

Committee, Group or Sub Group

FINANCE & STRATEGY GROUP

Meeting Date & Venue

2.30pm Monday 26 th October 2020, Virtual ZOOM Meeting

Report Author

Deborah Jenkins – Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer
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Report

Present: Parish Councillors Paddy Riordan (PR), Colin Bowden (CB), Joan Buller (JB), Sam Lain-Rose (SL-R), Simon McNeill (SM) John Perry (JP). Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer Deborah Jenkins (DJ), Acting Clerk Mick Westwood (MW).

1. **Apologies:** Councillor Sue Forward.
2. **Dispensations:** There were none.
3. **Minutes of last meeting (29/07/2020):** it was NOTED that they had previously been issued to Full Council and published on the PC website.
4. **Draft Budget 2021-2022** – Review of initial draft: Councillors reviewed the first draft of the budget as presented by the Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer. It was AGREED to include in the next draft a sum of £2,500 for an ongoing review of the Neighbourhood Plan and to reduce the figure included for the opening of The Parade toilet by the same amount. Councillors requested that the sum of £20,000 for the Surrenden Field Project towards outdoor gym equipment, refurbishment of the pavilion, extension of the footpath, to be partly funded from CIL/S106 monies, be moved to a separate budget line leaving the Surrenden Field Maintenance budget line at £5,000. Councillors were pleased to see that overall, there would be no rise in the precept. It was AGREED that this should remain the Parish Council's target.

ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:

5. **Jubilee Playing Field** – Update on engagement with interested parties about agreeing and formalising the future Management and Maintenance of Jubilee Field: MW advised that he had been in contact with Warners Solicitors who suggested the existing maintenance agreement could be refreshed for approximately one hour of time. To date £364 of the agreed £500 had been spent. MW believed the cost of the work would exceed the approved expenditure. MW wished to seek the solicitor's reassurance that the refreshed agreement would recognise the interests of all the parties involved. PR reported that he is struggling to get help on the committee and that many of the trustees had moved away from the village. MW stated that the trustees would be party to the agreement. PR requested the item to be added to the next Full Council agenda as he is keen to conclude the agreement. This was AGREED.

Councillor Simon McNeill left the meeting at this point.

6. **Youth Leader Project** – On receipt of the signed Maintenance Agreement from Youth Club trustees, the formal Agreement to support the youth leader role to be discussed – it was NOTED that the Youth Club had continued receiving financial support from the Parish Council despite the Club being closed throughout Covid-19. It was AGREED that PR would converse with Youth Club trustees to request a copy of their income and expenditure for the current year to enable Councillors to make a decision on the support given for the next financial year.

OTHER BUSINESS

7. **Review of SPC's Standing Orders** – last approved in September 2018. For recommendation and Approval by Full Council: – It was AGREED, by majority vote, to recommend acceptance of the Standing Orders, without amendment, to Full Council.

8. **Engaging the public in budget consultations** – whether or not to use the Village Update, or other platforms, as a means of reaching the public. For recommendation: PR reported that Councillor Castro had offered his expertise in setting up Survey Monkey if required. SL-R suggested Microsoft Forms, used by KCC, as a safer medium of on-line surveys. Councillors AGREED that due to timing a formal consultation would not take place this year but would be reviewed for next year.
9. **CIL** – Schedule of funds received for the period 1st April 2020 – 30th September 2020. DJ confirmed that £9,133.67 had been received in relation to Fishers Farm on 17th April 2020. Councillors NOTED that these funds had been allocated towards the Surrenden Field Project as discussed under the Budget item
10. **Quotation for Recommendation to Full Council** - Annual Tree Inspection: cost of survey. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that GRS Arboricultural Consultant carry out a walk over condition survey of all trees on land owned by the Parish Council at a cost of £300.00
11. **Staplehurst Village Centre** – Parish Office rental charges: It was NOTED that the trustees of Staplehurst Community Centre had reduced the rental of the parish offices by half from April to August during the lockdown period. PR reported that he had asked for an extension of the reduction going forward but this had been rejected by the Community Centre trustees.
12. **Next Quarter Contract Reviews & Payments to be made** - A schedule of forthcoming contracts and subscriptions for renewal had been circulated to all Councillors. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council the renewal of the annual contracts with Countrystyle Group re waste collection £702.00 p.a., Staplehurst Community Centre re lease of parish offices £4,200 p.a., RBL re Poppy Appeal Donation £100.00, Playplace Ltd re summer play scheme £2,000.00, Staplehurst PCC re donation towards Churchyard maintenance £7,583.00 p.a., Staplehurst Community Centre re Meeting Hall hire £957.00 p.a., Paxman Services Ltd re Bell Lane Toilet unlocking £957.00 p.a., Cleaning/opening £5998.00 p.a. and sundries £444.00 p.a. and annual subscriptions to the National Allotment Society £55.00, Kent Pond & Tree Warden £50.00 and Transport Accessibility Group £20.00.
The Deputy Clerk & Finance Officer had been given an invoice totalling £18 paid by a resident member of NPRG for technical support to download Zoom for NPRG meetings. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that this expenditure be reimbursed to the resident.
13. **Date of Next Meeting** –2nd December 2020. Time and venue TBA.

