

**ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL**  
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**Clerk: Tammy Williams**

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**HELD MONDAY 28<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2019 AT 7.30 PM**

**At Alvechurch Parish Council Office, George Road, Alvechurch, B48 7PB**

**Present** Cllrs T Wallis (Chairman), R Chima, J Cypher, A Helmore & A Humphries

**In attendance** Tammy Williams, Clerk

**fr18/016** **Apologies for Absence**  
Cllr M Ball

**fr18/017** **Declarations of Interest**  
None noted

**fr18/018** **Minutes Of Previous Meeting**  
The Minutes from the meeting dated 26<sup>th</sup> November 2018 were reviewed, authorised and signed.

**fr18/019** **Clerk's Report:**

- a. Update on the Fundraising Process by the Hopwood Play Equipment Working Group  
The Clerk confirmed the National Lottery had requested ID verification and this had now been received and processed. The Clerk spoke with the National Lottery regarding the application and was advised that the application had now been passed on to the Decision-Making Team and the Hopwood Mums would hear within 10 weeks. The Clerk queried this timescale as it was supposed to take 10 weeks to process from start to finish. The Clerk was advised that the identification documents had been omitted from the original application, hence the delay, but it was unlikely that the decision would actually take another 10 weeks.
- b. Update on Quarter 2 & Quarter 3 Internal Financial Checks  
Due to staffing levels in Quarter 3, the Responsible Financial Officer had to delay this assessment due to work volumes however these have now been arranged for 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019 and an update will be provided at the February Parish Council meeting.
- c. Update On The Pitch Maintenance For The Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields  
The Clerk spoke to the Grounds Maintenance Contractor. He confirmed that he is spiking all of our pitches and checks the flow of water underneath by lifting the manhole covers. If sand-grooving was required then that would cost in the region of £1000-£1200.
- d. Outstanding items: Reviewing the Public Works Loans Board application process  
The Clerk will work with the Supporting Officer on this.

**fr18/020** **Finance And Administration in Respect of the 2018/19 Financial Year, to Include:**  
a. To Receive A List Of Invoices For Payment And Consider Any Exceptional Items As Necessary

The cheque list was reviewed and authorised.

The Clerk advised that at the December Parish Council meeting, Council had approved

the purchase of a Dell Vostro 15 3568 laptop at a cost of £339 however the Clerk had opted not to buy it until the staffing arrangements were finalised and when the Clerk did go to buy this laptop the cost was now £475. The Clerk advised the Finance & Resources Committee members that the Supporting Officer will start on 7<sup>th</sup> February and as such the Clerk supplied members with a proposed alternative laptop: HP 240G6 from Ebuyer at a cost of £399.93 inclusive of vat (with a comparable specification) and also a laptop carrying case at £12.99. The Committee **agreed** that the Clerk could purchase this alternative laptop. Ebuyer does not offer an account system therefore the Clerk will have to purchase the laptop herself and reclaim the cost through expenses as soon as possible.

Finally, the Clerk advised that Boxer has estimated that it will take them 2 hours to transfer all the Clerk's software packages on to the laptop at a cost of £170 + vat. It was **agreed** that this would be a necessary cost in order to set up the new laptop.

b. **To Consider a Standing Order Instruction in Respect of Staff Salaries**

This agenda item was deferred.

c. **To Consider Quotations In Respect Of Tree Surgery At Rowney Green Playing Fields**

The Clerk advised that she had spoken to the Tree Officer at Bromsgrove District Council for guidance on the proposed tree surgery. The Tree Officer recommended reducing the height by no more than 40% and to reduce their width without cutting into the wood as it would never grow back otherwise. The Clerk had received quotations from 4 tree surgeons with quotes ranging from £1,200 to £5250 + vat to undertake the work. The Finance & Resources Committee **agreed unanimously** to appoint Blue Sky Arboriculture at a cost of £1,200 + vat.

**ACTION POINT: The Clerk** to instruct Blue Sky Arboriculture to undertake the work as soon as possible.

e. **To Consider And Propose To Council Internal Audit Arrangements For The 2018/19 Financial Year**

The Clerk advised that an email had been received from Diane Malley regarding this year's internal audit arrangements. The Committee considered whether to appoint a new internal auditor in order to reassess the Parish Council's financial arrangements. The Clerk advised that her aim for the next 12 months is to undertake a number of strategic improvements regarding Council policies and risk assessments. After further discussion, the Committee **agreed** that it would recommend to Council to instruct Diane Malley to undertake the internal audit of the 2018/19 financial year.

**ACTION POINT: The Clerk** to add this proposal to the February Parish Council agenda for consideration

5.5 **To Consider Quarter 3 Expenditure And Receipts Against Budget For This Financial Year**

The Clerk provided the Committee with a number of reports detailing the financial situation at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter. Councillors debated these figures, the set up at the beginning of the financial year and the data/reports the Scribe provides. The Responsible Financial Officer confirmed that she would review how the Quarterly data is presented for future quarter ends. Councillors also discussed the Lengthsman Scheme: Worcestershire County Council confirms our Lengthsman's budget at the beginning of the financial year rather than when Parish Councils set their own budgets and also CALC has advised that Worcestershire County Council has cut the budget for training and equipment so concerns were raised about the future of the Lengthsman Scheme.

**ACTION POINT: The Clerk** to review and improve the presentation of quarterly financial reports

**ACTION POINT: Cllr Humphries** to contact Worcestershire County Council for an update on the Lengthsman Scheme

5.6 **To Consider A Request From Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council To Contribute 50% Of The Cost Of A Skip For The Former Parish Lengthsman In Respect Of The Clearance Of Waste Materials From Historical Lengthsman's Duties**

The Clerk advised that the former Lengthsman had confirmed that the County Council had removed 5 lorry loads of waste materials from his yard in recent months. The former Parish Lengthsman had also worked for Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council and their current Lengthsman had picked up some Lengthsman's signs and equipment as well. Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council (LBPC) had contacted Alvechurch Parish Council (APC) to request that APC splits the cost 50/50 of a skip (likely to be a 4 yard skip) with

LBPC. The Clerk provided the Committee with three quotes from local skip hire companies and they ranged from £140 inc. VAT to £161 inc. VAT. The Finance & Resources Committee **agreed** that the Parish Council would contribute 50% of the cost of a skip as it wasn't likely to use its entire Lengthsman's budget in this financial year due to the unexpected break in Lengthsman's arrangements.

**ACTION POINT: The Clerk** to liaise with Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council.

fr18/021

**Finance and Administration in Respect of the 2019/20 Financial Year, to Include:**

**a. To Consider And Make A Proposal To Council Regarding The Payment Of A Grant Application Received**

The Parish Council had considered grant applications for the 2019/20 financial year at the December Parish Council meeting and during that meeting the Clerk had made Councillors aware that there may be an additional grant application to still be considered. The Clerk advised that this grant application for the Knit & Natter group had been received at the office subsequently. The application was for £100 in order to pay for the cost of hiring a venue and the group sell their knitted items to raise funds for The Lounge and other charities. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council had the Power to pay this grant under Section 137 of the 1972 Act. It was noted that the Parish Council had already received grant applications in excess of its Grants budget for the 2019/20 financial year and that at the December Parish Council meeting, Council had decided that it would not exceed the budget set for grant payments. The Finance Committee considered this grant application and noted the social benefits that clubs in our community provide parishioners as well as the fundraising activities that this group undertakes. The Clerk advised that there was £850 remaining in the grants budget for the 2018/19 financial year. The Committee therefore decided that the Clerk should write to the applicant to advise that as the Parish Council had received grant applications that exceed the Grants payment budget for the 2019/20 financial year in advance of the deadline, it would not be possible to approve the grant for payment in the 2019/20 financial year. However, the Finance Committee would re-consider the application at the March Finance & Resources Committee for payment in the 2018/19 financial year only if there is scope in the overall budget for the 2018/19 financial year.

**ACTION POINT: The Clerk** to write to the applicant for the Knit and Natter group

**b. To Consider And Propose To Council The Precept For The 2019/20 Financial Year**

The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer provided the Finance Committee with a presentation for this agenda item (appendix 1). The Clerk had reviewed the finances of the Parish Council and noted that the overall Reserves had decreased over recent years. It was noted that Reserves could be called on in an emergency/unforeseen situation, a budget overspend, an unbudgeted project or if the District Council was unable to pay our Precept in advance. The Finance & Resources Committee members had already had the NALC's Good Councillor's Guide to Finance & Transparency in which it was noted that a Parish Council could hold between 3 and 12 months in average monthly expenditure in Reserves. The Clerk advised that neighbouring parish councils have in the region of 12 months average expenditure in Reserves and that Alvechurch Parish Council is responsible for three playing fields, two buildings, the rent and costs of an office space, three employed staff and one self-employed member of staff as well as holding assets in the region of £750,000. It was also noted that at two of its Playing Fields the play equipment there is/will be more dynamic now following an upgrade in provision and therefore the ongoing maintenance costs will increase for the Parish Council now. As such the Clerk recommended that the Parish Council should hold 12 months average expenditure in Reserves so that should the Precept not be paid for any reason the Council would have sufficient funds in order to continue to provide services to parishioners and continue to pay the running/employment costs of all of its assets and staff members for as long as possible in an emergency situation or to ensure that the Parish Council would have sufficient funds in the event of any emergency budget requirements. The Clerk stated that the Parish Council will likely hold around 9 months of average monthly expenditure at the beginning of the 19/20 financial year. However, the Parish Council's budget has increased to around £183,000 for the 19/20 financial year to accommodate possible election costs, increased employment costs and potentially to provide additional funding to the Hopwood Play Equipment project if the National Lottery grant application isn't successful. As such the Clerk recommended that the Parish

Council increased its Precept to £123,699 (or a 10% increase on the 18/19 financial year) for the 19/20 financial year which would equate to an annual increase of £4.70 for a Band D taxpayer. The Clerk did not recommend increasing the Precept so that the Parish Council would immediately have 12 month's average expenditure in Reserves but the Clerk's recommendation was to increase the Precept so that the Parish Council would be moving in a positive direction towards holding 12 month's average expenditure. The Clerk also recommended that the Parish Council does have a Reserves policy so that the budgeting and precepting process becomes a simpler process each year. The Finance Committee debated the Clerk's presentation. It was recommended that the Clerk alter the presentation so that the finances noted for future years are depicted with dotted lines to clearly differentiate between actual and predicted income & expenditure. A Councillor provided the Committee with national data pertaining to the 2014/15 financial year which indicated that Band D taxpayers nationally paid more than Alvechurch Parish taxpayers and also that the average national Precept increase was 4.9% at that time. Councillors raised concerns about the public perception of such a big increase and it was noted that in the Parish Council's latest newsletter in The Village magazine that it had been suggested that the Parish Council might follow in Wythall Parish Council's footsteps and hold a community consultation to gauge Parishioner's views on potential projects and the Parish Council's budgets. It was proposed by a Councillor and seconded by another that the Finance and Resources Committee recommends that the Parish Council increases its Precept to £118,076.68 (a 5% increase) which will amount to an increase of £2.28 per annum for a Band D taxpayer. The Finance and Resources Committee **agreed unanimously** to recommend to the Parish Council that it makes a precept demand of £118,076.68 for the 2019/20 financial year.

**fr18/022 Information, Outstanding Items and Items for the Next Meeting**

None noted.

**fr18/023 To consider, and if considered appropriate, to pass the following resolution to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of agenda item 9 which contains confidential employee information:-**

**“RESOLVED: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, Section 1 Sub-Section 2 a body may, by resolution, exclude the public from a meeting (whether during the whole or part of the proceedings) whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons stated in the resolution and arising from the nature from that business or of the proceedings; and where such a resolution is passed, this Act shall not require the meeting to be open to the public during proceedings to which the resolution applies.”**

**fr18/024 To Consider a Request From the Clerk to Work and be Paid for Additional Hours in Response to the New Staffing Arrangements in February**

The Finance and Resources Committee **agreed** that the Parish Council would pay the Clerk's salary for one six-hour day so that the Clerk can work alongside the Supporting Officer on the Supporting Officer's first day at Alvechurch Parish Council.

**fr18/025 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The date and time of next meeting will be 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at Alvechurch Parish Council office, George Road Alvechurch

Committee members:

Cllrs A Wallis (Chairman) M Ball, R Chima, J Cypher, A Helmore & A Humphries

Signed .....  
Chairman

Date .....

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