

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Governance & Finance Committee Meeting

Date: Thursday 21st November 2019 **Time:** 6.30pm

Place: Burghfield village hall committee room

Present: Mr I MacFarlane (Chair) Mr C Greaves

Mrs C Jackson-Doerge

Ms L Morse

Attending: Clerk to the Parish Council

Absent: Mr T Ansell

1.11 **Apologies for Absence**

To report, approve and record apologies for absence (and the reasons) from members of the Parish Council

Resolved by members present to receive the apologies submitted by Mr T Ansell

2.11 **Declaration of any personal or financial interests**

In accordance with the requirements of the process for dealing with member's standards matters, to disclose and declare all personal or financial interests including those of a partner/spouse on any Agenda item (as recorded in the Register of Member's Financial and Other Interests form).

No interests were declared by members present.

3.11 **Applications for Dispensations**

To consider and grant any applications from members who may have a personal/financial interest in a specific matter under consideration.

There were no items upon the agenda that necessitated a member to present a written request for dispensation for a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

4.11 **Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 19 September 2019, having been circulated, were confirmed a correct record and signed by the presiding Chairman.

5.11 **Clerks update**

- i) No items were identified that are not already contained within the main body of the agenda.

6.11 **To deal with any items requiring URGENT attention by the committee**

No matters requiring URGENT attention were raised.

Proposed by Ms L Sharp, seconded by Mr C Greaves and **resolved** unanimously to purchase the wire Christmas tree as per quotation received. Belmont Fabrications are to be instructed to undertake the works as soon as possible.

7.11 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To resolve, pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and the press leave the meeting during consideration of the following:

*Proposed by Mr C Greaves, seconded by Mrs C Jackson-Doerge and **resolved** unanimously to exclude the public and press accordingly.*

8.11 **Staffing**

- i) To consider any issues regarding council's employees

A review is to be undertaken of the caretaking duties required on a daily basis at the village hall. An update is to be provided at the next scheduled meeting.

A new cleaner is to be appointed to the village hall and Sports Pavilion with immediate effect.

- ii) To review the time being spent by council employees in response to enquiries presented to the council by individuals

Members present gave consideration to the amount of time being spent by council staff in response to specific enquiries presented to the council. Members agreed that the remit of the council was to serve and respond to the concerns of the majority of the parish, not any one individual at any time. It was also reiterated that council staff were answerable to the council as whole, corporate body, not any individual councillor or parishioner.

- iii) To determine a schedule for Staff appraisals prior to the financial year end

Members present gave consideration to the approaching end of financial year performance reviews for all council employed staff. The clerk provided an initial verbal update, answering any questions raised in relation to the performance of staff. Members present expressed their thanks for the detailed report and for the clerk's daily management of staff. The clerk is to undertake staff appraisals for the Assistant Parish Clerk and the Village Hall Manager. A report, with any recommendations, will be presented at the next scheduled meeting.

Members present **resolved** unanimously to present the Litter wardens with a Christmas bonus for the value of £75 each.

9.11

Accounts

i) To consider requests for donations under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972

A request was present by Mrs Bland's PTA for consideration to be given to a donation of £50 towards the provision of the parish council logo being placed upon collection boxes in Mrs Bland's Reception. Members present **resolved** unanimously to not forward a donation of £50 for the provision of the logo. A suggestion is to be forwarded for an application to be submitted to the Bland's Trust.

A request was present by Berkshire Vision for a donation of £500 towards the provision of their service within the parish. Members present reviewed the accompanying accounts and **resolved** to forward a donation of £500 accordingly. **Resolved** unanimously by members present to donate £500 as requested.

Members present gave consideration to the plea presented by Sulhamstead and Ufton Cricket Club for a donation of £10,000 for the required improvements and provision of Female changing rooms. Members present **resolved** that due to not donating to capital projects, they would not be donating accordingly. A suggestion is to be presented for the Cricket Club to contact Sulhamstead Parish Council in relation to potential CIL monies available.

ii) To receive the budget comparison figures for the current financial year.

The budget comparison figures for the period 1 April to 31st October 2019 were presented and the figures noted. The current percentage expenditure of 67.9% was based on the current year's budget and excluded those figures that related to the previous year's commitment but had been paid in the current financial year.

iii) To receive the interim audit report 2019/2020

Members present noted the interim audit report, thanking the Clerk/RFO for a successful audit visit. The council continues to operate an effective and robust system for conducting business. All points raised at the end of financial year 2018/2019 have been addressed accordingly, and to the satisfaction of the internal auditor.

