

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Monday 12th October 2020 at 6.30pm remotely via zoom

PRESENT: Councillors Steve Williamson (Chairman), Andy Long (vice-chairman) and Keith Graham

Also present: Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk

00182 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – Mike Smythe – contact issue

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - None

MINUTES

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14th July 2020 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

00183 RESOLVED to adopt the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 14th July 2020. The Clerk to correct two grammatical errors.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA

The Finance Chairman would send the Clerk a list of any payments that were over £100 for 2019/20 to be added to the website.

The Finance Chairman confirmed with the Clerk that no members of the public had exercised their rights to see the accounts.

Cllr Long wished Members to note that due to the poor condition of the notice boards some items displayed had suffered from the poor weather conditions.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – No public attended

AUDIT REPORT

5.1. To review and consider the actions taken as a result of the Internal Auditor report

The audit report was submitted to Councillors at the last Full Council meeting in September. There were a few amendments which would be circulated to all Members ahead of the next Full Council meeting. The Chairman had no concerns regarding the report.

5.2. To receive and update on the timetable for the external audit

The Clerk confirmed with the Chairman that she was still waiting for a response from the external auditor.

The Chairman requested that the Clerk get one cheque stub signed retrospectively for Orchard Landscapes. Also, an invoice had been located

from PKF Littlejohn from March 2017 relating to an external audit. When time allows the Clerk would make enquiries with PKF regarding their findings from this audit as there was not a record of this audit taking place in the minutes.

RISK REGISTER

The Chairman informed the Committee this information was presented at the last Full Council meeting in September. The Former Locum Clerk had produced the draft Risk Register with minor updates from the Chairman of F&GP Committee. The document would need to be reviewed annually although the Finance and General-Purpose Committee would monitor it more regularly.

A discussion took place between Councillors regarding the individual items on the Register. The following changes/amendments were agreed:

- The Clerk would back up any work in progress on a weekly basis on two memory sticks. One to be held herself and one by the Chairman of F&GP. The Clerk would need to send the pin and the email password to another Councillor.
- The Chairman to change some wording regarding the Precept requirement and to the Direct Cost box.
- It was acknowledged that the Finance & General Purposes Committee also regularly review payments and that should be included within the Risk Register.
- A spelling correction in the RFO box. For noting, reserves would be made available for recruitment and induction of a new Clerk.
- The Chairman would update the box re Council records electronic to include the added security measure of the memory stick.
- The £10m public liability to be included within the Insurance box.
- It was agreed Data Protection needed to be a separate item on a future agenda. The Clerk would investigate the annual cost to the Parish Council of the data protection fee and how the Council could protect themselves.
- Under the notice board box there needed to be a reference to the Asset Register.
- Under the Minutes/Agendas/Notices/Statutory documents box, the Clerk would investigate the legal obligations regarding the publication of additional agenda documentation.

The Chairman would clarify the wording on the website regarding the Legal liability of the Parish Council.

00184 The Finance and General Purposes Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend the Risk Register for adoption at the next Full Council meeting subject the agreed changes being made. The Risk Register would be reviewed at least annually.

GRANT POLICY

7.1. To consider and approve changes to the application process for grants

The Chairman informed the Committee that time constraints had not allowed this item to be ready for consideration. He stated there was a standard policy from SSALC that he would circulate and which would be reviewed at the next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting. He asked Members to note that some of the grants that had been awarded this year might not have been spent due to Covid-19. Other Parish Councils do reserve the right to have the funds paid back if they haven't been spent. A grant monitoring form would be considered in the future. He invited Councillors to forward any proposals regarding the grant process to himself or the Clerk.

8. BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2021/22

8.1. To discuss position paper on approach to 2021/22 budget and recommend to the Full Council

The Chairman stated this was an initial budget discussion. He went through each item listed and invited comments from fellow Councillors. The following was noted:

- Audit fees – The Chairman recommended this figure should remain the same to take into account the external and internal auditors fees and the extra work the internal auditor needed this year. Councillors to note it may not be necessary to have an external audit next year.
- Clerks Admin fee – An historic item which would not be needed in next year's budget.
- Home working – The Clerk to check she has been paid a home allowance.
- Zoom – Councillors would need to review whether this item would be included in next year's budget.
- Clock Maintenance – A reduced payment this year due to Covid-19 had prevented the clock being wound up for six months. An on-going question about any alternative option.
- Dog Waste Collection – The Clerk to investigate the charges for next year from Wealden DC.
- Finger Post refurb – No budget and in recent years funded from CIL.
- Flower Beds – The Chairman recommended no increase and possibly a small reduction.
- Grant for Churchyard Maintenance – The Committee agreed that it may be necessary for the Churches to apply for these grants in the future.
- Grant-Discretionary – Agree to recommend that applicants would receive the payment in April 2021, apart for the defibrillator payments.
- Grant – Mowing at BSG Village Hall- to be reviewed as part of discretionary grants.
- Grant – Village Halls for hiring of hall facilities – An historic arrangement. Councillors would need to consider whether this payment would be listed under a different heading. The Committee agreed that the Chairman would work with the Clerk to draft an email to the two village halls, shared with Cllrs Davies and Velten.

- Insurance – The Chairman recommended a slight a reduction as VAT had previously been included.
- Legal costs – The Chairman recommended this could be combined with Misc. expenses
- Mowing Rushlake Green – This would be the cost next year £2,743.80 as part of the agreed contract.
- Postage – Needed primarily for Councillors without access to the internet.
- Election Expenses – £500 put aside each year. Any funds collected would go to ear marked reserves. This would be necessary again.
- Stationary – Review with the Clerk
- Subscriptions – The Chairman recommended a slight increase.
- Training – To review what would be needed for each committee and Councillor.
- Travel Expense – The Clerk would be able to claim mileage once face-to-face meetings re-commenced.
- Website – Annual cost of £1 for the website domain name.

The Chairman would write to each Committee Chairman to invite them to comment on what budget requirement would be needed.

Cllr Long voiced his concerns regarding the depleting reserves. The Chairman confirmed this would be addressed.

FINANCE 2020/21

9.1. To receive and note monthly bank reconciliations

The Chairman had previously circulated the last 6-month bank reconciliations plus two quarterly reconciliations. The Committee agreed that the Clerk must take responsibility for the bank reconciliations from the end of the October. The Finance Chairman would check all the completed reconciliations.

9.2. To receive and note monthly Budget Monitors

There were no comments on the budget monitors.

9.3. To receive and discuss a report from the Chairman of the Finance and GP Committee and review all future planned budget expenditure for 2020/21 and to make any recommendation to Full Council

The Chairman asked Members to note the Parish Council was using its reserves which would be further depleted if the Clerks hours were increased or overtime worked. The Chairman had five possible suggestions for decreasing costs listed on his report.

The committee agreed to recommend deferring payment of discretionary grants to the next financial year.

The Clerk would investigate what the legal obligations of the Parish Council were regarding items to be paid which were specifically included in the budget and upon which the precept was based. The Parish Council would consider seeking clarification from the Church's on costs occurred this year for maintenance of the churchyards.

The Chairman stated the training budget was unlikely to be fully utilised.

A resolution for this item would be deferred until the next Finance and General Purpose meeting once the Clerk has clarified the above points.

9.4. To note the proposed application for VAT refund from 2019/20

This item was for noting. The Clerk had received a copy of last year's return.

INTERNET BANKING

10.1 Review of payment controls and to make any recommendations to Full Council

The Committee discussed the controls and were satisfied the correct procedures were in place.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA – NONE

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

00185 RESOLVED at 8.30pm to exclude the press, public on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reasons of the confidential staffing nature of the business to be transacted.

PARISH CLERK CONTRACT

13.1. To review and agree various policies and procedures relating to the contract of employment for the Parish Clerk

The Chairman stated the policies and procedures to be agreed were produced by the Former Locum Clerk and were based on standard ACAS models for small companies. The Committee and the Clerk were satisfied with all the documentation.

00186 The Committee **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council the following policies and procedures:

Warble ton Parish Council Disciplinary Procedure

Warbleton Parish Council Grievance Procedure

Warbleton Parish Council Equality & Diversity/Disability Discrimination Policy

Warbleton Parish Council Health & Safety Policy

A discussion took place between the Committee Members and the Clerk regarding the hours in her contract. Various options were discussed. The Committee suggested to the Clerk that the minutes could be less detailed in order to save time. The Clerk agreed with the idea.

The Chairman advised a debate would be needed to discuss the meeting timetable for next year with the aim of reducing the number of meetings taking place and reducing the length of time the meetings. The Clerk would investigate the SSALC model which calculated the hours a Clerk should work according to the number of meetings which take place.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

A date to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9pm.