



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

To: All Members of the Finance & Staffing Committee
(Cllr L Hitchings, Cllr R Holmes, Cllr K Herbert, Cllr H Miéville, Cllr N Lacey-Clarke, Cllr L Lindsay, Cllr H White, Cllr A Cross and Cllr S Hitchings)
All other Members of the Town Council Dorset Council Councillors
Members of the Public & the Press

Dear Member

FINANCE & STAFFING COMMITTEE

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee to be held **online** using Microsoft Teams on **Monday 18th March 2024 at 7:00pm** to consider the following items. This meeting will also be available to view online using Microsoft Teams [using this link](#).

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
11th March 2024

A G E N D A

Prior to consideration of the following Agenda, there will be a democratic quarter of an hour, which may be extended at the discretion of the Committee, during which time members of the public may speak. During the course of the meeting, members of the public and our elected representatives from the Dorset Council may indicate they wish to speak, and, at the discretion of the Chairman, and with the approval of the Members, they may be allowed to do so on points of information only. The Committee may on occasion invite members of the public to comment on specific issues where points of information or their particular knowledge on a subject might prove of benefit to the Committee.

Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, belief or disability), Crime & Disorder, Health and Safety and Human Rights. Disabled access is available.

All in attendance should be aware that filming, recording, photography or otherwise may occur during the meeting.

1. Public Session
2. Apologies
3. To receive any Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations
4. [Minutes of the Meeting held on 11th December 2023](#)
5. [Town Clerk's Report & Correspondence](#)
6. Analytical Review of Expenditure against Budget for the following:
 - 6.1 [Administration Budget for the year to 29th February 2024](#)
 - 6.2 [Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 29th February 2024](#)
 - 6.3 [General Reserves](#)

7. Review of Finance Documentation
To receive and retrospectively approve the:
 - 7.1 Cheque payments 011140, 011141 and 011142 totalling £512.21 (for petty cash and Cemetery Refund)
 - 7.2 Direct debit payments for the period 1st November 2023 to 31st January 2024 (sheets 214 - 216) totalling £115,021.53
 - 7.3 Online Faster Payments FP 179 – FP 198 totalling £725,305.75 (Including transfers from maturing Hampshire Trust Bonds to other Town Council Accounts)
 - 7.4 Online Corn Exchange Faster Payments CE02 – CE06 totalling £29,396.75
 - 7.5 [Investment Account for the period to 29th February 2024](#)
 - 7.6 Report by Chairman on Bank Reconciliation and Petty Cash checks
 - 7.7 [Bank Reconciliation to 29th February 2024](#)
8. [To receive the Internal Auditor's Report](#)
9. [Insurance Risk Assessment relating to the Town Council's Insurance Cover and Approval of Insurance Premiums for 2024/25](#)
10. Review of the Risk Assessment Management Policy (including Financial) Arrangements for 2024/25 (sent to Councillors separately due to the size of the document)
11. [Review of Asset Register](#)
12. [Review of Variable Direct Debits](#)
13. [To consider the current status of bad debts with the Town Council](#)
14. [To receive a report on the free venue hire requests received for 2023/2024](#)
15. To review the Finance & Staffing [Committee Remit](#) and the [Financial Regulations](#) (there are no proposed amendments from staff to either the Remit or the Financial Regulations – last updated May 2023 – however Councillors may have proposals they wish to put forward)
16. [To approve the Investment Policy](#)
17. To consider the transfer of funds to manage the financing of the Corn Exchange project
18. To consider the virement of underspent reserves

Minutes of the Town Council and Committee meetings are available from the Town Clerk's Office and at www.blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk.

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



Town Clerk's Office
Church Lane, Blandford Forum
Dorset DT11 7AD



Twinned with Mortain, France



Tel: 01258 454500 • Fax: 01258 454432
Email: admin@blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk
www.blandfordforum-tc.gov.uk

Town Clerk's Report & Correspondence

Public Works Loan Board – The Town Council's loan application for £1.3m to renovate the Corn Exchange has been approved by the Public Works Loan Board and they are now in the process of getting the approval letter from the Secretary of State signed and will forward on as soon as they receive it, along with details of how to draw down the funds.

Dorset Branch – As Secretary to the Dorset Branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks, the Town Clerk invited Simon Hoare MP to the Corn Exchange to meet with Dorset clerks now that he holds the position of Minister for Local Government. Neil Wedge of the DAPTC, and Rob Smith of the Society of Local Council Clerks joined the clerks and it was a good opportunity to hear about the current priorities and funding opportunities for local councils.

The Town Clerk has now stood down from the position of Secretary after four years due to the anticipated workload the Corn Exchange will bring.

Committee Clerk – The Committee Clerk is reducing her hours from 25 a week to 20 hours a week from 1st April 2024 and will work 9am-2pm Monday to Thursday.

Staff Training – Since last March staff have attended the following training courses:

Type of Training	Attended by
Working Together Webinar – 20mph policy	Committee Clerk
DAPTC New Clerks Finance	Business Support Officer
Cherry Picker Training	4 x grounds staff
SLCC project management training	Committee Clerk
SLCC Agendas and minutes training	Committee Clerk
Procurement Training	Town Clerk
LGBTQ+ Awareness Session	Town Clerk
Social Media Workshop	All office staff
Cemetery Management and compliance	Business Support Officer
FiLCA	Business Support Officer
Management of memorials workshop	2 x grounds staff
Role of SAG and Martins Law – Dorset Safety Group	Town Clerk & Operations Manager
Public works loan board – DAPTC	Town Clerk & Operations Manager
Anti-terrorist training	Town Clerk & Operations Manager

Councillor Training – Since the March meeting in 2023, Councillors attended the following courses:

Type of Training	Attended by
DAPTC Cllr Conference	Cllr White
DAPTC Cllr Conference	Cllr Stevens
DAPTC Changing Chairs	Cllr Holmes
DAPTC Changing Chairs	Cllr Mieville
DAPTC Changing Chairs	Cllr Cross
DCMP	Cllr Holmes & Cllr Chapman

Administration Budget for the year to 29th February 2024

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ADMINISTRATION COSTS £		As at 29.02.24				STATUS
N/L code		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Budget Variance	
4010	Advertising	515	472	338	(134)	
4012	Audit	3,764	3,450	3,727	277	
4014	Bank Charges	309	283	137	(147)	
4015	Property Fund Admin Charge / Exp	3,400	3,117	3,406	289	
4018	Equipment Maintenance/Hire	515	472	356	(117)	
4028	New Equipment	515	472	60	(412)	
4039	IT New Equip	103	94	181	86	New laptop for reception, replacement screen
4040	IT Maintenance/Software	10,131	9,287	10,846	1,560	Transfer system to Cloud
4041	IT Consumables	50	46	49	3	
4042	Professional Services	10,000	9,167	3,907	(5,259)	Ellis Whitam
4050	Newsletter/Forum focus	2,266	2,077	3,307	1,230	
4052	Publications	155	142	0	(142)	
4053	Photocopier Charges	824	755	640	(115)	
4054	Stationery & Printing	1,545	1,416	1,108	(308)	
4057	Subscriptions	2,196	2,013	2,450	437	DAPTC; NBMA; ICCM
4060	Postage	650	596	335	(261)	
4065	Telephones	3,605	3,305	7,374	4,069	Increased fees following Cloud transfer
4094	Staff Training & Travel Exps	3,914	3,588	3,115	(472)	
4095	Staff Travel & Expenses	3,090	2,833	2,645	(187)	
4096	CIIs allow, Training & Travel Exps	5,500	5,042	2,633	(2,409)	
4097	CIIs Welfare / Meeting Exps	103	94	166	72	
4099	Staff Welfare	258	237	280	43	
4301	Health & Safety Staffing	721	661	5	(655)	
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>54,129</i>	<i>49,618</i>	<i>47,065</i>	<i>-2,553</i>	
4701	Insurance	14,636	13,416	14,178	761	Annual Insurance cover
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>14,636</i>	<i>13,416</i>	<i>14,178</i>	<i>761</i>	
4800	Mayoral Expenses	2,797	2,564	756	(1,808)	
4802	Civic Expenses	5,150	4,721	7,460	2,739	
4805	Civic Twinning	200	183	0	(183)	
4806	Civic - Freedom	200	183	0	(183)	
4803	Honorary - Town Crier	300	275	150	(125)	
4807	Honorary - Deputy Town Crier	300	275	150	(125)	
4804	Honorary - Mace Bearer	400	367	200	(167)	
4808	Honorary - Deputy Mace Bearer	400	367	200	(167)	
4809	Membership to Guild of Mace Bearers and Town Criers	100	92	40	(52)	
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>9,847</i>	<i>9,026</i>	<i>8,956</i>	<i>(70)</i>	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	78,612	72,061	70,199	(1,862)	
INCOME						
2025	Interest	1,545	1,416	1,738	322	Santandar interest
2003	Property Fund Dividend	0	0	0	0	CCLA
3893	Grant Income	0	0	0	0	
3894	Misc Income	0	0	614	614	Calendars, public liability, screen hire
3897	Overtime Charges	72	66	191	125	
3899	Photocopying	165	151	116	(35)	
3920	Admin Charge - Barnes for Rec	5,816	5,331	5,816	485	
3925	Salary charge -out to Barnes for a Re	25,921	23,761	21,089	(2,672)	
	TOTAL INCOME	33,519	30,726	29,565	(1,161)	
	NET COST/ (INCOME)	45,093	41,335	40,634	(701)	

