
Minutes of Finance Committee meeting held on Monday 22nd March 2021 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.

03.00.21F Democratic 15 minutes Public Time

There were no members of public present.

03.01.21F Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

**03.02.21F 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.

03.03.21F To confirm Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday 18th January 2021

The Minutes from the Finance Committee meeting held on Monday 18th January 2021 were approved and signed.

03.04.21F Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

03.05.21F To review the 2020/21 accounts year-to-date

- The Receipts and Payments account was reviewed against budget and the year-end forecast. There are a few transactions still to go through for the current year. The Finance Committee approved the Receipts and Payments as presented and this was duly signed by the Chairman.
- The Bank Reconciliation was reviewed and signed.
- Petty Cash was reviewed and confirmed as being correct.
- The Town Council now has oversight with a Capital Receipt Grant issue which will be discussed further at the April Council meeting. The Finance Committee reviewed this year's S.137 expenditure and were satisfied that the payments are appropriate even though only half the budgeted amount had been applied for. It was agreed to encourage community groups to apply for money in the next financial year especially after Covid restrictions have eased and review S.137 expenditure after six months. There will be an effort to engage better with the community, including on social media, to reach a wider audience as part of restarting the Council's Community Engagement Strategy this year. Cllr James asked how we evaluate the benefit of some of the grants ie Walkers are Welcome membership especially as it can be difficult to get reports from some grant recipients. It was noted that Walkers Are Welcome is a national organisation with tourism links across the country including local businesses. A full report is due soon from SSYF for their outreach work so that Council can learn more about issues affecting young people and consider ways to help them.
- Food Bank and Covid support funds managed by the Town Council were reviewed. The Food Bank Annual Report and accounts have been approved at the March Council meeting. The Food Bank Petty Cash managed by the Food Bank Coordinators was reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee.
- Ear-marked reserves were reviewed in detail. The current projects for the QEII Park to install drainage, lighting and steps from the Playing Field are currently being quoted for. There is some money remaining for the QEII Park from Shropshire Council from the land transfer. There is also some Neighbourhood Fund money available and Council should receive more Neighbourhood Fund money in April. The quotes for the projects are expected to be ready for discussion at the May Council meeting. The Finance Committee will review the Ear-marked reserves again for these projects at the next meeting. The Chairman raised

concerns regarding the on-going issue with not receiving a written agreement with Prysmian regarding street light maintenance and that despite previous requests no meeting has taken place. DM was asked to arrange a meeting with GH and Prysmian.

03.06.21F To consider options to upgrade accounting system to Income and Expenditure basis.

Following research and advice from our accounts advisor and internal auditor DM has obtained quotes for cloud-based Income and Expenditure accounting systems. The recommendation is for a bespoke package for town and parish councils rather than commercial business software. Three quotes of each were obtained and the Committee agreed that a bespoke package is appropriate. The Finance Committee approved the RBS (Rialtas) Alpha Financial Management Software.

03.07.21F To review progress of Projects.

The Committee went through the Projects List

Town Council projects

The additional Cemetery Land is subject to the Neighbourhood Development Plan outcome. The Cemetery projects for the bier, shed, lych gate has been on hold due to Covid restrictions. Our request for CIL Local funding towards the Love Lane Play Area refurbishment project was finally approved. Some cleaning and emergency repairs have taken place at the Wells but the repointing work has to wait until the warmer weather. All building materials have been purchased ready for use. The streetlight inventory and LED upgrades will be resolved once a meeting has taken place with Prysmian. Three additional streetlights requested by parishioners needs progressing. Parking issues at the Primary School were discussed with Police and Highways representative last November but there has been no progress since. The QEII Park projects are all underway with quotes being obtained for the May Council Meeting. The Tenbury Road junction survey is tied in with the NDP which is moving on well.

Shropshire Council projects

There has been some highway improvement work in the Newbridge area with the proposed extension of the 30mph and 40mph zones consultation currently underway. Whilst the Town Council is requesting a full survey of the High Street which will be noted in the Place Plan there has been no progress on re marking the disabled bays and lines on the main road. There has also been no update on resurfacing/repainting the Talbot Car Park. DM was asked to chase Unitary Cllr Gwilym Butler who said money had been earmarked for this work several years ago. There has been no further correspondence from Shropshire Council regarding the Library.

03.08.21F To review Asset Register and consider On-Line Mapping of assets.

The Finance Committee reviewed the Asset Register. DM has kept the Asset Register up-to-date throughout the year and recently checked all equipment in the container and cemetery shed. All purchases and a few amendments to the street lights inventory have been noted on the Register. It was agreed to establish the location of the community's Christmas Sleigh which has been used in recent years by the Fire Service and ask if they were interested in keeping it. Both mowers need to be serviced as they are not very old and should be working. The old strimmer should also be serviced to verify if it is useable.

Further to the previous discussion with cloud-based accounting, DM has been looking into online mapping of the Council's assets. This is recommended to support the Asset Register for insurance purposes but also for management of all assets including land and equipment ie bins, benches, CCTV, streetlights, signage, play equipment as well as community assets such as historical buildings, public walks etc. The maps can help with marking out events such as locations of all Festival participants, preparing maps for grass-cutting tenders etc. The digital maps will be of a uniform quality and therefore more professional and accurate than hand-drawn ones. The Finance Committee agreed to purchase Parish Online mapping which has been set up specifically for this purpose to help town and parish councils. With a 20% discount through SALC this will cost £136.00.

03.09.21F To review on-going difficulties with Lloyds Bank and consider options to add Finance Officer as a signatory and open account with another Bank.

DM and DB explained the difficulties with trying to add a third-party indemnity to the Town Council's accounts as well as releasing funds from the Playing Fields account. Due to Lloyds' access system of security questions on the Council's bank transactions and their requirement to link to personal information it has proved impossible to speak with a Business Manager and our local branch will not facilitate a Business Banking meeting either. One proposal is for the Finance Officer to become a signatory to enable a conduit to a Business Manager and start the process to implement the third-party indemnity and access to the Playing Fields Account. The Finance Committee felt this was

a sensible option and as the Council runs a strict two-signature rule there is no risk, purely as an administrative facility. Due to the difficulties and lack of interest in Lloyds to actually provide any help to overcome these difficulties it was further agreed to look at opening an account with another bank. DM will bring back options to the next meeting.

03.10.21F To review draft Three Year Business Plan and Annual Summary Plan for 2021-22.

The draft Three Year Business Plan was reviewed and subject to a few amendments will be sent to Council for approval at their April meeting. The Committee noted that many infrastructure and environmental items are governed by the outcome of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and it was felt that the Business Plan can be more accurately reviewed once the NDP has been made later this year.

The Annual Summary Plan for 2021/22 was reviewed in detail. The proposed electric charging points at the car parks and on the High Street will be added as Government grants are available for 75% of the installation costs and this will help achieve our Zero carbon target. Document to be sent out to all Council members for approval at the April Council meeting.

03.11.21F To receive Future Agenda items

There were no new items raised.

03.12.21F To set date of next Finance Committee meeting

The next Finance Committee meeting will be on Monday 21st June 2021 at 7pm by Zoom (subject to legislation).

Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Signed Chairman: G Hainsworth

Date: 21st June 2021