**FINANCE & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING – 2020/11/16 - 07**

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & SCRUTINY MEETING** held via Zoom on Monday 16th November 2020 at 7.00 pm.

*[The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020]*

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| **PRESENT:** | Councillor S Baxter (Chairman), Cllrs; Cypher, Helmore, Humphries, Wallis and Worrall. |
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|  | **In attendance:** Mrs J Smailes – Parish Clerk/Minute Taker |
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***AGENDA***

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| **1.** | **APOLOGIES** |
|  | None. |
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| **2.** | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** |
|  | None. |
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| **3.** | **DISPENSATION REQUESTS**  Cllr Humphries re. St Laurence Church Grant. |
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| **4.** | **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**  Approval of the Finance & Scrutiny Committee Meeting Minutes, held on 15th June 2020, were proposed by Cllr Baxter.  **Unanimous**. |
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|  | Cllr Cyhper queried why there was no *Clerk’s Report* agenda item for he felt there should be a means by which ‘actions’ from the last F&S Meeting were reported back to committee; citing the prior debate concerning the retention/surrendering of George Road (Council Offices).  Cllr Cypher also asked when the *Establishment Costs* were to be considered by committee?  The Clerk explained that the discussion in relation to whether to surrender or retain the council office space, and indeed ‘*Establishment Costs’* were both discussed at the September Full Council Meeting. It had been resolved at said meeting that the office would be retained until at least the end of the lease term period - December 2021. Furthermore the ‘*Establishment Costs’* budget element totalling - £27,650 had also been approved at this same Full Council meeting. **Noted**  The Clerk gave an undertaking to prepare an Actions List for future meeting. **Action - Clerk.** |
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| **5.** | **QUARTER 2 - BUDGET SUMMARY** |
|  | Members had received prior to the start of the meeting, the Q2 Budget Overview Sheet which showed, ‘spend to date’ and how the budget was currently performing against target. **Noted.**  Cllr Baxter drew members attention to its Earmarked/Free General Reserves which totalled £40.877.03. It was noted that this figure is still below the recommend threshold. **Noted.** |

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|  | At this point Members confirmed their acceptance for the current payment method (BACS Payments) to continue and ratified continued delegated powers to the Clerk and two Members *(LGA 1972 S101 – to continue to make BACS payments as per the Payment Listing, approved each month by Full Council).* |
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|  | The Clerk (RFO) spoke of the necessity for Council to consider its position should something prevent her from addressing the formal payment process; she expressed concern that she alone had internet banking access, believing that as/when a/another is employed by the council, succession planning should include this person being taught how to address/manage the accounts and also those of the Trust. **Noted.** |
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|  | The Clerk suggested that it may be possible to form some sort of ‘inter-parish’ support scheme which allowed a neighbouring Clerk (RFO) to administer another parish’s accounts if there were am emergency. Cllr Baxter/Chyper gave an undertaking to add such a consideration to the next CALC Meeting agenda. **Action – Cllrs Baxter/Cypher.** |
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|  | Cllr Baxter spoke of the necessity to revert to payment by cheque *(in line with Monthly Payment Listing),* if such an emergency situation ever occurred**. Noted.** |
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|  | Cllr Humphries stated that in the past there had been a list of Passwords that were stored safely and only released to the Chairman in the event of an emergency. The Clerk confirmed that a list of Passwords was still retained, be it they had been changed to ensure on-going security, and advised she would ensure such was printed and a copy placed in the Strong Box. **Action – Clerk.** |
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| **6.** | **FORMAL COMMITTEE BUDGET DELIBERATION** – F&S Committee Budget 2021/22  Cllr Baxter invited Members to view/make comment on the proposed Grant/Donation element of the committee’s budget.  Having considered each line of the budget header methodically, it was suggested by Cllr Worrall that The Lounge should receive a donation of £6,600 from the Council in 2021/22, rather than be requested to submit a Grant Request Form given that this organisation was considered to be an important part of Alvechurch’s community. Furthermore, this would not preclude The Lounge from also submitting a Grant Request Form should they have any specific item that they require additional funding toward. Seconded, Cllr Cypher. **Unanimous.**  It was further suggested that as the Council gave a grant sum each year to St Laurence Church that the sum of £500 should be shown as a ‘grant payment’ for year 2021/22. **Carried.** |
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|  | Cllr Baxter proposed that rather than split out any further sums, that a total of £1000 be placed in ‘Free Grants’, allowing community organisations to submit a Grant Form at set times of the year (as per the Grant Policy) for Committee consideration. **Unanimous**. |
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|  | Following the advice of the Council’s Solicitor it was noted that The Wiggin Memorial Playing Fields would need to hold their own funds as of April 2021, and that the Trust Meetings would also need to be ‘clerked’ separately to that of APC. The YSR Committee had already taken steps to exclude monies from its former budget deliberations and for this reason the F&S Committee were now required to consider a donation sum that it was prepared to make to the Trust by means of two instalments for 2021/22. **Noted.** |
|  | Cllr Worrall proposed a sum of £10,000 be given as a donation to the aforementioned Trust, Seconded by Cllr Humphries. **Unanimous.** |
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| **7.** | Cllr Wallis spoke of The Picnic In The Park, explaining that in the past £1000 had been set aside in case APC had to underwrite the event insurance etc. |
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|  | Cllr Cypher suggested that the donation sum of £10,000 which had already been resolved should provide sufficient funding for the Trust to underwrite its own events in the future. |
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|  | Cllr Baxter proposed that the Donation/Grant element of the F&S budget be approved as being a total of **£18,100**. **Unanimous.** |
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|  | Members then turned their attention to *Electoral Fees/Councillor Allowances* with it being proposed by Cllr Baxter that Election Costs stand at £500. **Unanimous.**  Cllr Worrall suggested that a sum of £250 be included against the Member Expenses budget header, Seconded Cllr Humphries. **Budget header total - £750. Unanimous.** |
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|  | In relation to Inspections/Contingency Members resolved to include £1000 for ROSPA Playground Inspections/Emergency playground repair work, with a further £1500 to be placed in Contingency *(General)*.  Cllr Baxter proposed a **Budget header of £2,500. Unanimous.** |
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|  | A short discussion then took place concerning the PBP (Policy, Budget, Precept) process and when it was anticipated the Tax Base figure would be received from the Billing Authority (BDC), also the anticipated date of the Budget/Precept F&S Committee Meeting, from which a Precept Recommendation would then be presented by the F&S Chair to Full Council for consideration/approval. |
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|  | Cllr Baxter explained that as soon as the Tax Base figure had been received, the Clerk would address the statutory Band D Calcs, As Chair of F&S, she would then convene an Extraordinary Meeting. It was hoped that this would be prior to the December Full Council Meeting, allowing the Precept recommendation/approval at Full Council on 14th December; however, if not, Full Council would otherwise have to consider the Precept recommendation in January. **Noted.** |
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|  | **MEETING DATES**   * Extraordinary Meeting pending receipt of Tax Base figure.  **Noted.** |
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|  | Meeting Closed at 9.02pm. |

***Chairman …………………………… Date …………………………***