Overall Revenue Budget for the year to 29th February 2024

ADMINISTRATION COSTS £

N/L code		2023/24			Budget Variance
		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	
4010	Advertising	515	472	338	(134)
4012	Audit	3,764	3,450	3,727	277
4014	Bank Charges	309	283	137	(147)
4015	Property Fund Admin Charge / Exp	3,400	3,117	3,406	289
4018	Equipment Maintenance/Hire	515	472	356	(117)
4028	New Equipment	515	472	196	(276)
4039	IT New Equip	103	94	181	86
4040	IT Maintenance/Software	10,131	9,287	10,846	1,560
4041	IT Consumables	50	46	49	3
4042	Professional Services	10,000	9,167	3,907	(5,259)
4050	Newsletter/Forum focus	2,266	2,077	3,307	1,230
4052	Publications	155	142	0	(142)
4053	Photocopier Charges	824	755	640	(115)
4054	Stationery & Printing	1,545	1,416	1,108	(308)
4057	Subscriptions	2,196	2,013	2,450	437
4060	Postage	650	596	335	(261)
4065	Telephones	3,605	3,305	7,374	4,069
4094	Staff Training & Travel Exps	3,914	3,588	3,115	(472)
4095	Staff Travel & Expenses	3,090	2,833	2,645	(187)
4096	Cllrs allow, Training & Travel Exps	5,500	5,042	2,633	(2,409)
4097	Cllrs Welfare / Meeting Exps	103	94	166	72
4099	Staff Welfare	258	237	280	43
4301	Health & Safety Staffing	720	660	5	(655)
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>54,128</i>	<i>49,617</i>	<i>47,201</i>	<i>-2,416</i>
4701	Insurance	14,636	13,416	14,178	761
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>14,636</i>	<i>13,416</i>	<i>14,178</i>	<i>761</i>

ADMINISTRATION COSTS £

		2023/24			
N/L code		Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Budget Variance
4800	Mayoral Expenses	2,797	2,564	756	(1,808)
4802	Civic Expenses	5,150	4,721	6,192	1,471
4805	Civic Twinning	200	183		(183)
4806	Civic - Freedom	200	183		(183)
4803	Honorarium - Town Crier	300	275	150	(125)
4807	Honorarium - Deputy Town Crier	300	275	150	(125)
4804	Honorarium - Mace Bearer	400	367	200	(167)
4808	Honorarium - Deputy Mace Bearer	400	367	200	(167)
	Membership to Guild of Mace				
4809	Bearers and Town Criers	100	92	40	(52)
	<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>9,847</i>	<i>9,026</i>	<i>7,688</i>	<i>(1,338)</i>
5500	Grants S137	11,000	10,083		(10,083)
5505	Grants SLA	22,500	20,625	32,974	12,349
5530	Grants CAB			5,000	5,000
		<i>33,500</i>	<i>30,708</i>	<i>37,974</i>	<i>7,266</i>
	TOTAL EXPENSES	112,111	102,768	107,041	4,273
INCOME					
2025	Interest	1,545	1,416	1,738	322
2003	Property Fund Dividend	0	0	0	0
3701	Events			315	315
3893	Grant Income	0	0		0
3894	Misc Income	0	0	614	614
3897	Overtime Charges	72	66	191	125
3899	Photocopying	165	151	116	(35)
3920	Admin Charge - Barnes for Rec	5,816	5,331	5,816	485
3925	Salary charge -out to Barnes for a R	25,921	23,761	26,116	2,355
	TOTAL INCOME	33,519	30,726	34,906	4,181
	NET COST/ (INCOME)	78,592	72,043	72,135	92

