

BURGHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Governance & Finance Committee Meeting

Date: Thursday 29th November 2018 **Time:** 7.30pm
Place: Burghfield village hall committee room
Present: Mr M Paterson-Borland Mr P Lawrence
Mr D Godding Mr C Greaves
Attending: Clerk to the Parish Council Assistant Clerk to the Parish Council
Apologies: Mr I MacFarlane Mr N Morse

1. To receive members apologies for absence and written requests for Disclosable Pecuniary Interest dispensations

There were no items upon the agenda that necessitated a member to present a written request for dispensation for a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

2. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27th September 2018, having been circulated, were confirmed a correct record and signed by the presiding Chairman.

3. Matters Arising on the Minutes

- i) Further details were requested from TiM in relation to their S137 request.
- ii) Rider Levitt Bucknall have been instructed to undertake RIBA stage 1-4 for the proposed Community Hub following recommendation by the finance committee.
- iii) The Risk assessment, following review at the previous meeting, has been adopted accordingly.
- iv) The parish laptop has been upgraded as approved at the previous meeting.
- v) The identified tree works at St. Mary's church yard have been completed.

4. To deal with any items requiring URGENT attention by the committee

Members present received the quotation for the survey of all trees in the parish to update the overall management plan. Proposed by Mr P Lawrence, seconded by Mr C Greaves and **resolved** unanimously to present a recommendation to the Community committee.

5. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve, pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and the press leave the meeting during consideration of the following:

*Proposed by Mr M Paterson-Borland, seconded by Mr P Lawrence and **resolved** unanimously to exclude the public and press accordingly.*

Staffing

- i) To consider any issues regarding council's employees

The Community hub committee have advised that they are undertaking a review of the staffing requirements for the operation of the hub. A report will be presented to the committee for their consideration in due course.

- ii) To review the time being spent by council employees in response to enquiries presented to the council by individuals within the parish

Members present gave consideration to the amount of time currently being spent by council staff in response to specific enquiries being presented to the council. Members deemed that the time being spent on requests from one individual is disproportionate and resulting in significant financial costs to the council. Members agreed that the remit of the council is to serve and respond to the concerns of the majority of the parish, not any one individual.

Members determined that an amendment was required to the parish council standing orders in relation to the management of parish council, committee and sub-committee meetings to clarify the procedure to be undertaken for questions presented by parishioners.

Proposed by Mr P Lawrence, seconded by Mr M Paterson-Borland and **resolved** unanimously to present proposed amendments to full council at their next scheduled meeting.

- iii) To determine a schedule for Staff appraisals prior to the financial year end

Members present gave consideration to the approaching end of financial year performance reviews for all council employed staff. The clerk provided an initial verbal update, answering any questions raised in relation to the performance of staff. Members present expressed their thanks for the detailed report and for the clerk's daily management of staff. The clerk is

to undertake staff appraisals for the Assistant Parish Clerk and the Village Hall Manager. A report, with any recommendations, will be presented at the next scheduled meeting.

Members present resolved unanimously to present the Litter wardens with a Christmas bonus for the value of £75 each. Proposed by Mr M Paterson-Borland, seconded by Mr P Lawrence and **resolved** unanimously.

A review of safety clothing provided to the parish council litter wardens is to be undertaken. Items identified as being required to ensure their safety are to be obtained and supplied accordingly.

6.

Accounts

i) To consider requests for donations under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972

Members present gave consideration to a request presented by Together in Mission requesting a grant of £500 to provide a contribution towards the running costs of Silver Sunday. **Resolved** unanimously to not donate as the council are unable to donate to any organisation retrospectively.

Members present gave consideration to a request presented by the Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis for a grant of £700 to provide a contribution towards the overall costs in providing services within the area. **Resolved** unanimously to donate £700.

ii) To receive the budget comparison figures for the current financial year.

The budget comparison figures for the period 1 April to 22nd November 2018 were presented and the figures noted. The current percentage expenditure of 64.4% was based on the current year's budget and excluded those figures that related to the previous year's commitment but had been paid in the current financial year.

iii) To receive the final external audit report and AGAR statements for 31 March 2018

The Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2018 has been signed off and returned from PJK Littlejohn, the external auditors appointed by the Audit Commission. Confirmation was provided that the Annual Return was in accordance with proper practices, relevant legislation and regulatory requirements. The 'other matter' raised by the auditor in reference to the public rights notice period was noted by members present. Section 1, assertion 4, will be ticked 'No' next year in acknowledgment of the error noted.

iv) To determine the arrangements for the Year End Closedown procedures

Due to the current workload of the RFO having increased, members present **resolved** unanimously to instruct DCK Accounting to complete the year end closedown procedure.

v) To consider any specific projects for inclusion within the revenue and capital estimates for financial year 2019/2020

Committee members discussed suggested projects and whether a potential precept increase was required for financial year 2019/2020. The committee chairman provided information on specific funding projects identified for inclusion within the estimates. Members received a schedule of probable income and expenditure calculations, based on the anticipated outturn for the current year and the committed revenue expenditure for the following year. The figures were based on the revenue consequences of previous capital programs and the administrative and operational requirements necessary to meet the parish council running expenses and objectives. Members gave consideration to any alterations on the proposed figures and to any policy decisions that would involve additional expenditure. As in previous years, the pay structure for all staff would be reviewed prior to the financial year end.

The following projects were discussed by members present:

- Village hall security entry system upgrade
- Outdoor gym equipment
- Devolved services
- Library funding required for WBC
- Provision of a Community Hub
- IT systems refresh

Proposed by Mr P Lawrence, seconded by Mr I Macfarlane and resolved unanimously the above projects are incorporated within the revenue and capital estimates for presentation to the full council in January 2019.

vi) To approve the revenue and capital estimates for the financial year commencing 1 April 2019

Further to presentation and approval at full council in January, the revenue and capital estimates as presented, are to be implemented as of 1st April 2019. Proposed by Mr P Lawrence, seconded by Mr C Greaves and **resolved** unanimously. Members presented noted the estimates predicted a deficit budget, acknowledging the deficit would be funded

from the reserve fund. General reserves would remain within the recommended 6 month net expenditure.

- vii) To recommend the amount of precept to be served upon West Berkshire District Council for 2019/2020

Consideration was given to the amount of precept to be served upon West Berkshire Council. In arriving at the required amount, members were reminded of the need to ensure that the general balances, aside from those earmarked for specific purposes, were maintained at in compliance with current requirements.

Recommended that a precept for the sum of £257,000, be served upon West Berkshire Council for the year commencing 1 April 2019. Proposed by Mr P Lawrence, seconded by Mr D Godding and **resolved** unanimously for the recommendation to be presented to full council in January 2019.

7. **Governance & Compliance**

- i) To determine any specific actions required in relation to the Community Hub

The clerk verbally updated members in relation to progress to date regarding the Community Hub. All actions are being dealt with accordingly by the Community Hub committee, in accordance with the timescale.

- ii) To review the FOI requests submitted and determine responses

Members present discussed the volume of FOI act requests being forwarded to the parish council from one individual within the parish. Clarification following legal advice having been sought was provided to members, highlighting the need for the council to consider invoking their Habitual and Vexatious complainant policy.

8. **Policies & Templates**

- i) To review the Habitual and Vexatious complainant policy and determine its suitability for implementation

Members reviewed the Habitual and Vexatious complainant policy to determine its suitability for implementation. Following legal advice, members **resolved** unanimously that a letter would be sent to the individual from the Chairman of the Parish Council, with a copy of the Habitual and Vexatious complainant policy, advising it will be invoked should the number of requests from the individual be deemed unreasonable as per the requirements set out in the current policy.

Members **resolved** unanimously that a further review of the policy should take place to ensure it is sufficiently robust and reflective of best practice requirements. The policy is to be represented to members at the next scheduled meeting for their consideration.

9. **Administration: Burial Ground**

- i) To receive an update & consider any administrative issues in the daily operation of the burial ground

Members present acknowledged the tree works identified within the survey for the existing churchyard had been completed.

- ii) To receive an update following the transfer of maintenance of St. Mary's Churchyard and give consideration to the schedule of maintenance required

Members present gave consideration to the maintenance schedule required at the existing churchyard, determining the further discussions were required. The item is to be brought to the next scheduled meeting.

10. **Matters for future discussion** - IT system, village hall booking system, security entry system, standing orders, church yard maintenance.

11. **To receive items for information only** - None

Conclusion: The Chairman declared the meeting closed 21.23pm

Chairman: