

ALVECHURCH PARISH COUNCIL
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Clerk: Tammy Williams

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE

FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD MONDAY 22nd JANUARY 2018 AT 7.30 PM

At Hopwood Community Centre, Redditch Road, Hopwood, B48 7TL

- fr17/026 Present** Cllrs M Ball (Chairman), R Chima, J Cypher, A Helmore, A Humphries & T Wallis
- In attendance** Tammy Williams, Clerk
- fr17/027 Apologies for Absence**
None
- fr17/028 Declarations Of Interest**
None
- fr17/029 Minutes Of Previous Meeting**
The Minutes from the meeting dated 27th November 2017 were reviewed, authorised and signed.
- fr17/030 Clerk's Report:**
- a. Update on the Plumbing Work at Hopwood Community Centre
The Clerk advised that she had contacted Wythall Heating to ascertain the cost of thermostatic mixing valves to provide safety measures with hot water temperatures. Wythall Heating will come back to the Clerk with a price and then the Clerk will proceed accordingly.
- b. Update on the New External Audit Arrangements for the 17/18 Financial Year
The Clerk advised that the new External Auditors are PKF Littlejohn and that the Clerk will be attending a webinar on this year's external audit requirements on 23/1/18. Any pertinent matters will be raised at the February Parish Council Meeting.
- c. Update on the Agreed Arrangements for the Internal Auditor for the 17/18 Financial Year
The Clerk advised that following the January Parish Council Meeting she instructed the Internal Auditor to carry out an internal audit of our accounts. The Internal Auditor has advised that she will be in touch in due course with the date of the audit; the Clerk noted that it is usually towards the end of April.
- d. Update on the Changes to Staff Auto-Enrolment Pension Arrangements
The Clerk advised that she had received a communication advising that from 6/4/18, staff members will be required to make personal contributions into their pension schemes. The Clerk advised that she is looking into the correct way to process these changes.
- e. Update on the Website Domain Cost
Following the November Finance & Resources Meeting, the Clerk had contacted another Clerk to ascertain if £102.00 for 2 years use of our website domain name, i.e .gov.uk was good value. The Clerk was advised that the .gov.uk domain names are not easy to come by and there are not many providers of them. It was deemed to be good value and in line with what other local parish councils pay for theirs.

f. Outstanding Items From the Last Meeting – Parish Council Risk Assessment

Cllr Humphries advised that he had drafted a Parish Council Risk Assessment and it was agreed that he would forward it to Cllr Ball and the Clerk for initial consultation before presenting it to the Finance & Resources Committee/Parish Council

fr17/031

Finance And Administration in Respect of the 2017/18 Financial Year to Include: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 (Chairman).

The Clerk ran through the items on the Cheque List including that the office staff had sought IT support following a Windows 10 Update that had caused issues with the Assistant Clerk's computer and the Clerk had sought professional advice from Scribe in relation to a problem with Banking Reconciliation.

ACTION POINT: The Responsible Financial Officer to confirm the timeframe for the last Npower bill

b. To Consider the Quarterly Review of Expenditure and Bank Balances Against the 2017/18 Budget

Cllr Ball had converted data from Scribe into bar charts indicating the level of expenditure against the budget allotted for each cost centre. Councillors commented that this would be useful information for parishioners to review on the Parish Council's website. At the end of Quarter three it was noted that the Parish Council is on budget for every cost centre.

ACTION POINT: The Responsible Financial Officer to review expenditure made under the Youth funding code

ACTION POINT: The Responsible Financial Officer to reinstate detailed quarterly assessment reports.

c. To Consider the Mandate to Manage the Allotments Bank Account

It was noted that the Treasurer has stood down from the Allotments Association as well as other key association members; combined with the fact that the Assistant Clerk was now managing the plot allocation as well as continuing the annual issuing of invoices to plot holders, it was **agreed** that the management of the Allotment Association's Bank account should now be managed by the Parish Council. As such the Responsible Financial Officer had completed a banking mandate so that two of the existing banking signatories would sign cheque for expenditure in relation to the allotment accounts in the future. Cllrs Humphries, Chima, Ball and Wallis checked and signed their individual sections.

ACTION POINT: Cllr Wallis to arrange for the former Treasurer to sign the mandate to confirm the change of signatories on the Allotment's Bank Account

A Councillor queried whether the rent payable to the land owner was remaining the same; it was confirmed that at the last meeting with the landowner for the allotments site, he had confirmed that he was happy to maintain the current rent and that this would be reviewed again later in 2018.

d. To Consider the Pitch Maintenance For The Football Pitches at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields

A councillor raised concerns whether sufficient pitch maintenance is carried out on the football pitch at the Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields. In particular, whether sand should be added to the pitch surface to prevent top soil getting into the grooves and whilst it was felt that some annual maintenance should be carried out, it was also noted that the pitch is currently unused and is therefore not subject to usual wear and tear. Councillors were provided with copies of the available paperwork regarding the pitch maintenance requirements including the Outline Maintenance Recommendations document; the costs stated on this document seemed high but it was felt that these were reflective of the specialist services provided by the contractors at the time. It was requested that the Clerk clarify the qualifications that our existing grounds maintenance contractor holds.

ACTION POINT: The Clerk to pass the Outline Maintenance Recommendations document to the Grounds Maintenance Contractor for his evaluation of the required maintenance for the Wiggin football pitches. The Grounds Maintenance Contractor to supply quotations for the recommended work to be considered at the June Youth Sports & Recreation Committee Meeting.

fr17/032

Finance and Administration in Respect of the 2018/19 Financial Year, to Include:

At this point in the meeting, the Responsible Financial Officer brought forward Agenda Item 6.2 to be reviewed before considering and proposing the Precept:

a. To Consider Having a Reserves Policy

The Responsible Financial Officer advised Councillors that she had completed the Finance module of her ILCA studies and that she had also been reading the NALC's: The Good Councillors' Guide to Finance & Transparency in particular, looking at precept setting. The Responsible Financial Officer had given copies of the NALC's: The Good Councillors' Guide to Finance & Transparency to each of the Finance Committee Members for their perusal and safekeeping. The Responsible Financial Officer thanked Cllrs Cypher and Humphries for collecting these from Worcestershire CALC. The Responsible Financial Officer felt that in order to facilitate budget setting in the future, it would help greatly to ascertain the levels of our bank balances that constitute our Reserves. The Responsible Financial Officer had also spoken with the SLCC for guidance. It was noted that "Earmarked Reserves" were funds which would be specifically set aside for planned financial commitments in the future such as election costs or for future IT equipment requirements for example. NALC's: The Good Councillors' Guide to Finance & Transparency recommends that a Parish Council should "typically hold between 3 and 12 months expenditure as a General Reserve (funds set aside for unforeseen expenditure); For the 2018/19 financial year the Parish Council has a £35,000 General Reserve which constitutes just over 3 months of average Parish Council expenditure for unforeseen expenditure as well as a £5,000 contingency fund in its budget. The SLCC advisor that the Responsible Financial Officer had spoken to had suggested 6 months of General Reserves would be an appropriate amount to be set aside for unforeseen expenditure and that the remaining available funds could be earmarked for specific expenditure should needs arise.

It was noted by a Councillor that no auditor had ever raised concerns about the levels of Reserves held by the Parish Council however, the Responsible Financial Officer did advise that there was a supplementary booklet that the Parish Council had had to complete for last year's External Audit and this had asked for details of Earmarked and General Reserves held by the Parish Council. The Responsible Financial Officer felt that although the Parish Council fell outside of the two Transparency Acts governing Larger and Smaller Authorities, the Parish Council should aim to publish more financial information such as this.

The Responsible Financial Officer raised a query about what actual risks could be posed to the Parish Council as the Parish Council has a comprehensive Insurance Policy and that when the current contract ends with Zurich this summer, the Responsible Financial Officer would look for a policy that also provides key person cover to mitigate costs associated with long-term sick leave of its employed staff members in the future. Cllr Humphries advised that he had compiled a Draft Business Risk Assessment that he would share with Cllr Ball, Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Clerk.

It was **agreed** that the Finance Committee would consider its Reserves again, perhaps at the July Finance Meeting so that it can form part of the Budget setting for the 19/20 financial year. A councillor also suggested that an "Idiots Guide" to Finance and Budget Setting would be a beneficial tool for Finance Committee Members.

ACTION POINT: Cllr Ball to compile an Idiots Guide. **Cllr Humphries** to send his draft Business Risk Assessment to the Clerk and Cllr Ball for consideration.

The meeting then moved on to Agenda Item 6.1

b. To Consider and Then Propose the Precept for the 2018/19 Financial Year

It was noted that Cllrs Cypher and Humphries had recently attended a CALC Meeting and precept setting had been on the Agenda; a speaker at the CALC Meeting had advised that increases in Precepts should be linked to something that is for the benefit of the community. Councillors noted that it was expected that Worcestershire County Council would be increasing their Precept by 5% and it was likely that Bromsgrove District Council would increase theirs by 3% for the 18/19 financial year. Councillors felt that in the 18/19 financial year, the Parish Council wished to continue its investment in improving its Sports and Recreation facilities including improvements to the play equipment at Hopwood Playing Fields. The Responsible Financial Officer had provided Committee Members with the figures for Band D taxpayers if the precept was increased

by different percentage amounts. The Finance Committee Members **agreed unanimously** to recommend to Council that the Precept is increased to £112,453.98 which constitutes an increase of 2% on last year.

ACTION POINT: The Responsible Financial Officer to clarify the Band D increase for Finance Committee Members.

fr17/033 Information, Outstanding Items and Items for the Next Meeting

- The Business Risk Assessment
- Idiots Guide to Finance

fr17/034 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The date and time of the next meeting is 19th March 2018 at 7.30pm at Hopwood Community Centre.

The meeting ended at 21.10.

Signed
Chairman

Date

DRAFT