Surplus from 2022/23as at 31/03/2023

65,290.22

Retrospective approval of the Investment Account for the period to 29th February 2024

In line with the Town Council's Investment Policy, the Chairman of Finance & Staffing, the RFO and the Town Clerk have made the following investments on behalf of the council, seeking the highest possible interest rates and financial security.

Amount £	Details (including period)	Interest Rate %	Bank
806,283.02	Public Sector Deposit Fund	5.25%	CCLA
665,280.68	2 Year Fixed Rate Bond – matures May 2025	4%	Cambridge & Counties Bank
424,196.53	Santander 95 day account	4.57%	Santander
435,842.00	2 year Business Bond issue 43 – matures July 2024	2.11%	Hampshire Trust Bank

CCLA – Property Fund Investment Dividend Statement for the period to 29th February 2024

The Local Authorities' Property Fund
Prices and Dividend Yields



End of	Feb-24	Jan-24	Dec-23	Nov-23	Oct-23	Sep-23	Aug-23	Jul-23	Jun-23	May-23	Apr-23	Mar-23
Offer Price p	296.32	296.62	297.71	301.04	301.55	303.70	304.20	306.18	307.30	308.72	307.60	307.73
Net Asset Value p	277.59	277.86	278.88	282.01	282.48	284.50	284.97	286.82	287.87	289.20	288.15	288.27
Bid Price p	273.28	273.56	274.56	277.63	278.11	280.09	280.55	282.37	283.41	284.71	283.68	283.80
Dividend on XD Date p*			3.54			3.74			3.35			3.09
Dividend* - Last 12 Months p	13.72	13.72	13.72	13.27	13.27	13.27	12.79	12.79	12.79	12.29	12.29	12.29
Dividend Yield on NAV %	4.94	4.94	4.92	4.71	4.70	4.66	4.49	4.46	4.44	4.25	4.26	4.26
Fund Size £m	1044.7	1138.8	1142.9	1155.7	1157.7	1186.3	1188.2	1195.9	1200.5	1207.0	1202.7	1203.1

* The Dividend is paid gross and is after all charges

Risk Warning

Please remember that the value of units and the income from them can fall as well as rise and an investor may not get back the full amount invested. Past performance is no guarantee of future returns. The Property Fund's unit value will reflect fluctuations in property values and rents. The units are intended only for long-term investment and are not suitable for money liable to be required to be spent in the near term. They are realisable only on each month end valuation date and a period of notice may be imposed for

Bank Reconciliation to 29th February 2024

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

WHEN IN RED = NEEDS UPDATING
NOTES
R = RECONCILED

Bank Reconciliation as at

29th February 2024

Bank Statement as at

29th February 2024

Current Account	£24,148.50	
Less Unpresented Cheques	£0.00	
Plus uncleared receipts	£0.00	
		£24,148.50 ✓

Hampshire Trust Bank - A/c No: below

29th February 2024

From	To	Accounts			
11/01/2023	10/01/2024	11535793	3.75%	£0.00	
Account closed and monies transferred to PSDF account					
23/07/2022	22/07/2024	11208028	2.11%	£435,842.00	
Annual Interest in Jan & July					£435,842.00

Hampshire Trust Bank - 1 Yr Fund @ 3.75%

29th February 2024

11528753	09/01/2023 - 11/01/2024	Annual Interest in Jan	£0.00
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Account closed and monies transferred to PSDF account

Santander 95 Day Notice A/C10555310

29th February 2024

£424,196.53	
£424,196.53 ✓	

Santander 31 Day Notice A/C10555349

29th February 2024

£4,295.95	
£4,295.95 ✓	

Santander Business Reserve A/c 10138119

29th February 2024

£92,460.55	
Less: interest not yet accounted for	-£236.67
£92,223.88 ✓	

CCLA-PSDF

Opened 19/09/263

0101190001PC

29th February 2024

806,283.02	
Less uncleared expenditure	
£806,283.02 ✓	

Cambridge & Counties Bank (2 yr fixed rate @ 4.00%)

29th February 2024

£665,280.68	
09/05/2025	15028429 Annual Interest in May
£665,280.68 ✓	

Petty Cash as at

29th February 2024

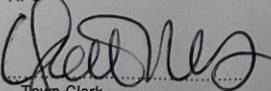
£250.00	
£250.00 ✓	

£2,452,520.56

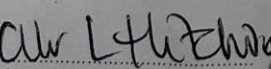
Fidelity Guarantee £5,000,000

PREPARED BY  Date: 9th ~~February~~ ^{March} 2024

RFO

CHECKED BY  Date 8/3/24

Town Clerk

CHECKED BY  Date 11/3/24 (by email)

Chairman of Finance

Approval to insert electronic signature

To receive the Internal Auditor's Report

DARKIN MILLER ~ CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Accountancy ~ Internal Audit ~ Taxation



FINAL

Internal audit report 2023/24

Visit 2 of 3

BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: 12th March 2024

Report author: R Darkin-Miller
Email: r.darkin@darkinmiller.co.uk

Introduction

This report contains a note of the audit recommendations made to Blandford Forum Town Council following the carrying out of internal audit testing on site on 28th February 2024 with subsequent remote testing.

The audit work has been carried out in accordance with Appendix 9 of the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils: A Practitioners' Guide', as amended by the additional requirements of the later AGARs.

An internal audit covers the review of the operation of the Council's internal control environment. It is not designed to review and give full assurance over every transaction carried out by the Council. Instead it enables the auditor, following the sample testing of a number of different types of transaction, to give an opinion as to whether or not the control objectives are being achieved across a range of financial and governance systems.

Audit Opinion

As this audit report is an interim one, no audit opinion is offered at this stage.

The report issued after the final visit for 2023/24 (which will be in May or June 2024) will contain the audit opinion.

The following areas were reviewed during this audit visit:

1. Payments
2. Risk Management
3. Budgetary Control
4. Petty Cash
5. Payroll

Audit Recommendations

Recommendations made during the audit are shown in appendix one to this report.

Recommendations are graded as follows:

Rating	Significance
High	Either a critical business risk is not being adequately addressed or there is substantial non-conformity with regulations and accepted standards.
Medium	Either a key business risk is not being adequately addressed or there is a degree of non-conformity with regulations and accepted standards.
Low	Either minor non-conformity with procedure or opportunity to improve working practices further.

The number of recommendations made at this audit visit and their priority are summarised in the following table:

Rating	Number
High	0
Medium	2
Low	2
Info	0
TOTAL	4

I would like to thank Linda Scott-Giles, Town Clerk; Amanda Crocker, Finance Officer for their assistance during this audit.

Darkin Miller ~ Chartered Accountants
INTERNAL AUDIT OF BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL
FINAL REPORT VISIT 2 OF 3: 12th MARCH 2024

Appendix 1 – Recommendations and Action Plan

Recommendation number	Detail	Priority (Low/Medium/High)	Management Response	Responsible Officer	Due Date
4.1 – Ensure actual figures updated in budget monitoring report	<p>I checked to see that there were no significant unexplained variances from budget. I found that all cost centres appeared to be underspent at month 10, but noted that the actual figure for salaries had not been updated since the most recent formal budget monitoring report to F&S Committee on 11/12/23 (which reported results to end October 2023). The Finance Officer noted that the actual salaries figure shown in the budget monitoring report is manually updated.</p> <p>I updated the report for the actual figure and noted an overspend of £26k/6% to the pro-rated budget. The Finance Officer noted that the figures to the end of January included the delayed pay award for 23/24 (paid in December 2023) and a number of contractual increments to staff. The results to end February show that this adverse variance had reduced to £6.5k/1%, and the Finance Officer's expectation was that this expenditure would come in on budget at the year-end.</p> <p>I recommend that the salaries figure is updated in the budget monitoring report each month in order to ensure that any adverse variances can be investigated and any appropriate action taken to resolve them.</p>	L	Noted	RFO	Ongoing
7.1 – Ensure overtime claims in place to support all overtime paid	<p>I checked to see that other payments to employees were reasonable, properly supported and approved by the Council. I found that two staff were paid mileage in the month (both agreed to signed claim form) and two staff were paid overtime. No claim form was on file to support one of the amounts of overtime claimed. The other was supported by a printed timesheet for the period on which details of additional hours worked, and deductions from those hours for salaried hours not worked, was made. The timesheet was not clear: it appeared that the employee had worked two hours of overtime one week and had been one hour short another week (meaning that they had worked one hour more than was due over the period), but that the hour not worked was then deducted from the total of overtime due for the month in relation to events that the employee had attended which were outside of their normal hours. A further deduction was made in relation to hours not worked in the following period, but there was no timesheet on file for that period to support the deduction made.</p> <p>I recommend that all overtime claims are supported by an overtime claim form signed and dated by the employee (to self-certify that the hours worked were correct and for genuine council business) and counter-signed by the line-manager or Clerk (to evidence that the claim has been checked and approved for payment). Where the Clerk incurs overtime, the claim should be signed by a nominated Councillor.</p>	M	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The Town Clerk approves salaries prior to them being processed, so any overtime is checked before payment is made. Consideration will be given to an overtime claim form being introduced in addition to the existing timesheets.</p>	TC/RFO	Immediate

