
Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held on Monday 28th September 2020 at 7pm using the Zoom on-line facility commencing at 7pm.

Present:

Cllr Geoff Hainsworth, Cllr Debbie Brown, Cllr Paul French and Cllr Guy James.

Finance Officer: Mrs D McBride

Chairman, Cllr Hainsworth welcomed everyone to the meeting.

09.00.20F Democratic 15 minutes Public Time

There were no members of public present.

09.01.20F Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

**09.02.20F Declaration of interests:
Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members are reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of member's interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

There were no interests declared.

09.03.20F To confirm the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Thursday 23rd July 2020

The Minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on Thursday 23rd July 2020 were approved and signed.

09.04.20F Matters arising from the Minutes

- DM informed the Committee that the outstanding community events to be held by The Glassroom as part of their Capital Receipt Grant have been deferred as business has been hindered by Covid restrictions and other circumstances. The Committee hope that things will improve and the events will be held next year.

09.05.20F To review the 2020/21 accounts year-to-date

- Receipts and Payments were reviewed; year-to-date against budget and the year-end forecast. Grants for the Play Area and CCTV not received in the last financial year are due in soon. We have also received £15,000 from 'Covid business and tourism support' grants. As these projects develop this will be reflected in expenditure. The street lights upgrade is not complete as the concrete street light in the Furlongs has still not been removed. This is a joint project with Western Power and Prysmian and both parties need to be chased up. DB had received an email from Cleobury Country regarding a larger office which is becoming available. It would mean more space for all office staff to work safely and offers an area for working group/committee meetings. Matter to be looked into further and brought to full Council in October. The Committee approved the Receipts and Payments as presented and this was duly signed by the Chairman.
- The Bank Reconciliation was reviewed and signed.
- Ear-marked reserves were reviewed in detail. There has been an enquiry for CIL funding for the Community Hub. The Committee were not unwilling to support this but as the Hub is part of the Neighbourhood Plan proposals the Committee felt they could not give an answer until the Neighbourhood Plan has progressed and will seek advice from Unitary Cllr/Portfolio Holder Gwilym Butler. Due to the proposals for Council to purchase two laptop computers for officers who are home-working and also Chromebooks for councillors, the Committee approved an increase to £3,000 for Office Equipment which may need increasing further as the plan develops. The reserves for Dementia Friendly Town will be increased to £500 as we will be helping deliver support leaflets and posters especially when the Cleobury Hills Nursing Home opens.
- Petty Cash was reviewed and confirmed as being correct.

09.06.20F To review Bank Mandate and confirm all direct debit payments

The mandate for the Council's bank accounts was reviewed. It was agreed to make amendments to the signatories to reflect the current council members. Cllr Brown will speak with Lloyds Bank to update the Playing Fields bank mandate so that funds can be released.

Initials.....GH.....

09.06.20F To review Bank Mandate and confirm all direct debit payments (cont'd)

The Committee confirmed the following suppliers are paid by direct debit: 123 Reg for website domain, BT for office and mobile phone services, Shropshire Council for invoices and payroll, NEST for pension contributions and Npower for street light electricity.

09.07.20F To review progress of Projects and grant funding received

The Committee went through the Projects List which DM had updated since the last meeting. Further updates were noted at the meeting and the updated copy of the Projects List is attached with these Minutes.

Town Council projects

Points to note: The LEADER claim for the Love Lane Play Area work has been approved and payment is due to be made soon. Projects such as obtaining quotes for lighting at the QEII Park and at sites around town need moving on. There is also no progress in obtaining an accurate detailed inventory of our street lights and no confirmation of the proposed highway improvements near the Primary School. Re-pointing and repair work will be undertaken at the Wells by a local contractor. The £5,000 grant to help with the refurbishment and creation of a site of historical interest for tourism to help boost the local economy has been received. The £10,000 business grant received will be initially allocated for the Cemetery as improvements are required on the shed and Lych gate as well as work on the shrubs and paths. The bier could also be refurbished and perhaps put on public display.

Shropshire Council projects

The Vehicle Activated Sign at Newbridge has finally been installed but the verge work is unfinished and no progress on the proposed highway improvements and extension of the speed limits has been made. The Town Council has brought all aspects of the Parking Strategy back under Council management but there has been no further action. A Working Group Meeting needs to be called to move this forward. The Clerk is chasing Highways for the Talbot Car Park's re-surfacing which has still not been carried out.

09.08.20F To consider on-going and future grounds maintenance

PF spoke about proposals to plant bulbs this autumn in the churchyard flower beds and at the QEII Park as well as having more floral displays ie planters and hanging baskets in town next year. Looking further ahead the Neighbourhood Plan is proposing more open access land in the future which we will need to manage. Whilst we have some excellent voluntary help currently, we cannot rely on this permanently and need to consider ensuring regular maintenance by the Town Council either through additional contractors or staff hours. It was agreed to seek contractor support initially and review this regularly as these projects develop.

09.09.20F To consider preparations for next year's expenditure budget and revision of fees

The first draft of a budget for next year will include an increase in expenditure on grounds and tree maintenance. Due to a variety of issues on the Playing Field this year, including unpaid fees and groups leaving unwanted equipment on the field resulting in anti-social behaviour and more recently a fire which has resulted in damage to property, the Committee agreed that there needs to be stricter management of the regular field users. Following advice from the Fire Service the Clerk has asked the Rugby Club to remove all their tyres with immediate effect. The issues this year have highlighted that the Playing Field hiring fees are inadequate. It was agreed that all fees will be increased from 1st April 2021 to better recover the costs of managing the field. All sports groups making block or individual bookings will be expected to sign up to the Playing Field Hire Agreement going forward. The Committee agreed to leave the Cemetery fees as they are for another year and review them again next autumn.

09.10.20F To receive Future Agenda items

There were no new items raised but the Committee felt that due to some of the issues raised in this meeting we need to ensure more accountability from community groups using our facilities but also improved reporting from those we have supported financially.

09.11.20F To set date of next Finance Committee meeting

The next Finance Committee meeting will be on Monday 16th November 2020 at 7pm using the Zoom on-line facility.

Meeting closed at 8.13pm.

Signed Chairman: G Hainsworth

Date: 16th November 2020