
Minutes of the Meeting of Southbourne Parish Council's Finance and Policy Committee held 3rd May 2023

Present: Cllrs: P. Thorne (Chair), N. Redman, A. Tait and R. Taylor

In Attendance: S. Hodgson - Clerk and RFO

The meeting opened at 6.30

83. CHAIRS INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

The Chair thanked Committee Members for all their hard work during the last administration and felt that the SPC finances and its procedures were in a much better position. She also said that it was not her intention to stand for Chair when the new appointments were considered at the annual meeting.

84. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllr. Hicks who was attending an official engagement at the Palace on behalf of SPC.

85. MINUTES. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8th March 2023

Members **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the Minutes of the Finance and Policy Meeting held on the 8th March 2023 and they were duly signed by the Chair.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

There were no Declaration of Interests.

87. ADJOURNMENT FOR OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

88. CLERK'S UPDATE

Members **Noted** the Clerks Report.

88.1 Fuel Card. Members **NOTED** the clerk had made arrangements to trial the use of a fuel card to allow the contract/caretaker to purchase fuel for the mower without the need for reimbursement. Any transactions (limited to £100 per month) will be paid by Direct Debit. This will also allow VAT to be reclaimed. At the end of the trial period a charge of £1.50 will be applied monthly. If this process proves effective Members will be asked to formally approve and ratify at the end of the trial period.

89. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE, THE REPORTS FOR THE MONTHS OF MARCH AND APRIL 2023 AS FOLLOWS:

- **TO NOTE VERIFICATION OF BANK RECONCILIATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS CURRENT ACCOUNT AND ACTIVE SAVER ACCOUNTS FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH AND APRIL IN LINE WITH THE COUNCILS FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**
- **TO NOTE THE INCOME & EXPENDITURE FOR THE PERIOD COVERING 1st APRIL 2022 – 30th APRIL 2023**
- **TO NOTE THE BALANCE SHEET, RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS REPORT AND EMR REPORTS**

The reports were **NOTED** and the Chairman signed the balance sheets for March and April as reported and previously circulated.

Members **NOTED** that a Rialtas version update has been installed creating a small issue when closing down April Month end. This has been resolved with support from Rialtas, but prevented certain reports being printed in the usual style. However, alternative reports have been provided with the same information. There are also some changes to the reports which now require an additional signature. This was also **NOTED**.

90. TO RECEIVE AND NOTE THE YEAR END REPORTS INCLUDING

- **TO RECEIVE THE BANK RECONCILIATION TO 31st MARCH 2023 AND TO NOTE INCOME & EXPENDITURE AGAINST BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1st APRIL 2022 - 31st MARCH 2023.**
- **TO NOTE THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

90.1 Year end Reports.

Members reviewed and **NOTED** the reports.

90.2 Income and Expenditure against budget.

Members reviewed the income and expenditure against budget and **NOTED** there were considerable variations on some budgets compared with actual expenditure. Pension and NI/PAYE liabilities variance were particularly significant but this was due to the appointment of additional staff, increases to staff salaries and backdated pension contributions rolled over from the previous year. Supply costs (streetlighting and pavilion) were also affected by the considerable hike in energy costs.

The bottom line figure for overspend of £15,839 was considered manageable. However, with an amount of £50k of reserves being used to prop up this year's budget, Committees would need to be mindful of expenditure and keep a close eye on budgets.

90.3 Statement of Accounts.

Members reviewed the Statement of Accounts and **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council that the Annual Return be duly signed by the Chairman at the next SPC meeting.

91. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022-23 (AGAR SECTION 1) TO CONSIDER THE QUESTIONS AND AGREE COUNCILS RESPONSE TO EACH STATEMENT AND QUESTIONS AND RECOMMEND APPROVAL TO COUNCIL

Members considered the Statement and **AGREED** that they could answer yes to all the questions with the exception to Statement four:

We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations

It was **NOTED** that the External Auditors report for 2021/22 highlighted that the inspection period for electors rights had been issued for 31 days instead of the required 30 days. Whilst this did not restrict electors rights to inspect the accounts and financial information, it was technically outside of the agreed period. Therefore, Members **AGREED** to answer **No** to statement four.

Members further **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council that the Statement be signed by the Chair of the Council and submitted to the external examiner.