Proposed by Mr C Greaves, seconded Ms L Sharp, all resolved to increase the fidelity guarantee to £750,000 at an additional, cost of £237.45 for the remainder of the financial year.

iv) To approve the instruction of DCK Beavers to produce an Investment Strategy

Resolved unanimously to instruct DCK Beavers to prepare an investment strategy. The councils reserve policy it to be incorporated accordingly as part of the overall strategy.

v) To give consideration to the opening of a CCLA fund

Members **resolved** unanimously to open a CCLA fund and invest £100,000 accordingly. Proposed by Ms L Sharp, seconded by Mr C Greaves, **resolved** unanimously to open a CCLA deposit account and invest accordingly.

vi) To consider any specific projects for inclusion within the revenue and capital estimates for financial year 2020/2021

Committee members discussed suggested projects and whether a potential precept increase was required for financial year 2020/2021. The committee chairman provided information on specific funding projects identified for inclusion within the estimates.

Members received a schedule of probable income and expenditure calculations, based on the anticipated outturn for the current year and the committed revenue expenditure for the following year. The figures were based on the revenue consequences of previous capital programs and the administrative and operational requirements necessary to meet the parish council running expenses and objectives.

Members gave consideration to any alterations on the proposed figures and to any policy decisions that would involve additional expenditure. As in previous years, the pay structure for all staff would be reviewed prior to the financial year end.

The following projects were discussed by members present, incorporating any potential projects identified as being viable at full council on 14th November 2019:

- Additional member of staff for 6 months
- Increase in budget for Community Events to £13,000

- Ear Marked Reserve for Standpipes at the Common allotments for £10,000
- Ear Marked Reserve for Green/Environmental initiatives of £10,000

Resolved unanimously the above projects are incorporated within the revenue and capital estimates and Ear Marked Reserves for presentation to the full council in January 2020.

- vii) To approve the revenue and capital estimates for the financial year commencing 1 April 2020

Further to presentation and approval at full council in January, the revenue and capital estimates as presented, are to be implemented as of 1st April 2020.

Proposed by Mr C Greaves, seconded by Ms L Sharp and **resolved** unanimously.

Members present noted the estimates predicted a deficit budget, acknowledging that although the deficit would be funded via general reserves, the councils reserve fund would remain within the recommended 6-month net expenditure, in accordance with the councils reserves policy.

- viii) To recommend the amount of precept to be served upon West Berkshire District Council for 2020/2021

Consideration was given to the amount of precept to be served upon West Berkshire Council. In arriving at the required amount, members were reminded of the need to ensure that the general balances, aside from those earmarked for specific purposes, were maintained at in compliance with current requirements.

Recommended that a precept for the sum of **£275,000**, be served upon West Berkshire Council for the year commencing 1 April 2020.

Proposed by Mr C Greaves, seconded by Mrs C Jackson-Doerge and **resolved** unanimously for the recommendation to be presented to full council in January 2020.

10.11

Governance & Compliance

- i) To undertake a review of the councils Financial Regulations

Members present gave consideration to the amendments required to the councils Financial Regulations following the release of a revised document from NALC (National Association of Local Council's)

Resolved unanimously to present a recommendation to full council for the amendments to be incorporated with immediate effect.

- ii) To undertake a review of the councils Standing Orders in relation to "motions"

Members present gave consideration to the proposed amendments to the councils Standing Orders following the recommendation from the interim audit.

Resolved unanimously to present a recommendation to full council for the amendments to be incorporated with immediate effect.

- iii) To undertake a review of the current committee structure upon the council

Members present gave consideration to the formation of an additional committee upon the council specifically for Community Events. Following the results of the Parish questionnaire highlighting parishioners desire for additional events, members **resolved** unanimously to present a **recommendation** to full council for the formation of a committee specifically for "Community Events". The committee is to meet on an alternating basis with the Communications committee.

11.11

Policies & Templates

- i) To receive an update following a review of policies held by the council for the ensuing municipal year

An updated schedule of policies requiring review during the current municipal year was provided. A review of the policies held is to be incorporated within the relevant agendas for consideration.

- ii) To review the Habitual and Vexatious complainant policy and determine its suitability for implementation

Members reviewed the Habitual and Vexatious complainant policy to determine its suitability for implementation, determining that it would be invoked should the number of requests from any individual be deemed unreasonable as per the requirements set out in the current policy.

12.11

Administration: Burial Ground

- i) To receive an update & consider any administrative issues in the daily operation of the burial ground

Resolved unanimously to not apply an increase to the Burial fees for financial year 2020/21.

- ii) To receive an update in relation to the schedule of maintenance for St. Mary's Churchyard for the current financial year

The schedule maintenance has now reverted to once a month for November.

10.

Matters for future discussion

11.

To receive items for information only - None

Conclusion: The Chairman declared the meeting closed 21.00pm

Chairman: