

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
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Minutes of a meeting of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee on Monday, 10 July 2023, at 7.00 p.m. in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal.

Cllr S Coleman	Present	Cllr J Dunlop	Present
Cllr L Edwards	Present	Cllr D Evans	Absent
Cllr M Helme	Apologies	Cllr C Russell (Chair)	Present
Cllr D Rathbone (Vice-Chair)	Present		

In attendance: Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk) and Inge Booth (Democratic Services Assistant), and one Member of the Public, Annie Alison, in relation to Agenda Item No.11(a) (Grant Applications – Drum Nation) (Minute No.AGC5/2023 below).

AGC1/2023 Apologies

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Cllr M Helme.

AGC2/2023 Declarations of Interest

Cllr L Edwards declared an interest in Agenda Item No.11(e) (Grant Applications – Kendal Youth Zone) (Minute No.AGC5/2023 below), by virtue of the fact that she was a member of the Kendal Youth Zone Committee. She left the Chamber during the discussion and voting on that particular grant application.

AGC3/2023 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered for exclusion.

AGC4/2023 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Resolved: To receive the minutes of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee held on 17 April 2023 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

AGC5/2023 Grant Applications

The Town Clerk presented a report, attached to which was a summary of all the grants paid in the last financial year. The current budget allocation was shown in the Budget Monitoring statement attached to agenda. The report further drew attention to the grants criteria which were available on the Council's Website. Members were being asked to consider a number of grants, details of which were provided.

The Town Clerk provided an explanation with regard to the Committee's current budget allocation of £43,000. Attention was drawn, however, to existing commitments of around £20,000 in relation to three-year deals. Members expressed the need moving forward for the Committee to be provided with a table showing a breakdown of the budget, for example, funds for the year, existing commitments and the amount of funding which remained for the

year, although it was recognised that the responsibility for grant funding may in due course be taken on by a different committee. In this context, it was suggested that of importance was the need for that committee to examine the whole aspect of the style of the application form to ensure that clear details were in future sought on what each individual grant was to be spent on.

Resolved: Moving forward, the committee with the responsibility for consideration of grants to be provided at each meeting with a table showing a breakdown of the budget including, for example, details on funds for the year, existing commitments and the amount of funding remaining.

Resolved: Moving forward, the committee with the responsibility for consideration of grants to examine the format of the grant application form to ensure that clear details are sought on what each individual grant is to be spent on.

During consideration of the first grant, the question of how to distribute the entire grants budget fairly over the year was raised. Of initial importance, it was felt, was the need in future for each meeting to be provided with a table summarising all those applications included within the agenda.

Resolved: A table summarising all applications included within the agenda to be provided in future to each meeting of the committee considering applications.

The fact that the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee held four meetings each year was highlighted. To this end, it was proposed that no more than one quarter of the budget of £23,000 should be granted at this particular meeting, i.e. around £6,000. The Town Clerk expressed the opinion that, moving forward, grants applications should be looked at twice yearly, with the process being advertised well in advance. By way of caution, attention was drawn to late applications which had been submitted in previous years and to the fact that not always enough money remained in the budget. It was also suggested that organisations granted funding early in the year should not be precluded from making further applications later on in each year.

Resolved: To consider total funding of £6,000 at this meeting, first reviewing all of the applications prior to allocation a grant figure to each one as felt appropriate.

During consideration of the applications, the Council's grants criteria were questioned around not offering grants in relation to ongoing running costs. It was noted that there were, in fact, a number of organisations which were offered grants on an annual basis, and that it was vital that this was addressed. To this end, Members stressed the importance of reviewing the grants criteria and for Council to adopt an updated policy, in order to maintain clarity and transparency.

Resolved: To review the Council's grants criteria in order for Council to consider and adopt an updated policy.

The Committee next considered whether or not to make grants, as follows:-

- (a) Drum Nation for a contribution of £4,978 towards offering ten free samba drumming gigs to groups and organisation within the Kendal area.

Discussion took place around whether the funding would be used to fund events in Kendal, why Drum Nation could not run the events without a grant and the fact that beaters would need to be purchased in any case. Annie Alison of Drum Nation, being present at the meeting as a member of the public, was asked to address the

Committee. She explained that, whilst most member of the band owned their own equipment, a stock of drums and other essential equipment was kept for the workshops which were run by the organisation. This equipment often became damaged and needed replacing. Members of the group paid a membership subscription which was mostly used for travel. Annie further explained that events were becoming more cost challenging and pointed out that some were not even charged for. She also provided details in relation to funding received from other organisations, including on national lottery funding which was for a specific project in Carlisle. Members acknowledged the work carried out at events by Drum Nation and were, on the whole, of the opinion that a grant should be made.

(b) Kendal Breastfeeding Drop-in Group for a contribution of £5,000 towards securing the future of the group for a whole year. The funding would be spent as follows:-

- £690 Room Rent (£15 per week for 46 weeks)
- £110 Refreshments (tea, coffee, cold drinks, snacks)
- £200 Volunteer training
- £4,000 Professional fee for Breastfeeding Counsellor (c£87 per session for 46 weeks) This fee is significantly below the 'going rate', which would be closer to £200 per session. The Counsellor offers much of her work on a voluntary basis / discounted rate, in order that the group can come close to meeting local need.

Regret was expressed at the fact that this organisation needed to seek assistance in this way, Members noting that this type of support would previously have been provided by the National Health Service. Members acknowledged the need for such a service and the worthwhile work being carried out by the organisation. The fact was, however, raised that the application was in relation to the organisation's ongoing running costs which did not meet the Town Council's grants criteria. In addition, there was some question as to whether to funding was aimed solely at users in the Kendal area. It was suggested, therefore, that the organisation should be advised that Members had expressed support for the work of the organisation and that the group might return with an application for a grant in relation to a specific project, also indicating how Kendal users were being targeted.

Resolved: To make no grant to Kendal Breastfeeding Drop-in Group, however, to advise the organisation that the Committee is supportive for its work and that the group might consider returning with an application in relation to a specific project, also indicating how Kendal users are being targeted.

(c) Kendal Community Theatre for a contribution of £1,500 a year.

The Committee discussed whether the application related to a specific project or to the organisation's ongoing running costs. It was suggested that the funding was in relation to specific events. Whilst it was noted that one of the events had already taken place, it was pointed out that the application for grant funding had been made in March 2023. Attention was drawn to a number of gaps in the application form. Despite this, Members were of the opinion that a grant should be made.

(d) Kendal Photography Club for a contribution of £500 towards buying new IT equipment to replace an aged laptop and projector which no long meets the club's requirements.

The Committee noted that the grant application was for equipment and not for ongoing costs and Members were of the opinion that a grant should be made.

Note - Cllr L Edwards declared an interest in the following grant application by virtue of the fact that she was a member of the Kendal Youth Zone Committee. She left the Chamber during the discussion and voting on the application. In order to avoid Cllr Edwards having to leave the Chamber twice, Members proposed considering both whether to make a grant to the organisation and, if appropriate, to make a decision on the figure to be offered.

(e) Kendal Youth Zone for a contribution of £498.97 towards:-

- Xbox Game Pass 12 months - £70
- Bimawen 17.3 inch Portable Monitor £169
- Xbox Wireless Controller – 349.98
- Xbox Series - £209.99.

Members expressed support for the work of the group and proposed that the full amount be offered to the organisation.

Resolved: To offer a grant of £499 to Kendal Youth Zone.

Cllr L Edwards on returning to the Chamber informed Members that the group was trying to become a registered charity.

(f) South Lakeland Hydrotherapy Trust for a contribution of £3,000 towards enabling the Trust to cover the running costs of the pool.

Members noted that this application was in relation to the running costs of the organisation and raised the fact that rules should be applied consistently. However, the fact that funding was granted on an annual basis to a number of other organisations in Town was raised, for example Brewery Arts and the Citizens' Advice Bureau. South Lakeland Hydrotherapy Trust had been provided with a grant every year and was an institution that was part of the framework of the Town. Members believed that the Town Council's continuing support offered vital leverage for funding contributions by other organisations. To this end, it was felt that a grant should be made.

(g) Outside In for a contribution of £4,800 to support their work with Pupil Premium children in Kendal.

Members were keen to offer support to this organisation and to make a grant.

The Committee having reviewed each of the applications, next considered distribution of the funding of £6,000, and it was subsequently

Resolved: To offer grants to the following organisations as shown:-

- Drum Nation - £1,500.00
- Kendal Community Theatre - £500.00 for one year
- Kendal Photography Club - £500.00
- South Lakeland Hydrotherapy Trust - £1,500.00
- Outside In - £1,500.00

Resolved: To make clear to Kendal Community Theatre that the £500.00 grant is for one year only but that the organisation is welcome to re-apply for a further amount at a later stage.

AGC6/2023 Minute Action Sheet

Members considered a report on actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings.

The need for items on the Minute Action Sheet to be given reference numbers was raised.

AGC37/2022 (2022/23 Budget Monitoring) and AGC47/2022 (Minute Action Sheet) – Discussion took place on the importance of finance training for Members and the need to ensure that they were suitably equipped to carry out their roles as councillors. Attention was drawn to the difficulties in registering for CALC virtual training sessions. In addition, the need for a record to be kept of Members' attendance at training sessions was raised. Suggested was the potential to approach CALC with a view to establishing clearer instructions on how their training programme could be accessed. In addition, the option to consider bespoke financial training for Members of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee was raised. Stressed was the need to set up training in a way that would maximise Member attendance. By way of caution, the need to recognise the existing skill set of Members was pointed out, including the fact that Town Council Members were all volunteers, some of whom worked, and so may not be able to commit to training sessions. It was felt that some form of support should be offered to all Members to ensure that they felt confident in managing their financial responsibilities.

Resolved: To seek some form of support to be offered to all Members to ensure that they feel confident in managing their financial responsibilities.

Resolved: To note the report.

AGC7/2023 2023/24 Budget Monitoring

The Committee considered a report on the Council's budget and expenditure for the first quarter, to the end of June 2023. The Town Clerk explained that the Committee's budget was allocated in its entirety to grants and that nothing had been spent to date in the current financial year.

It was suggested that basic budget training might be provided by the Town Clerk to a small group of Members of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee. The Town Clerk also drew attention to an aspiration to make the Town Council's finance system available for all Member to view electronically and undertook to report on this at the next meeting.

Resolved: Basic budget training to be provided by the Town Clerk to a small group of Members of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee.

Resolved: To bring a report to the next meeting on the potential of making the Town Council's finance system available for all Members to view electronically.

Resolved: To note the report.

AGC8/2023 Budget Planning

The Chair sought an update on progress in relation to the budget process for 2024/25.

Note – At 9.00 p.m., in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders No.3 Meetings Generally x, a meeting shall not exceed a period of 2 hours, the Committee voted to continue the meeting.

The Town Clerk explained that this matter had already been given serious consideration by the Management Committee and pointed out that the Council was about to consider and vote on a change in structure and a regrouping of committees. Following this, work would be required by officers in dividing up budgets between the new committees. Subject to approval of the proposed structure, the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee, in its new format, would consider its budget at its next meeting.

Resolved: Subject to approval by Council of the proposed committee structure, a report on the budget to be brought to the next meeting of the Audit, Grants and Charities Committee in its new format.

Resolved: To note the verbal update.

AGC9/2023 Internal Audit

The Town Clerk presented the report from the Internal Auditor in relation to the audit for the year ended 31 March 2023, which had been considered and accepted by Council at its meeting on 5 June 2023. The Town Clerk explained the timetabling issues in relation to consideration of the document. He drew attention to the Internal Control Objective regarding publication of the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation. He informed the Committee that he had advised External Audit that this would be covered with Internal Audit in an interim review at six months, adding that an interim review should be carried out as a matter of course.

Members welcomed the proposal for a six month interim review which, it was pointed out, was industry standard.

Resolved: To endorse the Town Clerk's proposal for a six month interim review.

Resolved: To note the Internal Auditors' Report 2022/23.

AGC10/2023 Financial Regulations and Governance Arrangements Next Steps

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Financial Regulations had been adopted by Council on 5 June 2023. Processes and policies relation to those regulations were now in the process of being developed by officers.

Resolved: To note the verbal update.

The meeting closed at 9.04 p.m.