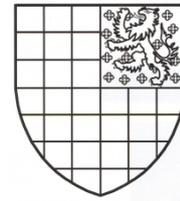


Town Hall
High Street
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ info@lewes-tc.gov.uk
www.lewes-tc.gov.uk



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

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

A Meeting of the **Audit & Governance Panel** will be held on **Wednesday 11th March 2020**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes** at **2:00pm** which you are summoned to attend.

S Brigden, Town Clerk
4th March 2020

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

To consider apologies from members of the panel who are unable to attend.

2. QUESTION TIME

To consider any questions regarding items on the agenda.

3. MEMBER'S DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

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

4. MINUTES

To agree Minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2019.

(attached page 3)

5. BUSINESS OF THE MEETING

- Routine financial oversight – 3rd qtr 2019/20
- Draft of criteria for 'major' grant requests

(documents to follow for Panel Members)

(Report AP001/2019 attached page 5)

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

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE: Members of the public have the right, and are welcome, to attend meetings of the Council – questions may be heard at the start of each meeting with the Chairman's consent, and subject to time available. Questions or requests to address the Council should, whenever possible, be submitted in writing to the Town Clerk at least 24 hours in advance. **PLEASE NOTE:** As space is limited, we would appreciate advanced warning if you plan to attend in a group; perhaps with neighbours, or to bring a party of student observers. We may be able to arrange for the meeting to be held in an alternative room.
General questions can be raised at our offices between 9am-5pm Mons- Thurs; 9am-4pm on Fridays – our staff will be pleased to assist.

Distribution: Cllrs Bird; Catlin; Lamb; Maples; Milner

Copies for information: All councillors; T/hall; LTC website; Lewes Library, Sx. Express, E.Argus

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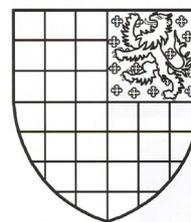
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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the **Audit & Governance Panel** held on **Thursday 17th October 2019**, in the **Yarrow Room, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:00pm**.

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

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

AudPan2019/10 **QUESTIONS:** There were none at this point.

AudPan2019/11 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** There were none.

AudPan2019/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.

AudPan2019/13 **MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting held on 14th August 2019 were received and signed as an accurate record.

AudPan2019/14 **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 2019/20.

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. Apparent variations were related to known events, such as specific payments in respect of works and purchases, or perceived 'overspend' which are attributable to Reserves in the final accounts prepared at year-end. There were no items of concern.

Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice: TC introduced the file of periodic bank reconciliations, for review of the scrutiny already conducted. The Chairman appended his signature to verify this.

Internal and external Auditors reports - TC reported that the External Auditor's signed certificate for the accounts year ended March 2019 had been received with no comments recorded, and this was now published with the other sections of the Annual Governance & Accounting Return as required. The Internal Auditor had conducted the interim audit for year ending March 2020 the previous week and had submitted his report; which found no items of note, all 'control objectives' met, and was complimentary regarding Council systems and operation.

Complaint(s) received: Members considered complaints received from a past-Councillor regarding processing of data and the delay in responses received from the Chairs of both the Personnel and Audit Panels. In both instances, the complainant had made requests which were not unreasonable in themselves, but the ways in which they had been registered with the Council were unorthodox and impractical and had resulted in protracted delay and some confusion. In the matter of a request for personal data contained in a confidential consultant's report to Council, this had been submitted as a file attachment sent direct to the Chair of the Personnel Panel in a format which her personal computer's software had treated as suspicious and would not open. After an admittedly lengthy delay, this had been investigated and the content identified and a redacted copy of the report requested had been prepared and subsequently sent to the complainant, who was presumed to be now satisfied in that regard.

A separate demand for other personal data had been initially sent to the Chair of the Audit Panel, who had explained the reasons that that he was unable to comply

personally and that the request should be redirected. This had not been accepted and the complainant had distributed a complaint to all members of the Panel. TC was not aware of the details of the request but was the only person able to address it. The data that could be requested was that held about an individual personally, or from which they could be identified *eg* by reference or description of a role. Such requests were for the Town Clerk to deal with in the normal course of his duties as the Council's data processor and system administrator. He advised that the originator of a data subject access request had no rights to demand how or by whom the request must be handled.

Members agreed that the Chairman should write to the complainant accordingly, and if his request was to be pursued then TC should be provided with the details.

AudPan2019/15 CONCLUSIONS:

1 Members considered information on the Council's financial status and management and found no items of concern.

2 In accordance with the national audit and governance guidelines: where member oversight is required, the Chairman of the Panel signed to attest the veracity of reconciliation records presented.

3 In the matter of two complaints received, the complainant had made requests which were not unreasonable in themselves, but the ways in which they had been registered with the Council were unorthodox and impractical and had resulted in protracted delay and confusion. One request was believed to be now satisfied and the Chairman would write regarding the other to explain these conclusions and to determine if the request was to be pursued.

AudPan2019/16 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 8:35pm

Signed

.....

date

Agenda Item No: 5)

Report No: AP001/2019

Report Title: Grants request assessment criteria

Report To: Audit Panel

Date: 11th March 2020

Report By: S Brigden, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report: To propose principles for application to any requests for financial assistance from Council outside the scope of the general grants scheme

Recommendation(s):

- 1 That the recommended principles be considered.

Information:

1. Council resolved, at its meeting on 19th December 2019 that:

FC2019/86.1 The Audit Panel is asked to draft a clear set of criteria and assessment process, along similar lines to that employed by the Grants Panel, by which all applications for funding will be assessed if falling outside the established miscellaneous grants scheme. The process shall include provision for any organization receiving a grant over £2000 to be requested to give a report (based upon a standard template) or a short presentation, if appropriate.

2. The system employed by the Grants Panel when assessing smaller grants (<£2,000) within the established Scheme uses a system, approved by Council in December 2003, whereby each panellist evaluates applications on their merits in five categories:
 - i) Closeness of match to Lewes Town Council's grant scheme policy
 - 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.

3. The assessors record a score for each element (max score 20 for each = total max 100) according to their own judgement, and the resulting totals are entered into a spreadsheet which, on behalf of any absent Panellists, applies a median average of the scores recorded by those present and aggregates the individual totals. This process is a first-stage and serves to moderate any inherent 'high' or 'low' scoring tendencies among individual assessors. The final recommendations are achieved through consensus following a Panel discussion – informed by the relative 'ranking' of individual applications within the batch in terms of their total score and proportion of the theoretical maximum.
4. Requests to Council arise from time to time for financial support in larger sums, 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. It is rare that these are received in batches, and so a system of comparative ranking (as described above) would be less relevant than a simple, structured, assessment that can be understood by both applicant and assessors. This could, however, follow the same principle of five equally-weighted elements and criteria ii) to v) above could be considered appropriate with no amendment; whilst criterion i) can be simply modified to assess "*closeness of match to the council's objectives and underlying values**". *These are inherent in the establishment of a parish Council and enhanced by published policies in specific areas of activity.
5. It is suggested that a template could be used at any meeting of Council; Committee or Working party, where applicants are asked to submit their request in whatever form is appropriate to them, as now, and Members attending the meeting then apply a score, with a moderated aggregate arrived at as described above. Council could set a minimum threshold score required before a request might be eligible for further consideration (say, 65%), and the matter then concluded following scoring and discussion, as now.

S Brigden 4th March 2020