7.2 – Consider amending format of timesheet to allow reconciliation with overtime claims	I further recommend that overtime claim for September 2023 for the employee concerned is checked to ensure that the correct amount has been paid; and that the Council considers amending the timesheets so it is clear which hours worked are part of a running total of hours over or under the hours due (and that this remains below a certain level, or is cleared each pay period), with a separate note of overtime worked, and in which pay period additional balances were paid. This will make it easier to reconcile overtime payments to staff timesheets in order to ensure that the correct amount has been paid.	L	Noted	TC	Immediate
7.3 – Check backpay calculations	<p>I checked to see that salaries agreed with those approved by Council. I checked the salaries paid in September 2023 back to a spreadsheet which showed the SCP, hours and pay due for the year. I noted that 11/16 staff were being paid in accordance with the figures shown, but that 5 staff appeared to be being paid 1SCP below the amount due. The Finance Officer noted that this had been identified and corrected in the November 2023 payroll. I was not able to fully agree the backpay calculations. The Town Clerk and Finance Officer are reviewing the figures to see if any amendments are needed.</p> <p>I recommend that the calculation is checked in order to confirm that the correct amount of pay has been paid to staff, with any amendments due processed in future months.</p>	M	Noted and investigations will be carried out prior to amendments being made.	TC/RFO	March/April

Insurance Risk Assessment relating to the Town Council's Insurance Cover and Approval of Insurance Premiums for 2024/2025

Background

At the Finance & Staffing Committee meeting held on 15th March 2021, a recommendation was made to full council on 22nd March 2021, which was approved as follows:

It was PROPOSED by Cllr L Hitchings, SECONDED by Cllr Carter and AGREED unanimously that the Town Council:

- Approves the removal of business interruption cover.
- Confirms that there are no other aspects of insurance cover that they wish to amend.
- Approves expenditure authority to enter into a further 3-year long term agreement with Company A until 18th April 2024 at a cost of £13,803.52 for 2021/2022 (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).
- Approves expenditure of up to £1,750 for the awaited additional amount for the Railway Arches cover and the clerk will report the amount back to council (Expenditure Authority: Localism Act 2011 s1-8).

This three-year long-term agreement is now due to expire in April 2024.

Introduction

The Town Council's insurance policy renewal is due in April 2024 and a quotation for a further 3-year long term deal has been requested from our existing provider (Company A).

At the time of preparing the agenda, Company A advised that:

*Authorisation on issuing the renewal terms is currently with our head office.
I shall escalate the matter today so that we can have the response before 18/03/2024.
As soon as I have had the update, I will be back in touch.*

The prices provided in 2021 have therefore been included in this report, below in italics, and will be updated once the quotation has been received.

On a three year agreement:

Loss of Revenue over 24month 88.46 Plus IPT

Additional Expenses over 24 months 49.15 plus IPT

On a one year agreement:

Loss of Revenue over 24month 98.29 Plus IPT

Additional Expenses over 24 months 54.61 plus IPT

*The premium offered by Company A for entering into a further 3-year long term deal (including all applicable taxes) is **£13,749.25** per annum or **£14,636.78** for a 1 year agreement and these documents have been shared with Councillors.*

The Town Council has been with Company A for several years and has built up a good working relationship with them. Due to the limited amount of claims the council has made, or had made against them, there is limited experience of how the company responds to claims, but they have been very efficient on the ones we have had.

Comparative Quotations

The Town Clerk has been in contact with Company B who is a broker who provided quotations for the last renewal period. All the updated information was sent to them and they sought three like-for-like quotations, a meeting was held with them, the RFO, Operations Manager and Town Clerk. The following response has since been received and a reply has been sent to thank them for the amount of time that has been spent on this process:

“As advised at our meeting we will not be able to reduce your current level of premium from Company A.”

Additional Information

In March 2023, Councillors approved the inclusion of the Community Fridge within its insurance policy and agreed the insurance premium for 2023/24 of £14,236.36 including taxes.

When assessing the Council's risks the following insurance cover it should be noted that it was agreed in 2011 that the Council would not insure the following:

- Larksmead palisade fencing
- Fencing at the Lamperd's Field compound
- Park Road play area fencing
- Railway Arches fencing
- Grit Bins
- 2021 – Following discussion and research, the insurance company did not recommend any additional insurance cover for the railway arches.

The revised premium for 2024 is awaited and a small part of this charge will be charged onto the Barnes for a Recreation Ground Trust.

The Insurance budget for 2023/24 has been set at £15,075, which is based on the insurance premium being increased in line with inflation.

Recommendation

The Council is requested to make a **recommendation to full council** to:

1. Confirm that there are no other aspects of insurance cover that they wish to amend.
2. Confirm approval to enter into a further 3-year long term agreement until 18th April 2027 with Company A at a cost of **£TBC** for 2024/2025, subject to any changes decided above and any revised insurance values.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
12th March 2024

Review of Asset Register

The full asset register is too large to distribute, however a summary sheet will be sent to Councillors.

The full asset register has a breakdown for each location and can be obtained from the Town Clerk.

Various members of staff updated the files in 2022 and the Mace Bearer was also involved by carrying out a full audit of the Town's Silver.

Councillors will recall that this resulted in restating the asset figure on the AGAR.

The asset register is now updated regularly when items are purchased or disposed of.

This agenda item must be a recommendation to full council.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
11th March 2024

Review of Direct Debits

Company	Service/Supply	Frequency
Allstar Business Solutions Ltd	Fuel Card	Variable
Card Saver Ltd	Merchant Card Terminal	Monthly
Data Protection Register	Subscription	Annually
Dorset Council	Bin Rental & Waste Collections	Quarterly
Dorset Council	Bin Emptying at Elizabaeth Road Allotments	Quarterly
Dorset Council	Loss of Revenue of Car Parking due to Market	Quarterly
Dorset Council	Rates	10 Monthly
EE Ltd	Grd & Property Mgers & Charge-hand Mobile Phone	Monthly
EVO Payments	Transaction Charges for Card Receipts	Monthly
KCOM / NASSTAR	Web Hosting and Broadband to Woodhouse Gardens	Quarterly
Environment Agency	Water extraction from bore hole	Annually
Fuel Card Services Ltd	Fuel Card	Monthly
Lloyds	Charge Card / Service Charge	Monthly
Glenmore Holdings Ltd	Quartley Management Charge for Glenmore Depot	Quarterly
Information Commission	Info Commission	Yearly
L.A.M.I.T	CCLA Property Fund Management Fee	Quarterly
Prime & Modern Ltd	IT contractor (previously G3)	Monthly
Quadient (was Neopost Ltd)	Franking re-fill	Variable
Sage	Payroll Cover	Annually
Sage	Accounts Cover	Annually
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Corn Exchange	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Park Road	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Woodhouse Garden	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Cemetery Workshop	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Marsh & Ham Toilets	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Cemetery Chapel	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Larksmead Pavilion	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Larksmead Floodlights	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric -Tabernacle Toilet	Monthly
Total Gas & Power	Electric - Glenmore Depot	Monthly
PHS Group	Sanitary Disposal, Needle Disposal, hand dryers,Freshners	Annually
SW Comms	Telephone Lines & Calls	Monthly
Southern Electric	CCTV Electric	Quarterly
SEFE Securing Energy for Europe GmbH (formerly Gazprom)	Gas - Corn Exchange	Monthly
SEFE Securing Energy for Europe GmbH (formerly Gazprom)	Gas- Larksmead	Monthly
SEFE Securing Energy for Europe GmbH (formerly Gazprom)	Gas- Woodhouse Gardens	Monthly
XCS	Photocopier charges	Monthly
water2business	Water Bill - Pavilion/ Cemetery	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Corn Exchange	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Park Road Recreation Ground - Pavillion	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Park Road - Old Public Toilets	Half Yearly
water2business	Water -Toilets Ham & Marsh Car Park	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Woodhouse Garden/ Tabernacle Toilet	Half Yearly
water2business	Water Glenmore Workshop	Half Yearly

