstead and this is to be reviewed after one year.

160. IT/CYBER SECURITY

The Chair introduced the report, It was clarified that the line that we have to the library is a shared line and as such is not as secure as it should be. Shared with WSCC means significantly more traffic which has caused the slow response times. It was asked if a VPN would solve this. The Clerk was no able to answer this other than to advise that the solution had been taken from our IT support and the solution is as set out. They were asked how we solve the problem and this was the suggested solution given.

It was clarified that the problems as to potential security weakness was identified by an independent report and the company were not affiliated to our insurers nor our IT support company.

It was also clarified that the changes proposed for next year are hardware not software based and so would not resolve this issue.

RESOLVED: To implement the plan as set out by the IT providers and to pay for this partly from the IT budget and also the ringfenced Business Support reserve.

There being no other business the Chair announced that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023** and ended the meeting at 8.06pm

SIGNED:

CHAIRMAN