

Batheaston Parish Council

Minutes of Agenda for a public meeting of the Finance Committee at 7:15pm on Tuesday 22nd September 2020

**Present: Councillors Catherine Gregory (Chairman), Andrew Lea,
Alexis Pavlou, Patrick Vandesteen.**

In attendance: Richard Maccabee (Clerk).

1. Public Participation.

Councillor Catherine McCarthy attended the meeting.

2. The Committee **accepted Apologies** from Cllrs Paula Day and Matt Tovey.
3. There were **no declarations of interest** from Councillors.
4. The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 18th August 2020 were not submitted.
 - 4.1. The Clerk apologised and said he would distribute them as soon as possible for informal agreement by members of the Committee. The draft minutes will then be published on the website and presented to the next meeting for approval.

Clerk

- 4.2. The Chairman commented that a number of other supporting papers were not circulated in good time. She proposed therefore that if any member indicated that they had not had time to review papers for a particular item, then that item would be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee or taken to the full Council meeting of 6th October.

5. Staff Management

- 5.1. The Committee noted that the Council approved updated Terms of Reference at its meeting on 8th September which require the Finance Committee to “set and manage staffing structures, staffing levels, job descriptions, person specifications, staff appraisals, salary and term conditions, recruitment, contracts of employment, training, qualifications, health and safety aspects and other conditions of service of all employees”.

6. Community Matters

- 6.1. Cllr Vandesteen set out the conditions under which the Council will make a grant to the Batheaston New Village Hall Trust, following Council decision at its September meeting.
 - 6.1.1. Cllr Pavlou indicated that wishes to see the Business Plan as a condition for any funding from the Council.
 - 6.1.2. Cllr Vandesteen indicated that the pledge was only relating to the completion of the building and not a grant to the operational facility.
 - 6.1.3. **Committee approved** the conditions.
- 6.2. The Committee considered a “Heads of Terms” document from Cllr Vandesteen, for the use and maintenance of the Penthouse Steps Garden by Grow Batheaston to develop a community garden.
 - 6.2.1. Cllr Vandesteen set out the context. It is highly likely that BPC owns the land, but has not formally registered its ownership. This is in hand.

- 6.2.2. The Heads of Terms is intended to create an understanding under all circumstances of uncertainty. However, when Grow Batheaston were asked to comment they stated that they would not do so, not sign any agreement at the current time.
- 6.2.3. Grow Batheaston are not satisfied that the Council do own the land, and are indicating that for that reason they will not consider the Heads of Terms.
- 6.2.4. **The Committee approved** the "Heads of Terms". Cllr Vandesteen will seek to progress this with Grow Batheaston

Cllr Vandesteen

6.3. To receive a report on the development of the Elmhurst Playground (Cllr Lea)

- 6.3.1. The report had not been submitted in time to be considered; Cllr Lea gave a verbal report. He is working with Cllrs May and Squire on this initiative. He indicated that there are three strands of activity:
- 6.3.2. The current equipment is urgent need of repairs, and he hopes engage members of the community to help with this.
- 6.3.3. He hopes to develop the plan for the future development of the site, again with involvement of members of the community.
- 6.3.4. There are Section 106 funds of £18k available for investment in this facility, which need to be spent by January 2022. Ideally this will be supplemented by grants and funding from other sources.
- 6.3.5. Expert advice is that ideally any work should be undertaken in the spring, which requires that orders be placed in January 2021. This is a tight timetable. He was asked to create time plan to ensure the funding is not lost for the October Committee meeting.

Cllr Lea

6.4. Cllr Vandesteen formally withdrew the motion to form a time-limited advisory group to complete the application for a Public Works Loan.

- 6.4.1. He said that a number of people have come forward to help and advice, but they do not wish to form a group.

6.5. Cllr Gregory made an oral report on proposals to register land owned by the Parish Council.

- 6.5.1. There are 6 plots of land understood to be owned by the parish, but none of these are registered with the Land Registry.
- 6.5.2. Deeds are available for the Football field/play area. Deeds are not available for the other 5 plots.
- 6.5.3. Cllr Gregory is working with the Clerk to get the land registered.

Cllr Gregory

7. Matters of Financial Administration for Approval

7.1. Progress on Audit Actions

- 7.1.1. The CLERK made an oral report the status of the audit of 2019/20 Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The Public rights are now closed and

there has been no request to view the accounts. He is awaiting comments from the external auditor.

