

## BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Governance & Finance Committee Meeting

**Date:** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020 **Time:** 6.30pm

**Place:** Virtually via Zoom

**Present:** Mr I MacFarlane Mr C Greaves  
Mr T Ansell Miss L Sharp  
Mrs C Jackson-Doerge Mrs J Ansell  
Mr I Morrin

**Attending:** Clerk to the Parish Council 2 members of the public

#### 1.05 **Apologies for Absence**

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

No Apologies for absence were received.

#### 2.05 **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).

Members present did not declare any personal or financial interests

#### 3.05 **Applications for Dispensations**

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

No applications were received prior to the meeting by members present.

#### 4.05 **Clerks update**

The Clerk advised that under Delegated powers, and in liaison with the Chairman of the parish Council, and the Chairman of the Finance Committee, the following decisions had been implemented during the lockdown period:

*Installation of security fencing at the Skate Park, Schedule of payments for April*

The half yearly precept instalment had been received. A CIL payment for period 1 October 2019 to 31 March 2020 of £62,571.04 was received.

#### 5.05 **Accounts**

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

The budget comparison figures for the period 1 April to 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 were presented and the figures noted. The current percentage expenditure of 8% 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.

ii) To receive an update following the Year End Closedown & Audit procedures

Due to the current circumstances relating to Covid-19, and the changes required in working practices, the councils internal audit was undertaken remotely with the final report awaited. Upon receipt of the Financial Statements by DCK, the AGAR is to be completed and presented to the Finance committee alongside the final audit report for their approval.

Due to Covid-19, the government issued changes in legislation in respect of authorities subject to the limited assurance regime. Statutory Instrument 2020/404 removes the requirement for a common period for the exercise of public rights, extending the deadline for the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to be published from 30 September 2020 to 30 November 2020.

#### 6.05 **Governance & compliance**

i) To review the 'Dignity at Work & harassment Policy' and determine its implementation

The Chairman advised that as the item had been raised by a councillor, and specifically related to council employees, the item would be discussed in closed session.

**Resolved** unanimously in accordance with Standing Order 1.e

**Resolved** unanimously that a meeting was to be established to discuss the issue in further detail with Mrs C Jackson-Doerge & Mr I Macfarlane present.

ii) To consider the review of the Standing orders in relation to Councillor Conduct, specifically regarding the scrutiny of officers

Discussions were held as to the incorporation of former rulings in relation to councillor conduct, particularly regarding council officers & employees. Advice is to be sought from the Monitoring Officer at West Berkshire Council, and the SLCC, to ascertain the extent of sanctions that could be applied. Upon clarification, the precise wording is to be circulated for approval and subsequent incorporation. Provision is to be made within the standing orders for the incorporation of the newly formed staffing committee and Virtual meetings.

7.05

#### **Policies & Templates**

- i) To receive and subsequently adopt the 'Protocol for Remote Meetings' policy.

Members present reviewed the policy as presented for "protocol for remote meetings". **Resolved** unanimously to adopt and implement the policy with immediate effect. The document is to be circulated to all councillors.

- ii) To receive and subsequently adopt the 'Remote Meetings Guidelines for the Public' policy

Members present reviewed the policy as presented for 'Remote Meetings Guidelines for the Public'. **Resolved** unanimously to adopt and implement the policy with immediate effect.

8.05

#### **Administration: Burial Ground**

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

Works have commenced at both sites as of 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 with reassurance provided that social distancing measures are to be adhered to.

A request was presented to the Clerk for a review of the Burial Ground Regulations, specifically regarding the plastic cellophane surrounding flowers and its disposal.

#### **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 Ms L Sharp and **resolved** unanimously to exclude the public and press accordingly.*

9.05

#### **Staffing**

- i) To receive an update regarding council employees and their duties during Covid-19

Members noted the Clerk & Assistant Clerk continued to operate the council successfully from home. The workload for both officers had increased considerably, members expressed their gratitude to all staff in adapting to the rapid changes and ensuring the necessary measures were instigated in accordance with government guidelines.

The parish council handyman undertook his duties at a reduced level throughout the lockdown period. As the restrictions have begun to lift, further duties have been incorporated.

The parish council litter wardens have been provided with PPE should they wish to commence their litter picking duties.

- ii) To review the status of the Village Hall and its employees following the outbreak of Covid-19

Members present acknowledged that the village hall may not be in operation until early 2021. It was **resolved** unanimously to support the utilisation of the Government Furlough scheme with immediate effect for the village hall manager.

Members acknowledged their duty of care in ensuring the village hall building remained in good order, with regular checks being undertaken. The role of caretaker is to be extended until mid-July.

- iii) To receive an update in relation to Staff appraisals

Clarification is to be obtained from staff members as to their preferred method of conducting their appraisal. Those opting for virtually will be undertaken as soon as possible.

10.05

**Matters for future discussion** - village hall improvements, feedback from WBC, Staff appraisals, staffing at village hall, Standing Orders, Burial Ground Regulations.

11.05

**To receive items for information only** - None

**Conclusion:** The Chairman declared the meeting closed 19.56pm

**Chairman:**