

Town Hall
High Street
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2QS



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ townclerk@lewes-tc.gov.uk
🌐 www.lewes-tc.gov.uk

To: Cllrs Bird; Catlin; Lamb; Dr Maples and Milner

A Meeting of the **Audit & Governance Panel** will be held on **Thursday 5th August 2021**, via Zoom video-link (*please see below*) at **6:00pm** which you are summoned to attend.

***VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE:** This meeting can be joined using computer video and audio using any suitably equipped digital device (*eg* laptop; tablet or smartphone) or, by audio only, using a telephone.

To join this meeting either follow this link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88007879128>

Or telephone 0131 460 1196 or +44 (0)330 088 5830. Use **Meeting ID: 880 0787 9128**

***Please also see the note below regarding password-controlled access to this online meeting**

S Brigden, Town Clerk 30th July 2021

AGENDA

1. ELECTION of CHAIR

To elect a Chairperson for the municipal year 2021/22

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

To receive apologies from members of the committee who are unable to attend.

3. MEMBER'S DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

To note declarations of any personal or prejudicial interests in matters on this agenda.

4. QUESTION TIME

To consider any questions received regarding items on the agenda for this meeting.

5. MINUTES

To agree Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2020.

(attached page 3)

6. BUSINESS of the MEETING

- Routine financial oversight – 1st qtr 2021/22

(documents appended for Panel Members)

For further information about items on this agenda please contact the Town Clerk BYE-MAIL at the above address

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE – Covid-19 emergency arrangements:

Members of the public have the right, and are welcome, to attend* this meeting – questions regarding items on the agenda may be heard at the start of the meeting with the Chair's consent.

Questions or requests to address the Working Party must be submitted by email to the Town Clerk at least 3 days in advance.

This meeting will be held online via Zoom Pro video link. To join the meeting follow the instructions above.

***Members of the public wishing to join this meeting must request a password by email at least 24 hours before the published start time. Please submit your request to townclerk@lewes-tc.gov.uk**

For guidance on joining online meetings please see the notes overleaf

This agenda and supporting papers can be downloaded from www.lewes-tc.gov.uk

Guidance on attending ‘virtual meetings’



Joining a meeting:

1. Invitations to COUNCILLORS and officers to join a virtual meeting of the Council; a committee, or Working Party will be included in an email accompanying the agenda, and will look similar to this (*examples only*):

Lewes Town Council is inviting you to a meeting of ??????????????????

To join the meeting, use this **link**: zoom.us/j/nnnnnnnnnnnn

Meeting ID: 123 4567 8910 (*example only*)

Password: 123456 (*example only*)

OR dial by your location

+44 (0)131 460 1196 United Kingdom or +44 (0)330 088 5830 United Kingdom

The link (but not the password) will be also repeated at the head of the Agenda and can be accessed from either. The **password** should not be shared, as **PUBLIC** attendees are asked to request a password by email at least 24hrs before the scheduled start.

2. Using a digital device with camera and microphone (*eg* laptop; tablet, smartphone), access can be gained by following the link. If audio-only is preferred (or problems interfere with video connection), telephone connection can be made using either of the numbers and following the prompts. Meeting ID and Password may be required dependent upon your chosen method.
3. If using computer audio and video a screen will open, similar to this:

Launching...

Please click **Open Zoom Meetings** if you see the system dialog.

If nothing prompts from browser, [click here](#) to launch the meeting, or [download & run Zoom](#).

If you cannot download or run the application, [join from your browser](#).

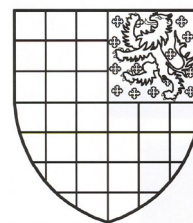
4. If you cannot download the application (or choose not to), or cannot run it, you may join from your internet browser by selecting that option.
5. On first connecting with the meeting you will be admitted to a virtual **Waiting Room**. Please follow any prompts, whether on-screen or audible. Attendees will be admitted once the meeting starts and what you see or hear after entry to the meeting may depend upon the equipment you are using.
6. To begin each meeting, the Chair will introduce some **meeting protocols** and all those attending will have live audio connections but will be asked to ‘mute’ their microphone when not speaking. Those wishing to speak will be asked to indicate by raising their hand or using the ‘hand up’ icon or sending a Chat message and they will be invited to do so by the Chair. The Chair can mute all attendees and selectively unmute individual speakers if there are interruptions or background noise issues.
7. While it is possible to use on-screen options to signify **voting** this will NOT be used. Should a vote be called during any meeting the Chair will ask Members to signify by raising their hand or, if there are any voting members attending by audio only, asking each in turn to voice their vote or abstention.
8. Attendees can send short **‘Chat’ messages** to one another privately and publicly during the meeting.
9. Meetings will be recorded, but records kept only until the Minutes have been subsequently validated.

PLEASE NOTE:

Before connecting, it is good practice to ensure that your equipment is adequately charged; that you will not be interrupted, and that your camera’s field of view or microphone do not capture anything you would prefer is not seen/heard publicly. Functions will be available once you have entered the meeting to alter the background, and your camera and microphone can be muted at will.

Please also ensure that other equipment nearby does not introduce audio ‘feedback’; that background noise is minimal, and that you select appropriate levels of microphone sensitivity and speaker volume on your device.

To learn more, a number of helpful FAQ’s and video tutorials are available at www.zoom.us



MINUTES

of the **Audit & Governance Panel** held on **Wednesday 25th November 2020**, online via Zoom Meetings at **6:00pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs Catlin; Lamb; Milner (*Chairman*).

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

AudPan2020/01 QUESTIONS: There were none.

AudPan2020/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr Maples, who had a conflicting commitment. Cllr Bird had technical difficulties with connection.

AudPan2020/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none.

AudPan2020/04 MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2020 were received and signed as an accurate record.

AudPan2020/05 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

Routine financial monitoring: Members were furnished with detailed information (*copies in minute book*) following the end of the second quarter of the financial year and miscellaneous comparative values *in present status* compared with budget and with the same period in the previous year as, whilst the full effects of Covid-19 continued to develop, these helped with context.

1. *Budget monitoring update* – this showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council's *Sage* accounting system for all transactions processed in the period. There was some discussion on salient points of detail, and TC responded with reference to the identified sources.
2. *Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice:* Due to remote working, TC was unable to show the file of periodic bank reconciliations for review of the scrutiny already conducted. Ordinarily the Chairman would append his signature to verify this, but this could be done in arrears at any point during the year.

Review of assessment protocol for major funding requests: Following the first use of the protocol recommended by the Panel earlier in the year, Council had asked that it be reviewed in light of that experience (Council meeting 8th October 2020). The Panel considered report AP001/2020 (*copy in the Minute Book*) which covered the matter.

3. The Audit Panel had proposed, and Council had adopted, a set of criteria and assessment protocol, along similar lines to that employed by the Grants Panel, by which all applications for 'major funding' will be assessed if falling outside the established miscellaneous grants scheme.
4. The system adopted is described in a Briefing Note, to accompany any agenda for a meeting at which an eligible request is to be considered.
5. The template can be used at any meeting of Council; Committee or Working party, with applicants asked to submit their request in whatever form is appropriate to them, and Members attending the meeting will then apply a score, to allow a moderated aggregate to be evaluated to indicate the overall level of support.
6. It had been recommended that the meeting at which this was conducted should set a minimum threshold score required before a request might be eligible for further consideration (65% was suggested), and the matter then concluded following scoring and discussion.

7. The protocol was used for the first time in October 2020 and the Council did not elect to set a threshold but, acknowledging that there was significant support evident in the value of scores awarded, the issue was decided on a final subjective discussion. This gave rise to a request for a refinement of the protocol by the Audit Panel.
8. It had been suggested by a Councillor that this might be achieved by the introduction of these steps:
 - a) A threshold level of 40%, with automatic rejection if this is not achieved.
 - b) For requests scoring above the threshold, the percentage score would serve to determine the degree of support and an initial amount recommended, *eg.* a request for £5,000 with a score of 60% would result in an automatic proposal that the applicant is awarded £3,000 (always subject to any financial considerations highlighted in accompanying report(s)). The meeting would then vote on this, or amendments may be proposed if individuals wish to propose a higher or lower amount.
 - c) If the Council agreed to fund an applicant who was looking for partial funding for a larger project, members may wish to agree the sum “in principle” only; on the understanding that funding from other sources to meet the total required could be evidenced before funds were released.
9. There followed some discussion on the principles of the moderated scores and the use of a median value of those scoring, as a proxy score on behalf of any Member who did not submit a value. Panellists reviewed their recommendations to emphasize that the first step should always be the deciding of a threshold score, and that they hold to their original recommendation of 65% as a ‘default’ value for most applications, to initiate any further consideration. Failure to reach the threshold should indicate automatic rejection without further debate.
10. The establishment of a base threshold was fundamental to the original proposal, as a benchmark against which to determine the support for further, detailed, consideration. The Panel considered that a potential drawback in linking the amount of any award in direct proportion to the support ‘score’ was that many applications of this nature may be unable to proceed without the full amount requested *eg* a score giving proportional grant as high as 95% could nonetheless represent an unworkable shortfall to the applicant.
11. It was considered that once the threshold level of support had been reached, further discussion should be open and reflect the context of a particular application with the value of any award not directly in proportion to the score, as had been suggested. Any award should ultimately be decided by a vote in the usual way following debate.

AudPan2020/06

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

1 Members considered information on the Council’s financial status and management for the second quarter; and were satisfied with the position in light of prevailing circumstances. It was acknowledged that routine bank reconciliations would be validated by physical signature later in the year.

2 Members recommend that the assessment of major funding requests should follow the protocol originally recommended and described in these Minutes and that the relevant Briefing Note be amended to emphasize key points (*copy appended*).

AudPan2020/07

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 6:55pm

Signed date

Assessment of requests for ‘Major funding’

Background:

1. The system employed when assessing smaller grants (<£2,000) within the established Community Grants Scheme is that the Grants Panel evaluates applications in four ‘rounds’ each year, with members individually awarding scores on perceived merits in five categories; then collectively analyzing aggregate results, and reaching consensus having assessed comparative ‘ranking’ of applications and other factors. Recommendations for awards are made in a report to Council.
2. Requests arise from time to time for financial support in larger sums – “Major funding” - usually related to projects within the community that appear to the applicant body to have some resonance with the aims of a parish council, and these may be brought direct to Council or to a Committee or Working Party according to context.
3. Such requests are usually received individually, and a system of comparative ranking as used by the Grants Panel is not appropriate. Council has agreed a system (*Resolution FC2020/07.2 refers*), devised by the Audit & Governance Panel, giving a simple, structured, assessment that can be understood by both applicant and assessors. This follows the same principle of five equally-weighted elements and similar criteria. These are:
 - i) Closeness of match to the council’s objectives and underlying values*
 - ii) Overall “robustness” of the proposal – *ie* general likelihood of success/sustainability
 - iii) Financial planning exhibited – *ie* adequacy/prudence/appropriateness *etc.*
 - iv) Scope and sustainability of the proposal – *ie* beneficiaries; scale; thoroughness
 - v) A personal (subjective) assessment; based on any special insight or considerations.

Also considered are factors such as the balance or proportion of Council funding being sought, compared with other sources and the applicant’s own funds, and other detail elements of a proposal.

*These are inherent in the establishment of a parish Council and enhanced by published policies in specific areas of activity or aspiration.

Assessment:

4. When a relevant application is received, to be considered at any meeting of Council; Committee or Working party, a report on the agenda or a submission by the applicant will be accompanied by this briefing note and a blank scoresheet for Councillors to complete individually. An example is attached to this note.
5. Councillors should individually record a score for each of the five elements (maximum score 20 for each = total max 100) according to their own judgement. A median average of the scores recorded by those present will be entered on behalf of any absent Member. The resulting total score will be represented as a percentage of the maximum possible. This process is a first-stage to moderate any inherent ‘high’ or ‘low’ scoring tendencies among individuals. The final decision is reached following a discussion – informed by the ‘scoring’ of the application in terms of total score and proportion of the theoretical maximum.
6. Council should set a minimum threshold score required before a request might be eligible for further consideration (65% is recommended in most circumstances). Failure to reach the threshold will result in immediate rejection. If there is sufficient support, represented by a score at or above the threshold, the matter is then concluded following discussion.
7. Following discussion, any award should be agreed by a vote in the normal manner.

FUNDING APPLICATION ASSESSMENT SHEET

Larger sums or requests falling outside the Financial Grants Scheme (*Resolution FC2020/07.2 refers*)



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Ref: *report FCnnnn/20nn*

APPLICANT *name* Requested **£n,nnn**

Councillor _____

Date: **meeting date**

	AREA	COMMENTS	SCORE (Max 20)
1	Closeness of match to the Council's objectives and underlying values		
2	"Robustness" of proposal – general likelihood of success/sustainability		
3	Financial planning – adequacy/prudence/appropriateness		
4	Scope & Sustainability – beneficiaries; scale; thoroughness		
5	Personal (subjective) assessment – any special insight or consideration		
			TOTAL (max 100)

Signature _____