To consider the current status of bad debts with the Town Council

The Town Council's Financial Regulations cover the process of managing and considering the writing off of bad debts. Section 9.4 states that:

Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year.

The Town Clerk has checked with the RFO and there are no debts outstanding at this time and no action is required.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
6th March 2024

Free Venue Hire Update

Applications were received for 2023/2024 from the following people/organisations:

The Blandford Group Practice were granted venue hire for 3 times a year in 2022/2023 in the Corn Exchange for their very popular Wellbeing Walk-ins, this was extended to 2023/2024, they have only used 28th July 2023.

Continuing from their previous years success, which is very worthwhile to the local residents, Sarah Rampton from "In Jolly Good Company" was awarded £648 in total of bookings made for Woodhouse Gardens pavilion which has allowed them to have 2 sessions a month for the year. This covers their sessions from 24th April 2024 to 25 March 2024.

Blandford Yuletide Festival were approved Free Hire of the Corn Exchange on Friday 1st December and 1 session on the Saturday for this annual event, which involves the local church, schools, businesses, and residents.

Blandford Health Walks were granted 3 sessions for their meetings in the Council Chamber, they have 1 more session to use.

Hanover Court Residents Association were approved to use 10 sessions for the Community Room to enable them to start their new resident's association. They were advised to have their own public liability insurance and they have used 6 sessions to date.

Artsreach had a remainder left over from their £300 for 2022/2023 and asked if they could use it to bid for some events for the Corn Exchange from October to December but were unsuccessful this time.

Pathways for Victims Voices, Cathy Jacques, applied for use of the Community Room and was approved for 3 sessions and to have their own public liability insurance. Only 1 session has been used to date.

Blandford Opportunity Group asked for 1 session to hold a Teddy Bears picnic at Woodhouse Gardens pavilion and their request was approved.

Sing Together / Blandford Health Champions, asked for use of the Corn Exchange for a singing for wellbeing and tea party event.

Livewell Dorset applied to use Woodhouse Gardens to help deliver health and well-being appointments, because of the ability to divide the pavilion in two, they are able to send 2 people to deal with people privately. They were approved £300 which will allow them to hold 8 days, taking them up to the 4th December 2023.

Nov 2023/2024 The Stour Valley Embroidery Project applied for use of Woodhouse Gardens as they needed somewhere long enough to stretch out the panel they are working on. Six sessions were approved, with the last session finishing on 25th April 2024.

Please note that some of the latter applications, now use the month their application was approved to cover their requests rather than the financial year as approved. This change was approved at F&S on 6th September 2023.

Recommendation

Councillors are asked to note the report and continue their commitment to the free venue hire for applicants who provide so much for the Town.

Rachael Harding
Bookings Receptionist
28th February 2024

To approve the Investment Policy

The Investment Policy has been distributed by email with the agenda and Councillors are asked to review it and consider the following suggestions put forward by the Responsible Financial Officer:

- Second paragraph – consider changing ‘a wide ranging review on a ...12 monthly basis’ to ‘a regular review’.
- Paragraph three states that the capital investment will be reviewed on a monthly basis, which could also be amended to a regular basis.
- Negative interest paragraph – need to remove the reference to 2018/19 and leave it as ‘If the UK enters into a recession....’
- Similarly, under strategy, reference to 2018/19 needs to be removed and the PSDF needs to be added to the end of the first paragraph.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee makes a recommendation to full council to approve the Investment Policy with the suggested amendments.

Linda Scott-Giles
Town Clerk
12th March 2024