7.1.2. The CLERK made a report on the status of the Action Plan.

- The Clerk presented the report, noting that a number of tasks had been moved to a later date.
- Replying to a question, he indicated that he is now reasonably confident that the revised deadlines.
- the CLERK was asked to consider how his time will be managed to prevent further slippage and whether other councillors/resources can be pulled into the projects.
- The **Committee approved** the report and asked to receive further updates on progress.

Clerk

7.1.3. The Clerk proposed to contract a further half-day's consultancy from the Internal Auditor

- He explained that the intention is that the Auditor will review progress and plans and advise on changes and further actions to ensure that a successful Audit is achieved for the year. The cost is £300.
- The **Committee approved** the proposal. The Clerk will proceed to book the engagement.

Clerk

7.2. Monthly transactions

7.2.1. **The Committee approved** the monthly transactions of £243.03 for August.

7.2.2. The Bank Reconciliation to August 2020 was **approved**.

7.2.3. The reserves stand as £42,698.72.

7.3. The Committee resolved to instruct the Clerk to set up a standing order to pay staff salaries, and that he provide appropriate measures for it to exercise oversight of the operation of this within Financial Regulations.

Clerk

7.4. To receive a report on the current state of finances against budget (Clerk, A)

7.4.1. The receipt of Community Infrastructure Levy payments £6,973 was noted. This was budgeted, but it was nevertheless positive to note that there had been no delay due to Covid-19.

7.4.2. The Clerk noted that the other principal changes were in the Staff budget. Agreement had been reached in the national pay scales which apply to the 3 staff who report to the Clerk. These are backdated to April.

7.4.3. On the other hand, it is now unlikely that Batheaston Youth Club will be able to open as early as expected, and there will be consequent reduction in its costs. The Clerk will confirm this with representatives of the Youth Club.

Clerk

7.4.4. Cllr Gregory announced that there will be a full review of the budget at the October Committee meeting to the half year (end of September).

Cllr Gregory / Clerk

8. Procedural Items

8.1. Cllr Gregory gave a summary on her findings relating to the Financial Regulations.

8.1.1. These have not been reviewed since June 2019, and the review was suggested by the Auditor.

8.1.2. She indicated that she would circulate a draft in good time for members to review and comment ahead of approval at the next Committee meeting.

8.1.3. She noted that the regulatory requirements are not onerous, and therefore leave scope for making sure that the Council adopts Regulations that will really be implementable.

8.2. The Committee approved a proposal to add Cllrs Day and Lea to the bank approvals.

8.2.1. The Clerk will progress with this.

Clerk

8.2.2. Cllr Pavlou reported that he has had difficulty gaining access to the system. He will redouble his efforts.

Cllr Pavlou

8.3. Cllr Lea had provided a draft Reserves Policy Proposal, but too late for members to consider it.

8.3.1. Members were asked to review and comment by 2nd October, so that it can be presented for approval at the October Committee meeting.

9. Clerk's report

9.1. The Clerk had not been able to circulate a written report and gave a short verbal report.

9.1.1. The committee provisionally approved the renewal of the Council's Insurance Policy.

9.1.2. It was noted that staff time needs to be ring fenced for training. The urgency of submitting the VAT reclaim was also noted.

9.1.3. He undertook to provide a report on the implementation of the new business system soon after the meeting.

Clerk

CLOSED SESSION – ADDRESSING CONFIDENTIAL STAFF MATTERS

10. Staff Matters

10.1. The committee received a report from the Clerk outlining current structures and matters for the Committee's attention.

10.1.1. The Clerk will progress staff matters, and present any proposals for approval at the October meeting of the Committee.

Clerk

10.2. The committee received a report from the Clerk to cover financial administration of staff management incorporating the following motions

10.2.1. The committee considered the pay rise for the 3 junior members of staff with effect from 1st April and the Clerk's Pension contributions. These are respectively contractual and legislative requirements on the Council and were therefore noted.

10.2.2. The impact of this rise will be taken into account in the half year budget review.

10.2.3. It was agreed the Clerk's contract needs to be updated to address the lack of clarity regarding whether it is linked to national scales. The Clerk will circulate a proposal of the changes to Committee members for approval at the October Committee meeting.

10.2.4. The **Committee resolved** to instruct the Clerk to pay the Handyman for the additional hours he has undertaken to water hanging baskets during the summer months, and to instruct the Finance Committee to ensure that this is within the allocated budget

Clerk

The meeting closed at 9:10pm

Forthcoming Meetings

Parish Council Meeting, 7:15pm on Tuesday 6th October 2020

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

Signed: -  Parish Clerk Date 24th September 2020