

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purpose Committee held on Monday 7 July 2008. Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm.

Present Chairman: Cllr J Capel
Cllrs M Cole, P Davies, M Hewitt, M Taylor, Ms Hazell and S Tilbey

Officer: Mrs Janet Holmes

596. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P J Adams

597. Declarations of interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting

598. Public Forum

None present.

599. To receive the minutes of the meetings held on 19 May 2008 and 16 June 2008.

The minutes were duly approved and signed as a true record by the Chairman of the Committee.

600. Matters Arising

Item 464 7/4/08 Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

The Parish Council had applied to the members allowances panel of South Bucks District Council for advice on establishing a travelling and subsistence allowance will stop the panel had considered the matter within the requirements of, the Local Authorities (Members Allowance)(England) Regulations 2003 (Statutory Instrument Number 2003 – 1021) which define a format of an allowance scheme for parish and town councils.

The panel propose that any travelling expenses should relate to the national rates applicable to local government staff. These are revised annually and approved by the Customs and Revenue Service for tax purposes. If the Parish Council accepts the suggestion it will need to agree a list of approved duties for which travelling expenses may be claimed. These would essentially be attending external meetings where a councillor is representing the parish council. It would not include attending parish council meetings within Burnham. The panel decided not to make any specific recommendations in respect of subsistence payments relating to councillors attending meetings as representatives of the parish council. This was on the basis that such matters, if they arise, are best dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Proposed by Councillor Tilbey, seconded by Councillor Davis

AGREED that the proposals of the District Council be recommended to the next meeting of the Full Council

601. Terms of Reference

The Halls Committee had raised the matter of their specific powers in relation to the forthcoming building project. The Finance and General Purpose Committee were asked to review the relevant items in the Terms of Reference of both committees.

With regard to the Halls Committee, it was agreed that if expenditure was within the budget of the Halls Committee there would be no problem. Any additional costs would need to be considered by the committee in the normal manner.

Councillor Ms Hazell advised the committee of the history of the establishment of the

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committee structure. The number of members for each committee was agreed when there was a political balance to the Council. There has always been the availability of co-opting a councillor with a particular skill for a particular period of time on to a committee e.g. Cllr Capel on to the Halls Committee for financial matters.

It was noted that the Recreation and Amenities Committee had requested that subcommittees not have any financial powers. It was agreed that this provision should be added to the general wording at the preface to the document.

The terms of reference of committees forms part of the Standing Orders of the Council and these revisions will be included when the Standing Orders are amended.

602. To consider the ongoing cost commitments of the halls project.

The Clerk produced a spreadsheet showing a schedule of payments made to date to contractors. It was recognised that the Council must receive regular updates and project costs for the rebuilding. Cllr Capel discussed the problems of timing with the application for a loan from the Public Works Loans Board. It was noted that as soon as the loan was approved, then the repayments would be liable.

603. To agree the formation, membership and terms of reference of a CCTV working party as recommended by the Full Council on 16 June 2008

It was agreed that a CCTV working party be set up with the following term of reference

" To investigate the effectiveness of CCTV and the possible financial implications"

The membership of the committee to be a total 9/10 members comprising 5/6 parish councillors; Member of the NAG/Neighbourhood Watch, Member of Pub Watch, A resident from Burnham Central Ward and one from Lent Rise Ward. With the provision that the Parish Council can co-opt additional members at appropriate times

Clerk to contact parish councillors to request volunteers. The times and dates of meeting to be set at a later date.

604. Financial Matters

No up to date financial statement was available as the Clerk had just returned from two weeks annual leave.

a] To note the comments of the Internal Auditor regarding the financial statement of 2007/8 and consider what action, if any should be taken.

The Internal Auditor's letter assures the Parish Council that it operates a system of internal controls which is adequate and effective given the resources available to it which adheres to the guide and other accounting and control principles for the financial year 2007/8.

His findings were as follows

Capital Project. He noted that it was the intention of the Council to demolish and rebuild Burnham Park hall commencing 2009. He noted that a feasibility study was being considered for the project which would take considerations such as loss of income during this period into account.

VAT The Council had "opted to tax" hall bookings to enable Vat building costs to be reclaimed. A decision had been made to absorb the costs during the current year so as not to increase the costs to hirers.

A VAT review had been undertaken by HM Revenue and customs with no matters identified during the visit.

Computers A new maintenance agreement had been put in place and the computer system made more efficient and secure. The level of insurance cover should be reconsidered again

Risk Assessment. Aspects of the risk assessment had been addressed but staff shortages

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meant it had not been completed. The aspects covered were for those likely to be more critical than others. A comprehensive review should be undertaken during the current year **Asset Register** A start had been made on compiling a formal asset register as set out in the NALC guide , work needs to be continued to ensure this is fully up to date as soon as possible

b] To note the comments of the recent VAT inspection.

The Council had recently received a visit from HM Customs and Revenue. VAT payments from 2002 onwards have been inspected. The inspector contributed the Council on the method in which records were kept and found no cause to complaint.

605. Training courses

It was requested that payments be made the following training courses

1.0 Mr J. Wotherspoon had completed five modules of the City and Guilds garden course. The council had reimbursed, one module at a cost of £79 and it is requested that consideration be given to the reimbursement payment of four additional modules at a total cost of £322. It was noted that Mr Wotherspoon has passed all his modules with the distinction.

AGREED That the Council reimburse the fees

2.0 The Clerk would be unable to attend a SLCC Institute Training day due to a hospital appointment . The Clerk requested that consideration be given to her attending the NALC/SLCC networking day for Quality Councils to be held on 19 September in Reading

AGREED that the Clerk attend the networking day

3.0 The Clerk informed councillors that the software company RBS would be holding a number of training days in September and October.

AGREED that the Clerk attend the one day full omega training course to be held on the 9th of September in Swindon.

Cllr Capel expressed an interest in attending either the same course or a half day budgeting course

(Clerks note. There will be an update to the programme software before the ninth of September. Thus making the training course even more useful)

4.0 The Clerk requested that she attend the SLCC National Annual Conference to be held at Wokefield Park between 17 October – 19 October. As the venue is close to her home in Reading, she would be attending as a day delegate

AGREED that the Clerk attend

606. Information items

a. Possible Trainee Clerk

The Clerk had received a request from a parish council in Berkshire that consideration be given to training their new Clerk. They would offer to fund the salary and expenses of a trainee during a possible 12 month attachment. Members expressed concerns as to the commitment that would be required from Burnham for such training and the load it would place on the Clerk.

The e-mail request was the first tentative contact, and the Clerk will report back to the committee should further information be received.

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b. Safety of contractors

The Clerk informed councillors of a recent incident experienced by the roofing contractor, who was attempting to repair the bus shelter at Windsor Lane early Sunday morning. He had been approached by four youths who broke glass bottles and threatened him. A report was made to the police and information from CCTV cameras was offered. The contact at TVP told Mrs Mansford that as no one had been injured they were not interested and recommended that when the contractor carries out repairs if the youths return he should phone 999. A copy of the email was passed to Cllrs Tilbey and Cole. Cllr Tilbey agreed to speak with Inspector Wrigley about the Information Desk's response

c. The use of red diesel

There is currently a dispute regarding the interpretation of VAT notice 75 which defines what machines and equipment are allowed to use red diesel and what operators are permitted to use red diesel. It appears to specifically exclude any recreational operations. If the Parish Council is not allowed to continue using red diesel in its tractors and mowers, there will be a considerable increase in the cost of maintaining pitches.

AGREED that the Clerk write to the MP for clarification of the situation.

d Nick Carr accident

The Clerk reported that Mr Carr has recently had an accident with a hedge trimmer whilst working on one of the Council footpaths. He had been taken to hospital by ambulance but was able to return to work the following day. This matter was reported to the Chairman of the Council and the relevant reports were completed.

e. Insurance claim.

Zurich Municipal have agreed to pay for a new flag pole

f. Investigation Bore Holes

Members were informed that test boreholes for the heating and cooling of the new building would be carried out on Wednesday.

g District Cllr J M Thomson

Members were informed that an e-mail had been received from councillor J. M. Thompson requesting information on the feasibility study. The feasibility study forms part of the Council's request for funding from the Public Works Loans Board and as such is a contractual document. The request to view the information had been refused.

h. TVP monthly stats

Details have been received for April & May and are available in the office for inspection

i. GC2C

details have been received of the recent GC2c meeting – these are available in the office for inspection

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.25 pm