92. CONSIDERATION OF THE SOUTHBOURNE PARISH COUNCILS INSURANCE RENEWAL

Members **NOTED** the Clerk's report as previously circulated.

Following discussion Members **AGREED** to accept the Insurance Renewal as proposed and instructed the Clerk to proceed.

Members further **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the costs of £4,223.47 to be funded from the associated budget.

93. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL CONTROL POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES INCLUDING CONSIDERATION AND RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL WHERE REQUIRED OF:

- **STANDING ORDERS**
- **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**
- **ANNUAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR 2023/24**
- **ASSET REGISTER**
- **LONE WORKER POLICY**

93.1 Standing Orders

Members **APPROVED** the Standing Orders as proposed and **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council for adoption.

93.2 Financial Regulations

Members **APPROVED** the Financial Regulations as proposed and **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council for adoption.

93.3 Annual Risk Assessment for 2023/24

Members **APPROVED** the Annual Risk Assessment with the following additional items:

- To add Ill Health Liability in respect of Employers Pension Contributions
- To include PAT testing for the office and pavilion
- Risk Assessment for home working - to be reviewed at annual appraisals.

Members **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** the Risk Assessment to Council with the aforementioned amendments.

93.4 Asset Register

The Chair congratulated officers for the extensive work undertaken to update and review the Asset Register.

The Clerk reported the review had highlighted that historical Asset Registers were not comprehensive or correct. This has resulted in a considerable change to the figures that may trigger a requirement to restate the figures for last year, based on the new workings. However, this was being discussed with the auditor. The Clerk also reported that there were ongoing discussions with the JBC Coordinator, the Westbourne Parish Council Clerk, the auditor and accounts support regarding inclusion/split of JBC assets. This was **NOTED** and the Clerk will update Members with the outcome.

Members asked if the power tools had been included and the Clerk confirmed that the Deputy Clerk was in the process of adding these.

Members **APPROVED** the Asset Register in relation to SPC assets and **NOTED** that there may be a requirement to restate the figures for this year's audit submission.

Members **AGREED** for the Clerk to amend/include as necessary any JBC related assets before submitting to Council.

93.5 Lone worker Policy

Members **APPROVED** the Lone Worker Policy as proposed and **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council for adoption.

94.TO AGREE ANY PENDING PAYMENTS AND TO RATIFY PAYMENTS AS PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED AND TO NOTE RECEIPT OF 1st PRECEPT INSTALMENT FOR 2023/24 OF £118,602.00

94.1 Members **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the pending payments as listed.

94.2 Members **AGREED** to **RATIFY** payments as previously circulated.

94.3 Members **NOTED** receipt of the 1st Precept instalment of £118,602.00.

95. CONSIDERATION OF ANY BUDGETARY REQUESTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES INCLUDING:

- **BUS SHELTERS - GREENSPACE & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE 28th MARCH 2023 - MIN. 96 REFERS**

Members **NOTED** the Clerk's report and quotations as previously circulated.

Members **NOTED** that following an insurance claim for damages to the bus shelter opposite Parham Place on the Main Road, a settlement sum of £2,320.44 had been received. The settlement was based on excess and depreciation.

Following consideration of the quotes supplied for a replacement shelter, Members unanimously **AGREED** to accept quotation one and further **AGREED** to fund the shortfall of £1424.56 from the General Maintenance budget.

96.BRANDING - INCLUDING TO NOTE FEEDBACK FROM SPC MEETING (11th APRIL MIN. 207 REFERS) ON THE CONCEPTUAL DESIGNS FOLLOWING THE SITE VISIT ON THE 28th MARCH 2023 AND CONSIDERATION OF ANY FURTHER UPDATES.

Members **NOTED** the Clerk's report as previously circulated.

Members considered the 2nd draft of the conceptual designs for the new logo. Following discussion Members proposed the following amendments:

- Remove the bird entirely
- Enhance the clump and church
- Remove the wavy lines

Members unanimously **AGREED** for a reworking of the design based on the amendments. Members further requested that the designer suggest a suitable colour palette.

In view of the timescales Members further **AGREED** for any further drafts to be referred to SPC for consideration.

