

Batheaston Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee
at 8pm on Tuesday 28th April 2020
Present: Councillors Catherine Gregory (Chairman),
Matt Tovey, Patrick Vandesteen.

In attendance: Richard Maccabee (Clerk) and Councillor Catherine McCarthy

1. **Apologies for absence.** Councillor Pavlou.
2. **Public Participation.** Councillor McCarthy attended as a member of the public. She made no representation.
3. There were no **declarations of interest** from councillors.
4. **Chairman's Opening Remarks**
 - 4.1. Councillor Gregory welcomed members to this first meeting of the new Committee.
 - 4.2. She reminded the Committee of the context for this Committee, and the need to act in a responsible manner. She had taken this into account in discussing the agenda with the Clerk; there are important subjects to discuss.
 - 4.3. She expressed the wish that the Committee will act in a business-like, constructive and thoughtful way. It will have to be prudent and realistic, as demand may outstrip the ability to deliver.
5. **The Committee approved** a motion from the Chairman to defer items 4 and 9.1, to the end of the agenda.
6. **Status of VAT reclaim**
 - 6.1. The Clerk reported that he has not been able to make progress on this due to other pressing commitments. He was able however to confirm that the figure of £7,500 included in the budget, remains 100% confidence.
7. **Impact of Covid-19 on Finances**
 - 7.1. The arrangements regarding the Council's 4 members of staff were discussed.
 - 7.1.1. The Committee reviewed the decision of Council to continue to pay staff salaries at full rate during the period of lockdown. It was noted that as the Council is directly funded by public funds it cannot furlough staff. The salary bill for 2020/21 is estimated at approximately £27,500.
 - 7.1.2. **The Committee resolved** that the current arrangements are appropriate and that it should not recommend any change to Council.
 - 7.2. The impact on Council Income
 - 7.2.1. The Committee noted that there will be a reduction of approximately £400 / month of income from bookings for the Rhymes Pavilion and the use of the Riverside Toilets. This is within the contingency allowed in the budget.
 - 7.2.2. Cllrs Gregory and Vandesteen undertook to update the budget to take account of known variances.

Cllrs Gregory, Vandesteen
 - 7.2.3. The committee agreed it should produce outline budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Cllr Gregory

- 7.2.4. The Committee considered whether there are opportunities for accessing grants from external bodies to support its activities or the Community. It was noted that Bath and North-East Somerset Council are under severe financial pressure, so unlikely to have funds. Cllr Gregory volunteered to contact the Quartet Community Foundation.

Cllr Gregory

- 7.2.5. The Committee considered whether any expected grants and similar income will be adversely affected by the Covid-19, or if there is a risk of failing to access available funds.
- 7.2.6. The most significant such risk is the income of £18,000 in Section 106 funding due for recreational purposes. The deadline for this is 25th January 2022, and it cannot be assumed that this will be deferred.
- 7.2.7. The Chairman will recommend to Council that an action plan needs to put in place to secure this funding.

Cllr Gregory

7.3. Financial Support for the Community

- 7.3.1. Members discussed ideas for supporting the community, including sponsoring events, during or after lockdown; and offering the Rhymes Pavilion to the community. In respect of the latter a specific idea was to offer the Pavilion to the Primary School to be used as an additional classroom, when it re-starts and needs extra space to maintain a level of social distancing.

Cllr Pavlou

- 7.3.2. Canvass as widely as possible across the community – from charities, volunteer organisations and community initiatives involved with C-19 – that could be worthwhile recipients of financial support by Council.

Clerk / Cllr Gregory

8. Grants to Batheaston Youth club

- 8.1.** The Committee reviewed the status of the grant funding awarded to the Youth Club.

- 8.1.1. It was noted that payments that the Youth Club expected totalling £4,000 had not been made in 2019/20,
- 8.1.2. It was also noted that formal approval of these grants by Council had not been recorded, although there was no evidence that this was not the will of the Council at the time.
- 8.1.3. The Clerk and Chairman will ensure that the Youth Club submits applications for funds for 2019/20, to be supported by a recent set of accounts, which conforms fully with the grant process.
- 8.1.4. They will also invite an application for grant funds for the current year, with appropriate adjustments for the period of closure during the lockdown.

Clerk, Cllr Gregory

- 8.2.** The Clerk and Chairman will review, update, and publish the grant process.

Clerk, Cllr Gregory

9. Internal Audit

9.1. To note that this has been deferred to 23rd June 2020, in line with delays to the External Audit deadlines.

9.2. The Clerk was asked to circulate the results of the audit in 2019 to all Councillors.

Clerk

10. Financial Management Processes

10.1. To review the monthly cycle of financial management and reporting (Clerk, A)

10.2. It was agreed to add Councillors Gregory and Tovey to the signatories for online banking and cheques.

Clerk

11. Supporting Investment Projects

11.1. The Committee reviewed the process, timetable and requirements for accessing funds from Public Works Loans (PWL) to support investment in facilities for the Village.

11.1.1. It was noted that a provision of £5500 was made in the approved budget for this year to fund repayment in a PWL, to support the validation and documentation of the fixed asset register; Communications platform; and the design and preparation for the Green Corridor initiative.

11.1.2. Prepare the PWL application for approval at the next Council meeting.

Cllr Vandestein

11.2. Fixed asset register validation and documentation

11.2.1. Councillor Gregory will work with the Clerk to appoint suitable agents to record and value the assets of the Council

Clerk / Cllr Gregory

11.3. It was noted that Cllr Jeffryes would be presenting a report on the Communications platform to the May meeting of Council.

11.4. "Green corridor"; to support design, legal advice and preparation

11.4.1. The Committee discussed the best way to take this forward, the first step being to actively engage with the village.

11.4.2. There was a consensus that it will need the dedicated focus of a Working Group, which could be new, or could be based on an existing group. One idea is to tap into the "Transition Batheaston" group, which has over 100 members.

11.4.3. Cllr Gregory will raise this as a requirement with the Council.

Cllr Gregory

11.5. Items 10.5 – 10.7 on the agenda were deferred.

12. Future Meetings

12.1. The committee agreed that the annual schedule of full meetings for the Committee will be April, July, October and January. The Clerk was asked to schedule the remaining meetings for this year. Working meetings will be arranged as required.

Clerk

13. Year-End for 2019/20

- 13.1. The meeting noted the Parish Clerk has yet to process outstanding payments for 2019/20 and to prepare the year end statement of accounts for 2019/20. These items were deferred to the next meeting.

Clerk

Meeting closed at 9:44.

Forthcoming Meetings

Parish Council Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 16th June 2020 venue to be confirmed

Parish Council Meetings are open meetings; members of the public are welcome to attend and may speak by invitation.

Signed: -  Parish Clerk

Date 22nd May 2020