Swanley Town Council
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POLICY AND FINANCE

MINUTES
Wednesday 4th May 2022

Present:

Members	Present	Apologies	Reason
Chair: Cllr M Horwood	✓		
Deputy Chair: Cllr V Letchford	✓		
Cllr A Skipper		✓	Personal Circumstances
Cllr J Barnes		✓	Work Commitments
Cllr G Darrington	✓		
Cllr J Domigan	✓		
Cllr C Lee	✓		
Cllr J Tuckfield		✓	Personal Circumstances

Also Present: Cllr L Ball, Cllr C Barnes, Cllr P Darrington, Cllr L Dyball, Cllr M Foster, Cllr J Griffiths, Cllr T Searles

Officers: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Ryan Hayman
Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) – Steve Innes
Park & Open Spaces Manager – George Brooker

Public: None

11533 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Cllr A Skipper, Cllr J Barnes, Cllr J Tuckfield

11534 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING
To approve as correct the Minutes of the Meetings held on Wednesday 16th March 2022.
APPROVED & SIGNED

11535 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
None

11536 TO RECEIVE THE MONTHLY FINANCES

Chair of Policy & Finance noted that the financial year ended with an underspend of £193,804.77 which includes the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) portion of those funds but generally a fantastic financial year by the Council and would like to thank Steve, Ryan and all the Officers for managing the budgets and maximising revenue. This financial year was commenced with restriction measures and then Omicron which caused uncertainty and to end the year with Venues performing well and still restraining expenditure it has been a fantastic year.

Civic Centre: There was a question on what budget code 7600 had been spent on - Legal Fees: Invicta Law fees for work undertaken regarding the status and ownership etc. of Recreation Ground. RFO confirmed that it was an invoice to do with the status of the Recreation Ground where legal advice was required to challenge and review the advice received in 2017 regarding the build-up of the trustee account and the history and the reasons why it is set up the way it is. Currently, there is a lot of dual accounting and we are looking into the reasons why it was set up this way and what our options are going forward if any to change it and make it a simplified process.

It was mentioned that a former Councillor - Cllr Victor Southern did a lot of work on the legal aspect of the Recreation Ground some years ago and may be worth contacting him for assistance regarding the issue. CEO confirmed that he did have his comprehensive report from 2017 which was forwarded onto Invicta Law, but there may be elements that Cllr Southern could assist further with.

It was questioned why the budget figures did match the actual amounts spent or received. CEO advised that the budgets setting was very difficult last year due to COVID-19 so the budgets were conservatively put together and it has worked in our favour on this occasion. Now we are back into more of a normal trading period, we should be more accurate with regards to the budget setting but there will always be variations. RFO confirmed the key thing to measure is the balance between income and expenditure for a certain venue or location and are they maintaining that differential.

Chair of Policy & Finance thanked Kerina and the team for all their efforts in keeping the Alexandra running during a difficult year.

Olympic: It was questioned why 4602 Field Hire has less income than expected: Horses was budgeted at £312 and only received £200. RFO confirmed that since May 2021 the tenant was no longer there and that is the reason there has been no further income.

Swanley Park: Chair of Policy & Finance thanked George and the Parks team for their hard work in making the Park profitable. He mentioned that there was a guide that has been produced for Kent of the top 100 attractions in the whole of Kent and Swanley Park is now mentioned in it as a destination to go which is something we should be incredibly proud of.

It was asked why 4727 Soft Play for February and March are higher than expected because Soft Play is now available at White Oak Leisure Centre, what are we doing that is better than White Oak. Park & Open Spaces Manager confirmed that we are now catering more for toddlers with the back-office area now set up as a separate toddler area and party bookings. The Barnyard is also very competitive on pricing. Easter events also drew people into the Soft Play and more marketing and advertising are making it more aware and is reaching a wider audience. There was a lull in December and January, but you can attribute that to the Festive Season. It was mentioned that the investment that was put into the Soft Play to buy that facility was around £90,000 and we have already made £36,000 in the first year alone which not only demonstrates that it will pay for itself but that it gives an extra amenity for people with young children and a place for parties.

It was asked when 4022 Rent – Candy Floss had started as there was no income in February and March. It was confirmed that she was looking to start on 2nd April and income would show in next month's report.

It was mentioned that the new Pedalos should be named. George said that he would be engaging with our social media followers and local schools to come up with some names for the Pedalos.

It was asked why 7832 – Cess Pit figures were quite high. CEO confirmed that this was on the CIL wish list, the problem is that the costs are quite high so we do need to build up that CIL allowance. We are hoping that CIL will do it as there are savings to be made, however, you still have to pay for the sewage to be put into the processing plant, but there would still be savings made and the environmental savings too without having lorries collect the sewage. It is purely down to when we will have £100,000 of CIL spare. It was mentioned that it was something that could be looked at given the underspend in the budget possibly later this year when we have an idea of how this year is going. The risk is the longer it is left the more the construction costs increase. CEO confirmed that we are in a good position for CIL funds and in October we receive the next tranche which may tip us over what we need.

Bank Reconciliation: Chair of Policy & Finance noted that the CCLA reserve account contained some CIL money which was transferred into there which is being reserved for the Rugby and Skate Park.

Payments Out: It was noted that the bouncy castle repairs cost was very high at £420 and would it not be better off purchasing a new bouncy castle. Parks and Open Spaces Manager confirmed that the plan was to reuse the bouncy castle for this year and look at new options next year. A replacement castle of that size is £2600 and the lead time on that is approximately 10 weeks. It was asked how often a repair was needed to the bouncy castle. He confirmed that each year a PIPA inspection is required to ensure the safety of the bouncy castle. The current bouncy castles are approximately four to five years old and do get general wear and tear repairs and they have paid for themselves. It was noted that in the last financial year the bouncy castle made £23,484 for the Park and in April 2022 the bouncy castle has already made £5,000. It was asked if a suitable storage facility could be found before purchasing new bouncy castles. CEO confirmed that the bouncy castles do get stored inside during the winter and is only during seasonal operation that they are stored outside. It was asked what the warranty is on a new bouncy castle. He confirmed that it is 2 years with purchases from Betterbounce which are a cheaper import. Purchasing from Inflatable World, who have been recommended produce top quality inflatables so their warranty should be longer. The base has been changed from sharp sand to AstroTurf matting due to the sand causing damage to the stitching. The previous CEO had suggested the sharp sand but it was not a successful idea.

RFO noted that there was reference to two transactions regarding payroll, one for the normal payroll and one for the staff 1.75% pay increases which was backdated to April 2021.

Creditors/Debtors: It was noted that the Church of England Primary School has since brought their account up to date. It was asked regarding the KCC Adoption Partnership monies owed to them. RFO confirmed that they had paid three invoices twice. It was mentioned that the NHS Property Services has already been invoiced for April for the top floor of The Oaks and this has already been paid, a sum of £48,000.

- **RESOLVED – accepted reports A/B/C/D/E/F/G/H/I/J**

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 25th May 2022

MEETING CLOSED AT 21:10

SIGNED: **25/05/2022**

Cllr M Horwood
Chair of Policy and Finance