

## Finance & Governance Committee

**Present:** Cllrs Cooper-Marsh (Chair), Banks, Chapman, Collins and Goodman

**Absent:** Cllrs Kumar, Hitching, Maslen and Pitt

**In attendance:** Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk

**Minutes** of the meeting of the **Finance & Governance committee** held on **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024** at **7.15pm** in the Priory Centre, Priory Lane, St Neots, PE19 2BH.

### Public Participation

There were two Members of the public present. Both were in attendance to speak on the St Neots

	<b>ACTIONS</b>
<b>118 Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs Kumar, Hitchin, Maslen and Pitt.	Admin
<b>119 Declarations of Interest</b> There were none.	
<b>120 Minutes</b> <b>RESOLVED</b> to approve the minutes of the 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 as a true and accurate record subject to amending that Councillor Cooper-Marsh was not in attendance.	Admin
<b>125 St Neots Folk Festival</b> Members received and considered further information on a grant application for £2,750 which had been deferred by the Grants Sub-committee with a request for further information.	

Representatives for the applicant addressed the Council and spoke to why the 2022 balance sheet sent to support the application made no mention of the grant received from the Town Council.

It was explained that up until 2022 the funding provided by the council was solely for covering priory centre hire. The late treasurer prepared balance sheets. This was a simple document showing income and expenditure in money terms (cash and cheques). When a 2022 submission was made it was asked that the grant be split 50/50 in funding and room hire.

The 2022 balance sheet does not show the room hire voucher in the accounts. This has now been added to the balance sheet. This is why the grant didn't appear in the 2022 accounts.

A Councillor commented that they could see any further elements of the application that raised additional questions.

The RFO stated that a split in grant payment was made in 2023, so this should show in those accounts. It was confirmed this would be the case.

**RESOLVED** to make a grant award of £2,750 to St Neots Folk Club for the 2024 St Neots Folk Festival. That the grant be award 50% in funding and 50% in Priory Centre room hire.

## 126 **Switch Now CIC**

Members received and considered further information on a grant application for which had been deferred by the Grants Sub-committee with a request for further information. Information from the applicant in response to questions raised by Councillors had been provided to the Committee ahead of the meeting.

The applicant was not able to attend the meeting. The Clerk read out a message received from the applicant to the committee, in which they acknowledged that restrictions on information they could share about their financial situation may mean the Council would not be able to make a grant award.

Members spoke in support of Switch Now CIC and the good work that they do for the community. Members did not express concern over the ongoing viability of the project and organisation but felt that if a grant is awarded it should be made clear it is a one off for the pilot project and should not be considered indication that funding would be provided for this as an ongoing project.

**RESOLVED** to make a grant award £1,350 to Switch Now CIC towards delivery of a free weekly IT Clinic to support young adults with learning difficulties / disabilities. The grant award is specifically for the pilot scheme and should not be considered an indication that funding would be provided for the project on an ongoing basis.

## 127 **CAB Funding**

Members received and considered a report and recommendation from the Town Clerk on a funding application made by the rural Cambridgeshire Citizens Advice. The Clerk had recommended that the committee approve a quarter of the grant requested to ensure the face to face service currently delivered continued for the first quarter of 2024/25 and that any further funding is reviewed following clarification on what HDC's funding should provide for St Neots.

A Member commented that the CAB that was originally funded no longer exists in the same form anymore and is focused on a telephone service and covering areas that the central hub wants them to look at. Presently has 30 paid employees and 30 volunteers. When SNTC first started funding there were 30 volunteers in St Neots alone.

HDC agreement used to include a face-to-face requirement in St Neots and if this is the case we shouldn't be paying for it separately. How do we know they are not paid by HDC under the current contract.

Members discussed at length the history of the CAB and concerns over the lack of face-to-face delivery in St Neots. A Member suggested CAB should have provided the agreement.

Proposed and seconded that a grant award of £2,500 to the CAB to provide one day a week face to face delivery for the first quarter of 2024/25 be made and that any further funding for the remainder of the year be reviewed and considered when the new funding agreement between Huntingdonshire District Council and CARC is made available.

**RESOLVED**

**128 Payments**

Members received and considered payments for January 2024.

Members noted the report.

*Cllr Chapman left the meeting at 20:20.*

**129 Unspent Budgeted Expenditure**

Members received and considered unspent budgeted expenditure which was estimated for 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and a request by officers to earmark unspent funds which were either required for planned works or to build up reserves for known costs such as elections.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council approve earmarking unspent funds as at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 from the following budgets;

Cost Centre	Budget Code	Budget Heading
102	4318	Youth Council and Youth Worker
105	4365	Carbon Neutral Budget
230	4119	The Cage / Lock up
210	4128	Street Scene Improvements
240	4346	Armed Forces Day (for 2024 event)
240	4346	Armed Forces Day (for vibrant community funding)
301	4123	Highways Improvements
301	4503	Noticeboards
400	6703	Capital Building Major Repairs
400	4902	Capital Ops ride on mowers and vehicles
400	4911	Capital IT Hardware

**130 Earmarked Reserves**

Members received and noted Earmarked Reserves held at 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

Members queried an amount of £117 remaining in EMR for Loves Farm House. It was explained that this was a remaining balance of funds following the payment and installation of blinds at the community building.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Loves Farm EMR of £117.00 be reallocated to the Community Building Fund.

### 131 **Young Persons Counselling Service**

Members received and considered a report from the Town Clerk on agreeing that the Council would confirm funding of youth counselling through the Young Persons Counselling Service for a further year. The Council have budgeted for the provision in 2024/25.

Members also received and considered a draft service level agreement for 286 hours of youth counselling, the same level as delivered in 2023/24.

**RESOLVED to RECOMMEND** that the Council confirms it will continue funding of counselling for young people with the Young Persons Counselling Service at a cost of £11,000 per year as budgeted for 2024/25. That the Council approve the proposed agreement for provision based on 286 hours.

### 132 **Grant Aid Scheme Review**

Members received and considered proposed amendments to the grant aid scheme and how it could be administered over the next financial year considering challenges around budget levels and the number of large applications that have been coming forward.

Members spoke in favour of the proposed changes, stating that these would hopefully help result in an easier to manage grant aid scheme that provided fair funding opportunities to local groups and organisations.

A query was raised as to what would happen with applications from smaller groups that that might be looking for running costs, such as insurance. This isn't a capital cost but is essential to a community group delivering what is needed. It was agreed this may need further thought or the ability for the Grant Sub-Committee to consider on a case by case basis.

**RESOLVED** that the committee approve the proposed changes to the grant aid scheme in principle and that officers bring forward a revised policy and forms based on the amendments for consideration and approval.

Members discussed underspend in the current years Grant Aid Budget and whether this could be earmarked for spending next year. Officers advised that the funds should be earmarked and would go to the Council's General Reserve. The Council could agree an overspend in next year's budget to reflect the amount.

### 133 **Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted that the date of the next scheduled Finance and Governance Committee meeting would be 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 at 7:15pm.

## COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON