

Batheaston Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee at 7:15pm on Monday 29th June 2020

**Present: Councillors Catherine Gregory (Chairman), Alexis Pavlou,
Matt Tovey, Patrick Vandesteen.**

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

- 1. Apologies for absence.** There were no apologies.
- 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. The minutes of the Finance Committee** meeting held on 28th April 2020 were approved.
 - 4.1.** The Clerk agreed that he will endeavour to amend the process to include an action list in future.

Clerk

5. Annual Audit

- 5.1.** Cllr Gregory commented that it had taken a significant amount of effort to clarify financial records over the past year to prepare for the audit.
- 5.2.** The Clerk introduced the Annual Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2019/20, and how it is derived.
 - 5.2.1.** He commented that presentation has not made clear the payment of VAT, spending over £9,000 of which up to £7,500 can be reclaimed. He noted however that this is dependent on submitting the claim to HMRC, which has not been done for the past few years.
 - 5.2.2.** Councillors commented that it will be important to track this, in a visible and meaningful way.
 - 5.2.3.** The overall picture is that the Council spent £18,000 more than it received, largely as a result of investment in the Secret Garden.
 - 5.2.4.** Council approved the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- 5.3.** The Clerk commented that the Audit findings and recommendations were not yet available, but that he expected that it would include a number of recommendations. The Committee agreed that it is imperative that these are attended to.
- 5.4.** The Clerk outlined the current status of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, which will be provided to the July Council meeting.
 - 5.4.1.** The desirability to ensure that all Councillors have access to financial information was discussed.
 - 5.4.2.** The Committee approved the current status of the Return, to be further refined for approval and submission.

5.5. Cllr Gregory introduced a paper proposing changes to the Fixed Asset Register.

5.5.1. She described the background to this; the procedures used previously for valuation of assets, which has relied on insurance values for many larger items. Councillors agreed that this does not aid understanding and transparency.

5.5.2. The Committee thanked her for this work, and approved the recommendations of the paper, to be taken forward over the coming year.

Clerk / Cllr Gregory

6. Financial Management

6.1. The Clerk presented a spreadsheet outlining the transactions undertaken in April and May 2020. Cllr Gregory said that she has checked the invoices for these transactions.

6.2. He said that pending the introduction of the new Finance Management System he has not undertaken a Bank Reconciliation for April and May 2020. He has however checked that transactions.

6.3. The Committee **approved** the transactions.

7. Procedures/Policies

7.1. The Committee approved an updated Fixed Assets Policy.

7.2. Cllr Gregory introduced an item relating to the current Financial Regulations. She indicated that these had not been reviewed since May 2019. She indicated that while there were no significant problems, a thorough review might be appropriate. It was noted that the priority is to ensure that day-to-day processes adhere to the Policy.

7.3. The Committee agreed that the review should be conducted in the October meeting.

Clerk

8. Expenditure - Grants

8.1. Cllr Gregory described the meeting that she and the Clerk had held with representatives of Batheaston Youth Club.

8.2. She explained that there had been some misunderstanding of the application, and that a new application ends to be submitted. This will be submitted in time for the Council meeting in July.

8.3. Cllr Gregory indicated that this grant accounts for approximately one-third of the Council's discretionary spending. She also noted that there is apparently a need for an investment of ca. £40k to be spent on the roof of the Youth Club.

8.4. Options for reducing the costs of running the Youth Club were discussed, including finding ways for it to share facilities with other organisations in the Village.

9. Expenditure - Projects

9.1. The Elmhurst Playground

9.1.1. Cllr Gregory described the situation regarding the Playground. It is in need of at least some refurbishment, and might benefit from a significant revamp. The Council is eligible for £18,000 of funding from Section 106, which is available until January 2022. There is therefore some urgency to determining the approach to be taken.

9.1.2. Cllr Pavlou indicated that he can seek views from the community of what is needed and desired.

Cllr Pavlou

9.1.3. Cllr Gregory will work with the Clerk to seek help in addressing some of the urgent maintenance tasks.

Cllr Gregory / Clerk

9.1.4. It was noted however that responsibility for this project needs to be assigned, and that this will be discussed at Council.

Cllr Vandesteen

9.2. Public Works Loan

9.2.1. Cllr Vandesteen had previously circulated a working document, and described the background to this and the process to submit an application for funding.

9.2.2. This is a two-stage process: applying for the facility to borrow money, and then subsequently drawing down the funding. He indicated that he is focussed on the former, as it is prudent to secure before the funds are needed.

9.2.3. He aims to submit it to Council for approval to commence the process of sharing with ALCA for their initial review.

10. The Bath and North-East Somerset (BANES) Council Briefing re Covid-19

10.1. Cllrs Gregory and Vandesteen had attended a webinar on the impact on the BANES' budget of Covid-19.

10.1.1. The overall picture is that the Council has suffered a £42m "hit", comprising £32m of lost income, and extra spending of £10m.

10.1.2. Currently the Council plans to drawdown of £11.5m from reserves, and has identified £21m of savings. There will be no rent holidays.

10.1.3. The clear implication is that there will be a knock-on impact on Parish Council budgets; being asked to do more for less.

Meeting Closed at 8:59

Forthcoming Meetings

Finance Committee Meeting, 7:30pm on Tuesday 18th August 2020, online.

Parish Council Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 8th September 2020, online.

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

Signed: -



Parish Clerk

Date 14th August 2020