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13 June 2024

To: All Members of the Finance and Administration Committee: Councillors S Abbott, H Belcher, N Brakspear, J Brook, A Brown, T Ellis, R Hopkinson, A Jones and G Ward.

All other Members of the Council for information.

Dear Councillor

The next meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee will be held on Wednesday 19 June 2024 in the Town Hall at 7.00pm.

Yours sincerely



David J Martin  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Press and Public – To observe the meeting online or take part in Agenda Item 2 - Public Question Time and Petitions, please click [here](#) or email [dmartin@corsham.gov.uk](mailto:dmartin@corsham.gov.uk) for instructions.

## AGENDA

1. Apologies.
2. Public Question Time and Petitions.
3. Declarations of Interest.

To receive any Declaration(s) of Interest under Corsham Town Council's Code of Conduct issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee Meeting held on 17 April 2024 – *for information only*.
5. Grant Applications (Second Round) – The grants scheme for 2024/25 is being publicised and two grant applications have been received for consideration at this meeting. The balances of the grants budgets for 2024/25 are as follows: Grants General/Section 137

(budget heading 102/1260 and 102/1262) £7,505.67; Methuen Hall (budget heading 102/1261) £34,600; Arts Centre (budget heading 102/1265) £2,000; Peacock Arts Trail (budget heading 102/1267) £750; Corsham Town Bowls Club (budget heading 102/1268) £0 and Gastard Village Hall (budget heading 102/1269) £0. There are earmarked reserves as follows: Grant Reserve (Peacock Arts Trail) £750 (budget heading EMR 347) and Grant Tourism/CADT £867 (budget heading EMR 361). There is a separate earmarked reserve for Twinning (budget heading EMR 363), which can be used as a grant alongside the twinning budget of £500 in 2024/25 (Community Services Committee budget heading 301/3101 Twinning Costs).

There is a limit to how much the Council can spend where it has no specific power. This is known as Section 137 expenditure and must be recorded separately in the Town Council's accounts. The limit for 2024/25 is £10.81 per registered elector, which equates to just under £110,000. The Council is highly unlikely to reach this figure in any given year and, overall, spent £5,771 (subject to year-end work and audit) on Section 137 expenditure in 2023/24. Where grant applications are for activities funded through Section 137, they are identified below (none for this meeting). The Community Services Committee has a Health and Wellbeing Grants Budget of £7,500 and Health and Wellbeing earmarked reserve of £21,451 (budget heading EMR 346), part of which are also classed as Section 137 expenditure. From 2024/25 it holds the Corsham Youth Zone budget of £9,000.

Details of the grant applications are as follows:

<b>Awarded 2023/24</b>	<b>Requested 2024/25</b>	<b>Applicant &amp; Purpose</b>
<b>General Grants</b>		
£0	£500	Company for Christmas – Towards meals and gifts for local residents who don't see friends or family on Christmas Day.
£0	£750*	Corsham Twinning Association – Towards the twinning trip from Jargeau to Corsham, including presentation dinner, sporting event and sightseeing trip.
£0	£750	1 <sup>st</sup> Neston and Box Scout Group – Towards the purchase of new climbing and camping equipment.

### **Section 137**

None for this meeting.

\*This can be funded from earmarked reserves (EMR 363 – Twinning) which has £2,321 available.

– *for consideration and decision.*

6. Detailed Income and Expenditure Accounts (including the Town Hall) – To consider the financial report – *for review.*

7. ICT – Infrastructure Refresh Proposal – Much of the Town Council’s IT infrastructure is at the end of its useful life and beginning to become unreliable. It was supplied in 2017. Our IT provider, Excalibur, has suggested a solution to ensure our IT is fit for purpose for the next five to seven years. This involves replacing the onsite server and cloud server, UPS solution (Uninterruptible Power Supply), switches and backup, along with the software. Laptops and PC’s are usually replaced as and when needed with typically one or two being replaced annually from within existing budgets.

Excalibur have quoted just under £12,000+VAT for the new equipment, licences and installation (A detailed specification is available on request). It is recommended that the Town Council’s IT infrastructure be refreshed during the current financial year, to be funded from General Reserves. It is also recommended that an earmarked reserve be established in future years for IT equipment replacement – *for consideration*.

8. Review of Financial Regulations – The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has recently published an updated Model Financial Regulations template. The previous template was produced in 2019 and Regulations adopted by the Town Council in January 2020. The Chief Executive/RFO and Head of Finance and Administration have adapted the new Model template to suit the Town Council’s needs (*attached*). It is recommended that the updated Financial Regulations be presented to Full Council for approval – *for consideration*.
9. Review of Banking Arrangements – One of the Corsham Climate Action Plan actions is to divest investments in Fossil Fuels by moving away from the poorer performing banks. Environmental considerations are also set out in our Investment Strategy and Policy adopted in March 2024. Officers have been exploring suitable alternatives to Santander and Lloyds banks which do not score particularly well regarding fossil fuel investments. Santander is the worst of the two. CCLA Investment Management, where the majority of the Town Council’s money is held, has a good track record for ethical investment.

Hundreds of local councils are now using Unity Trust Bank (<https://www.unity.co.uk/>) which scores well on the Green Bank website (<https://bank.green/>). The bank has good security, liquidity and yield. It is therefore recommended that the Town Council sets up an account with Unity Trust Bank and closes its Santander account during 2024/25. Once an account with Unity Trust Bank is up and running, it is recommended that Officers explore changing the current account from Lloyds Bank to Unity Trust bank. This will be more complex due to the number of transactions, suppliers and signatories etc – *for consideration*.

10. Draft Neurodiversity Policy – As part of the Town Council’s commitment to providing an inclusive working environment and our strategic plan priority of community wellbeing, the *attached* neurodiversity policy has been drafted – *for consideration and approval*.