

ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL
Ground Floor, 1A George Road, Alvechurch, B48 7PB
Tel: 0121 447 8016
e-mail: clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Clerk: Tammy Williams

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

HELD MONDAY 31st JULY 2017 AT 7.30 PM

AT ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL OFFICE, 1A GEORGE ROAD, ALVECHURCH, B48 7PB

fr17/010 Present Cllrs M Ball (Chair), A Humphries, A Helmore, J Cypher & T Wallis

In attendance Tammy Williams, Clerk

fr17/011 Apologies for Absence
Cllr Chima (accepted)

fr17/012 Declarations Of Interest
None

fr17/013 Minutes Of Previous Meeting
The Minutes from the meeting dated 22nd May 2017 were reviewed, authorised and signed.

fr17/014 Finance And Administration

a. To Receive a List of Invoices for Payment and Consider any Exceptional Items, as Necessary

Committee Members reviewed the invoices listed for payment and the cheque list was signed by Cllr Ball (Chair).

The Clerk advised Committee Members that in addition to the invoices, the Clerk had brought three standing orders for the signatories to sign as the bank had lost them twice now. Committee members felt that we should ask the bank for compensation for the inconvenience and for the time taken to prepare, sign and take the standing orders to the bank. The last set had been copied and a member of staff at Bromsgrove branch had signed the copies confirming receipt of the originals.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to request compensation and to look into internet banking

b. To Nominate Councillors to Photograph Parish Council Assets as a Record

It was noted that Cllrs Smith and Helmore had been taking photographs for the Neighbourhood Plan and Cllr Helmore confirmed that he would be happy to extend the exercise so that we have a record of our Assets. The Clerk confirmed that this would also help to ascertain correct insurance values for replacement items and also to identify any maintenance requirements.

c. To Receive an Update on the External Audit Process

The Clerk advised that she had received a telephone call from Grant Thornton who had queried whether the Parish Council held petty cash and also the Grant Thornton Auditor asked for clarification on the staff gratuities. The Auditor advised that all other areas in the submission document were fine and our documentation would be forwarded on to a second auditor for the final steps.

d. Quarterly Review of Expenditure Against the 2017/18 Budget and Capital Reserves

The Clerk had provided Committee Members with a copy of the Flexed Budget for Quarter 1 and supporting notes to review. Committee Members discussed the Parish Council's bank balances and precept. Cllr Ball queried the level of reserves at the end of

the last financial year in our bank balances. It was noted that we are a medium-sized Parish council (4th or 5th largest in Worcestershire) with playing fields, buildings and street lighting that require maintenance and pose an increased financial risk to us. We also run an office open to the public with three members of staff and as such it is prudent to build up a reserve to provide financial protection for times of unexpected issues. We do have an insurance policy although this does not cover us for staff sickness and a contingency fund which Councillors suggested should be increased in size.

e. To Consider the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) Limits

The Clerk advised Committee Members that in the event of another severe economic downturn and the bank the Parish Council uses went under, the Financial Services Compensation Scheme would only provide protection for the first £85,000 of Parish Council held funds. However, this level of protection is afforded for any funds held with different institutions. The Clerk therefore recommended that the Parish Council look to transfer some funds to another institution that to maximise the protection afforded by the FSCS. Committee Members were in favour of this but Cllr Cypher noted that due to amount involved it would need to be passed for resolution via Council.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to research comparable bank accounts and put together a recommendation to Council

f. To Consider External Funding Opportunities

The Clerk had received some external funding opportunities including an offer from Kompan to match a certain percentage of any playground equipment purchases. The Clerk had already contacted Richard Levett of CALC to clarify the position vis-a-vis the legalities of the tendering process for us should we be successful. Richard Levett had suggested that if we were successful we would be able to clarify the situation via the Government Tendering site and that also we could clarify it with NALC's Legal department. Committee Members discounted using the funding opportunity for the Wiggan as any additional funding perhaps should be directed at either of our other Playing Fields. Committee Members felt that Council would need to agree a proposal and budget to improve the play equipment at Hopwood Playing Fields and this could not be achieved in advance of the deadline for this opportunity. Future opportunities should be considered as they arise.

The Clerk had also received a funding opportunity by the Co-Op from a Hopwood resident but after reading the criteria it was **agreed** that the Parish Council would not qualify; similarly the Clerk had researched a funding opportunity by Tesco but the funding was too small to assist the Parish Council with installing more play equipment at Hopwood Playing Fields at this point in time.

Another opportunity that the Clerk had noted was a £500 grant to install wi-fi in a Community Centre. The Clerk wondered if this would enable the Parish Council to promote the Centre as a venue for business meetings. It was felt that any broadband connection would need to go up the driveway and that would cost a lot of money.

g. To Consider if the Responsible Financial Officer Should Have Access to a Small Budget For Procurement of Items

The Clerk advised that in August 2015, the Finance & General Purposes Committee had agreed that the Clerk could have a pre-payment card to enable the purchase of items on behalf of Council. Since then pre-payment cards now have charges attached to their use and this had since been discarded as an idea. The Clerk advised that in order to benefit from the Council's right to reclaim VAT, we cannot purchase items online as the card used is registered in a staff member's name and not the Parish Council therefore best value may not be available to us. The only purchasing opportunities to us on purchases including VAT are to either purchase them in a shop and receive a normal till receipt or to make purchases from online providers with whom we have an account such as Viking.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to raise this on the SLCC forum to clarify what other Parish Councils do and also to look into Oh Henry cards

h. To Consider The Letter Received From Stoke Parish Council Regarding The Eurobin Arrangements

The Clerk advised that she had received a communication from the Clerk to Stoke Parish Council advising that they were looking to increase the size of the Eurobin to accommodate the capacity requirements and that they hadn't heard back from Bromsgrove District Council regarding re-siting the bin.

- i. To consider increasing the hourly rate paid for planting the hanging baskets in Alvechurch and to receive an update on the watering of the hanging baskets

The Clerk advised the Committee Members that we hadn't increased the hourly rate for making up our hanging baskets since 2013. We have received many positive comments about them and as such it was **agreed** that Council would increase the total payment for making up the hanging baskets to £50 for labour plus materials.

- j. To Consider The Tendering For Grounds Maintenance Document And To Receive An Update On Next Steps For The Tendering Process

The Clerk advised Committee Members that she had emailed a copy of the Invitation to Tender for Grounds Maintenance document to Cllrs Humphries and Cypher to proof read as they had been involved in drafting the original document in 2014. Councillors reviewed the document and suggested changes

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to update the document with the agreed changes

- k. To Consider NALC's Code Of Recommended Practice On Local Authority Publicity (England)

Councillors reviewed this document.

fr17/015 To Receive an Update on the Recently Installed Defibrillator at Hopwood Community Centre

The Clerk updated Committee Members to advise that the defibrillator was installed at Hopwood Community Centre and a daytime training session was provided by Charlotte and Craig Saving Hearts Foundation.

The Meeting ended at 9.30

fr17/016 Date and time of next meeting to be held on 27th November 2017 at Hopwood Community Centre, Redditch Road, Hopwood

Signed
Chairman

Date