

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 6th September 2022 at 6.30pm at the Bodle Street Green Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillors Steve Williamson, Keith Graham, Andy Long, Charlie Saunders and Buster Ansell

Also present: Jackie Cottrell – Parish Clerk
1 member of the public

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – None

00561 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – None

ELECTION OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

00562 **RESOLVED** Cllr Williamson as the Chairman of the F&GP Committee

ELECTION OF FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIRMAN

00563 **RESOLVED** Cllr Graham to be Vice-Chairman of the F&GP Committee

MINUTES

To **resolve** that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 12th April 2022 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

00564 **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on the 12th April 2022

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT COVERED ON THE AGENDA

The Chairman of F&GP highlighted to Members that the formulation of a complaints procedure had been brought to the attention of the committee previously but no conclusions had been drawn. It was **AGREED** the item would **NOT** be moved forward.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - None

FINANCE AND BUDGET 2022/23

7.1. To receive and note the monthly bank reconciliation for July and August 2022

The Chairman of F&GP verified the bank reconciliations had been circulated and independently checked by himself. He clarified the Orchard Landscape payment in August for £1,679.21 should have been approved by Full Council before payment. He confirmed It would be added to the Full Council agenda for retrospective approval. The Chairman of F&GP would be clarifying the payment authorisation process to those on the bank mandate. The Clerk was instructed to label each invoice so the authoriser would know when the payment was approved.

Noted.

7.2. To receive the monthly budget monitor for July and August 2022 and discuss expenditure vs budget for 2022/23

The Chairman of F&GP verified the budget monitors had been circulated and independently checked by himself. He notified Members the negotiations for the national pay award were currently under way but were often agreed towards the end of the financial year and then back dated which was not conducive for the budget planning process. Employers had made an offer of £1,925 on all the pay points which equated to 4.0%. The PC had budgeted 2.5%. He advised when the pay offer had been agreed this would have a small impact on the costs for 2022/23.

The risk to the PC of a clerk going on strike was considered. It was AGREED this could be a possibility. It would be at the PC's discretion whether or not the Clerk would be paid during a strike period. It was noted a locum Clerk could be employed in the clerk's absence.

The Chairman of F&GP clarified to Members it was up to the individual PC to decide the pay grade for their Clerk. He advised it would be an item on the next Full Council agenda.

7.3. To note the proposed claim for a VAT refund for 2021/22

The Clerk would be submitting a VAT claim for £1,768.56.

Noted.

7.4. To review and recommend and changes to the insurance cover and consider whether to extend the renewal for 1,3 or 5 years

The Clerk clarified she had obtained 3 quotes from insurance companies recommended by the Clerks' Forum Facebook page. The quotes were for 1 year and 3 years. None of the companies were able to offer 5-year deals. The following points were noted:

- The PC's current insurer was heavily promoted by NALC.
- The current provider's quote remained at a similar price to the previous year.
- Zurich Insurance would not insure the war memorial until identified repairs had been completed.
- A full analysis would be carried out before the next Full Council meeting.

The Clerk was instructed to investigate the effectiveness of BHIB on the Clerks' Facebook Forum and to confirm the excess and clarify the war memorial was covered.

It was AGREED a three-year deal should be looked at favourably. It was noted that this lowered the price discrepancies between the top two companies.

It was AGREED the Chairman of F&GP and the Clerk would focus on the two companies that had provided the cheapest quotes.

7.5. To review current levels of reserves

The Chairman of F&GP clarified there would be an amendment to the level of CIL reserves. The Clerk had clarified that any match funding amounts received by the PC would need to credit the CIL reserves and not General Reserves which had been the case.

Noted.

7.6. To recommend to council that Keith Robertson be appointed as Internal Auditor for 2022/23

The Chairman recommended the F&GP Committee appoint Keith Robertson for another year stating his excellent knowledge of parish councils and the existing good working relationship with Warbleton PC.

00565 RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that Keith Robertson be appointed as the Internal Auditor for 2022/23

7.7. To note and discuss the response from the external auditor to 2021/22 AGAR 3 return

The Chairman of F&GP stated the PC had received a clean audit with no additional comments from the external auditor which had been an excellent result. The Clerk confirmed section 3 of the AGAR had been circulated to Full Council.

7..8. To consider and recommend to Council whether to continue to opt in to the SAAA central auditor appointment

The Chairman of F&GP stated that the 2021/22 reporting year was the last year of the current five-year contract with SAAA. The PC would have the option to appoint their own independent external auditor for the subsequent five-year contract from 2022/23 to 2026/26. The Chairman of F&GP advised that particular course of action was highly unusual and not recommended.

Members noted a decision would be made at Full Council.

BUDGET STRATEGY FOR 2023/24

8.1. To discuss the approach to the 2023/24 budget and make recommendations to Council

The Chairman of F&GP discussed the budget process and the options of how to fund the budget. Councillors were invited to ask questions.

A suggestion was made that each individual committee chairman should consider if the current level of meetings were appropriate as that directly impacted on the Clerk's time and the parish council's costs.

It was AGREED careful consideration would need to be given if there were to be any increase to the precept request in the current economic climate. The PC would need to decide how active they would want to be.

8.2. To agree dates for Grant applications to be received for review – 13th September to 15th November 2022

The F&GP Committee agreed to the above dates. The clerk to write to the previous applicants and to contact the Village Leaf to publicise the application period.

00566 **RESOLVED** the dates for grant applications to be received would be from 13th September to the 15th November 2022

8.3. To note the grant application form for 2022/23

Noted

GOVERNANCE

9.1. To note return to the Pension Regulator

The Chairman of F&GP clarified this had not been completed by the previous Clerk but all documents were now up-to-date.

Noted.

9.2. Data Protection – to receive an update on development of a data protection policy

It was AGREED this item would be deferred.

9.3. To note the CIL Monitoring Return 2021/22

The Clerk clarified the CIL Monitoring Return had been sent back to WDC and published on the PC's website.

URGENT MATTERS AT DISCRETION OF CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

None

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 29th November 2022

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (resolution 12.1)

12.1 To consider whether to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reasons of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

00567 It was **RESOLVED** to remove press and public from the meeting at 19.28pm

STAFF MATTERS (RESOLUTION 13.1)

13.1 To review the remuneration and contracted hours of the Parish Clerk and make, as appropriate, any recommendation to Council

The item was discussed at length but no recommendations were made. It was **AGREED** the item would feature on the next Full Council agenda.

The Clerk re-entered the meeting at 19.50 pm

The meeting closed at 19.50