

**The minutes of the Finance and Staffing Committee on
Tuesday 16th June 2020 at 7.30pm in the Parish Council Virtual Meeting Room.**

Present

Cllr Ronson
Cllr Wyatt
Cllr Judge
Cllr Duffield (acting Chairman)
Cllr Watton

In attendance

Clerk E Barry and R Bennett (recording) members of
public: 0

Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Tubb. Cllr Duffield agreed to the chair the meeting and an election for a new chairman and vice chairman would take place at the next meeting.

20.53 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

20.54 Election of Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman MOTION:

To agree a chairman for the coming year

MOTION: To agree a vice chairman for the coming year – item to be deferred to the next meeting PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Ronson and AGREED.

20.55 Minutes –

To approve the minutes of the last meeting PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Judge and AGREED.

20.56 Public Participation

There were none.

20.57 Committee Terms of reference

The terms of reference (ToR) had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Clerk referenced the only change that had been made was the addition to the finance regulations which allowed the committee to make decisions on spend.

The committee discussed the number of members as the ToR stated that there were to be seven, but it had always been six in the past. It was agreed that the ToR would be updated to six members, with quorate being three.

MOTION: To agree Committee terms of reference PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Ronson and AGREED.

20.58 Financial Situation Reports

i. Reconciliations –

Cllr Watton had performed the reconciliation and all balanced.

ii. Month-end reports and budget status May 2020

The income and expenditure report to end May had been provided and there were no areas of concern.

The Clerk had also provided an additional monthly balance sheet that had been

suggested to provide. The sheet showed the current account and tracker account, but because the accounts did not close month on month it did not provide all the information and it was felt that the information could be misleading. The Clerk agreed to that in future, she would not include this report.

iii. Community Centre

- Contract sum forecast – It was highlighted that the current overspend for the contract fee was £2382 and that amount included the use of the contingency. It was noted that this amount would flex as the project progressed.
- Income/Expenditure – Cllr Duffield asked the Clerk whether the new unitary authority were now providing grant and S106 payments on time. The Clerk highlighted that after the initial teething problems, draw down from New Homes Bonus funds were working ok.
- Cash flow/schedule of payments – Nothing new to report
- review of invoices
There were three invoices to be paid:
 - Edgar Taylor contract fee for £123,399.75 (net) – to be signed off and approved at by the Parish Council.
 - Dawn Lodge £2264 (net) – had been approved by Cllr Read and Cllr Tubb and to be signed off at Parish Council
 - Hayward Smart £3000 (net) – had been signed off by Cllr Tubb, Cllr Read and the Clerk. This would also go to Parish Council for approval.

MOTION: to recommend the payment of Community Centre Invoices to Parish Council PROPOSED by Cllr Ronson, SECONDED by Cllr Wyatt and AGREED.

iv. Payments to be agreed

It was highlighted that as only a proforma invoice had been received for the installation of the tennis club hut, VAT could not be recovered at this stage. The Clerk agreed to enter onto the system minus VAT and claim once the full invoice had been received. The Clerk stated that there had been a commitment to pay 10% upfront which would be taken from cash flow until the S106 money received. There was a 30 day term to pay the outstanding, once the work had been completed. Delivery of the hut would take place on 20 July and expected to take six weeks to install.

MOTION: to approve payment of invoices PROPOSED by Cllr Judge, SECONDED by Cllr Wyatt and AGREED.

v. Asset Register

The Clerk highlighted an addition to the asset register as the pump for the allotments water tank, which was estimated at a value of £300. It was also noted that a number of assets from the Anthony Hall were added some time ago but were not formatted in to add the additional cost, this had now been rectified.

MOTION: to approve updates to Asset register PROPOSED by Cllr Ronson, SECONDED by Cllr Watton and AGREED.

20.59 AUDIT & Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

i. Submission deadline for AGAR and supporting documents

The Covid-19 pandemic had meant the external audit had been carried out differently and a one month extension given; meaning the deadline was now Friday 31 July 2020.

ii. Process for signing and submission of AGAR

It was recommended that sign off was to be carried out at the parish council meeting on 15 July, but would come to Finance and Staffing committee first. The documents still required a wet signature by the Clerk and the Chairman of the Parish Council. The process for this would be determined.

MOTION: to make recommendation to Parish Council for the signing and submission of the AGAR PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Ronson and AGREED.

iii. Exercise of public rights

It was suggested that the date of publication of the notice would be Thursday 23 July and the 30 day period (to exclude weekends and bank holidays) for the exercise of public rights to be set as Friday 24 July ending Friday 4 September. The Clerk would look into how the public could view under the current regulations.

MOTION: to make recommendation to Parish Council for the setting of the period for the exercise of public rights

(Note: under new regulations there is no requirement this year for a common period for the exercise of public rights, the only requirement being that the 30-working day period should start on or before the first working day of September, i.e. the 1 September 2020). The dates were agreed as above PROPOSED by Cllr Ronson, SECONDED by Cllr Watton and AGREED.

iv. Internal Audit report – review and recommendation

The Clerk updated that there were no new recommendations added since the internal audit and the focus of the final audit had been on the community centre and the auditor was satisfied with all the evidence provided. The Clerk highlighted an issue that had been raised at the interim audit with reference to registered burials, this had been looked into and evidence provided to resolve, however the recommendation would still stay in the final report. The report would go to the Parish Council meeting for sign off.

20.60 Temporary Funding gap for Community Centre

A spreadsheet which contained the potential funding shortfall had been circulated to the committee and the following income highlighted:

S106 & NHB money secured £1,727,977
Income from precept secured and available £80,000
Total £1,807,977

The total predicted expenditure, to include items outside the contract and a £30k contingency was currently at £2,136,742.50. It was highlighted that if the £305k S106 money from land south of Aylesbury Road did not come in on time, this would be a temporary funding shortfall of £328,765.50.

The Funding Working Party of the Community Centre Committee had met on 4 June and had discussed various scenarios to meet the current funding gap of the community centre as follows:

- Use the S106 money from the land off Brook Street which was already available £113,636
- In addition use S106 money from Stratford Close £122,611, but this would require a deed of variation at a cost to the parish council.

The clerk updated that they were in discussion with planning officers at Buckinghamshire Council who were in negotiation with the developer at Aylesbury Road to agree a way forward.

Another option would be for the Parish Council to apply for a Public Works Loan (PWL). The funding group had discussed the PWL and recommended that the parish council seek approval from the Secretary of State to apply for the loan so that the money was available should it be required. It was stated that the Parish Council could apply and be approved for the loan, but would only draw down from it if required. Cllr Watton had shared a spreadsheet which modelled a number of scenarios of paying back the loan dependent on the amount borrowed and using the current day interest rates.

The committee discussed the options and how the PWL would work in practice and agreed to recommend to the Parish Council that they switch the S106 money and to also seek approval from the Secretary of State to apply for a PWL to the amount of £150k.

MOTION: To make recommendation to Parish Council as above PROPOSED by Cllr Watton, SECONDED by Cllr Ronson and AGREED.

20.61 Staffing Sub Committee

i. MOTION: To note the draft minutes of the staffing sub committee held on 4 June PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Watton and AGREED.

ii. Recruitment process

The Clerk updated the committee with the recommendation of the staffing sub committee for a recruitment agency to be employed to support the recruitment process for an assistant clerk. The company had a large market presence and specialised in the sector and could draw on their database for applicants, but also advertise outside of that if necessary. The company would select down candidates for interview and do the initial screening. The cost of the company would be 17% of the pro rata year's salary.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation of the staffing sub committee to employ the services of a recruitment company for the position of assistant clerk PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Watton and AGREED.

20.62 Staff Matters

The clerk gave the following update from the staffing sub committee:

- The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) had not yet shared

their scale banding, which were normally published in Jan/Feb.

- Recommends that salaries that needed to be reviewed would be, once NALC scale bandings were known and would be backdated to 1 April 2020.
- Recommends that the job title and job description for the administrator be reviewed.
- Recommends that the job description of the assistant clerk be reviewed, in particular the essential criteria including minute taking and governance arrangements.
- The administrator had agreed to do an extra five hours per week in the interim and may consider making permanent after September.

MOTION: To approve the recommendations of the staffing sub committee as above
PROPOSED by Cllr Wyatt, SECONDED by Cllr Ronson and AGREED.

20.63 Date of next meeting

TBC

Thanks were given to Cllr Duffield for chairing the meeting at short notice and to the Clerk and Cllr Watton for their work on the funding gap scenarios.