97.FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSAL FOR A REVIEW OF THE PARISH COUNCIL'S INVESTMENTS AND TO REVIEW THE INFORMATION RECEIVED FOR OPPORTUNITIES AND GUIDANCE ON FINANCIAL SECURITY FOR GENERAL RESERVES - MIN. 79 REFERS

Members **NOTED** the Clerk's report as previously circulated.

Members reviewed the projected returns on investment provided on the Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) for Churches Charities and Local Authorities and compared it with the interest currently being received from the bank. Whilst the bank returns had increased significantly on last year it was still less by comparison. Members were also mindful of the auditors recommendation to spread the risk of investment.

Following discussions Members unanimously **AGREED** to invest £50k within the PSDF fund. Members further **AGREED** that Cllrs. Thorne, Redman, Tait and Taylor be registered as signatories on the account with the RFO as an additional operating signatory. Each Councillor will complete the relevant section of the application form and return to the Clerk for completion and submission.

Members further **NOTED** that other banking arrangements should be considered to further spread the financial risk. However, this will be revisited following the appointment of new mandate holders at the next annual meeting.

98.CIL - TO NOTE THE 2022/23 CIL MONITORING REPORT AND TO NOTE APRIL PAYMENT OF CIL ALLOCATION WHICH INCLUDES THE RETURN OF PREVIOUS OVERPAYMENT

Members **NOTED** the Clerk's report as previously circulated.

The Clerk highlighted an anomaly on the CIL EMR balance that she had discussed with CDC. Following investigation, she believes she has identified where the error lay but is going to seek advice from the account support provider for confirmation.

Members **NOTED** this concern and asked the Clerk to provide and update at a future meeting.

99. IT AND WEBSITE - TO RECEIVE CLERK AND DEPUTY CLERKS REPORT ON IT ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNCILLOR CHROMEBOOKS, LAPTOP FOR ADMIN ASSISTANT, PHONE FOR AND ONGOING ISSUES WITH IT/WEBSITE PROVIDER INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF ANY RECOMMENDATIONS

Members **NOTED** the Deputy Clerk and Clerk's reports as previously circulated.

Members questioned the need for a mobile phone for the admin assistant. The Clerk advised that part of her role would be to work remotely and therefore it would be best practise to provide her with a phone. The role will also include updating social media on a regular basis and the phone will enable photos to be taken and uploaded instantly to Facebook.

Members unanimously **AGREED** to provide a mobile phone for the admin assistant and to add it to the current Vodaphone package.

Members **NOTED** the admin assistant is currently using one of the spare Chromebooks and is managing despite it not being the most compatible. However, should it become necessary to upgrade, Members unanimously **AGREED** for the Clerk to proceed with the purchase of a suitably priced laptop in line with that of the Deputy Clerks.

Members thanked the Deputy Clerk for her very comprehensive and detailed report and felt equally frustrated with the service being provided by the current IT provider.

During the discussion that followed Members recognised that there is insufficient provision within the budget to allow for a change of provider this year. It was further acknowledged that some extensive research would need to be undertaken to ensure that a suitable provider was found who could guarantee they would be able to fulfil the conditions and level of service required.

Members unanimously **AGREED** to continue with the current provider for this year but begin the process of sourcing a new provider in time to take any budgetary requirements into account for next year. It was further **AGREED** to defer to a future meeting for further consideration on how to manage the process.

100. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING OF £1,500.00 TOWARDS THE HERITAGE TRAIL PROJECT

Members **NOTED** the Clerk's report as previously circulated.

The Chair reported that a formal request for funding had now been made on behalf of the Heritage Trail project for an amount of £1500.00 and reminded Members that a budget had been provided for this within the budget.

Members unanimously **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the application for a donation of £1500.00 towards the Heritage Trail Project to be funded from Community Initiatives.

101. TO RECEIVE THE NOTES OF THE STAFFING CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING HELD ON 22nd MARCH 2023 AND CONSIDERATION OF ANY RECOMMENDATIONS.

Staffing notes are confidential and not for general circulation. Therefore, only the recommendations and appropriate related information will be submitted to the relevant Committees.

Members **NOTED** there were no Recommendations for this Committee to consider and therefore no further action required.

102. TO NOTE THE DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING.

Members **NOTED** the date of the next meeting - 5th July 2023@ 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm

