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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit and Governance Panel held online on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 18.00pm**

**Present:** Cllrs M Bird (from 18.20), S Catlin, R Handy, Dr W Maples, M Milner (Chair) and I Makepeace, Dr J Baah (not appointed to the Panel)

**In attendance:** Town Clerk

9. **Apologies:** were noted from Cllr Vernon.
10. **Member's Declarations of Interest:** There were none.
11. **Question Time:** There were none
12. **Minutes:** The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 were agreed as an accurate record. It was noted that there were questions raised about inaccuracies in expenditure at the meeting which have not been included in the minutes and replies were not received.
13. **Chair's announcements:** There were none.
14. **Finance Report:**
  - 14.1 Members sought clarity on the Bus Service Funding and whether the Town Council is clear as to what it is subsidising, recognising that supporting bus services is important. The Town Clerk explained £15,000 is for Compass Bus Services and £8,240 for CTLA, which are 'rolling' agreements. It was agreed that it will be useful to have bus funding more clearly presented in the budget.
  - 14.2 It was **resolved** that:

The Bus Service funding would be formalised as three-year service funding agreements with performance reviews of the service and SFAs being reported to the Transport Committee. The SFAs would have clear service targets and identify what the Town Council requires the funding to be spent on in the future.

- 14.3 It was noted that having the 'miscellaneous total' wasn't helpful, and although these have been explained before, it would be good to have them presented in a clearer format.
- 14.4 Members asked about the Christmas Lights funding. The Town Clerk clarified that the Town Council funded the lights £10,000 per annum for three years, making a total of £30,000. Lewes District Council (LDC) match funded this. The High Street Traders in their presentation to the Town Council for major funding had pledged nearly £9,000 and were hoping to raise a further £8,000. However due to COVID further donations and crowdfunding were not received. The full proposal was scaled back due to limitations with attachments to listed buildings. The infrastructure for the lights on the columns has been put in place and can be used in future years. The actual lights were on a hire agreement, which is normal practice for Christmas Lights as this enables them to be stored as required, maintained, and changed subject to contract. The Town Clerk has been liaising with the High Street Traders Association, along with an officer from LDC to fully

understand the financial implications. It is understood just over £60,000 has been spent over the three-year period. The Town Clerk will continue to work with the officer at LDC and the HSTA to clarify the expenditure. Members agreed that going forward the Town Council must ensure agreements are in place with grantees, and the Council's new robust major funding process will support this, along with measures such as releasing funding on production of invoices.

## **15. Interim Internal Report:**

**15.1** Points were raised about processes that were deemed inadequate. Some councillors noted that some inadequacies were previously raised by councillors. The Town Clerk explained that her approach to Internal Audit is different and that being new in the post it was important to explore areas with the Internal Auditor. This resulted in some existing areas being noted for consideration and other areas which were new, such as online payment systems, had been highlighted for improvements.

## **16. Review Major Funding Procedure:**

**16.1** Members reviewed the procedure following its recent application at Full Council.

**16.2** Members discussed the value of scoring beforehand and being able to score after hearing answers to questions posed to the applicant.

**16.3** Cllr Maples had sent a proposal earlier that day for improving the Major Grants assessment process which was discussed at length. It was agreed that the guide to differentiate scores was implemented. Sustainability should remain as a scoring factor as it is applicable to some applications. It was agreed that 'personal (subjective) assessment' shouldn't be scored. The Policy section of the form should include new criteria regarding supporting inclusivity and diversity, minority, special needs, and protected groups/interests. The entire criteria should then be listed in section 1 of the Assessment Sheet.

**16.4** It was agreed that the Grant Panel should undertake an initial assessment of Major Funding applications with the ability to invite the applicant to present their application and answer questions. The Grant Panel would then make a recommendation to Full Council, who would in turn undertake the scoring assessment. An Extraordinary Grant Panel would be convened to assess Major Funding applications. Applications would need to be received four clear weeks before the Full Council meeting to allow for this process to be completed in a timely manner.

**16.5** It was agreed that for Major Funding applications there should be clear indication whether the project will go ahead without Town Council funding and/or whether it can go ahead if the applicant receives less money than requested from the Town Council. Applicants should be clear about other funding sources, confirming when these are obtained, and encouraged to source other funding.

**16.6** Members agreed that it is important to ascertain robustness and impact for the Major Funding application and for there to be monitoring and evaluation when the project was complete.

**16.7** It was **resolved** that:

The Town Clerk revise the Major Funding procedure for the Audit and Governance Panels future consideration.

**16.8** It was noted that the whole application form needs to be reviewed and this would be undertaken in time for the 2023 to 2024 cycle and ideally a form available on the Town

Council's website.

**16.9** It was **resolved** that:

The Grant Panel be asked to formulate a set of FAQs (Frequently asked questions) for officers to ask grant applicants ahead of Grant Panel meetings.

**17. Bank Reconciliation:**

**17.1** The November and December bank reconciliations were reviewed by the panel and verified by the Chair, to be signed at a later date.

The meeting ended at 19:57

Signed: .....

Date: .....