

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance Committee
held at Bishopstoke Methodist Church
commencing at 7:38pm on 13 December 2022**

Present: Cllrs Winstanley (Chair), C McKeone and Lyon

In Attendance: Mrs S Thorogood (RFO to Bishopstoke Parish Council)
Mr D Wheal (Clerk to Bishopstoke Parish Council)

Public Attendance: 0 members of the public were present.

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Public Session

33 Apologies for Absence

33.1 Apologies were received from Cllrs A Dean and R Dean.

34 To adopt and sign Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25th October 2022

34.1 The Minutes of the above meeting had been circulated prior to the meeting.

34.2 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, seconded Cllr C McKeone, **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 25 October 2022 be adopted as a true record.

35 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

35.1 None declared or requested.

Cllr Winstanley agreed to bring agenda item 8 forward in order that the Clerk could speak

36 To approve a grant request from St Mary's Church

36.1 Details of the grant request had been included with the document pack.

36.2 The Clerk provided some background information in that the Parish Council has financial responsibility as part of its health and safety responsibility of the Churchyard to remove the oak tree but not to fund replacement trees. The Council has sight of minutes from the Parochial Church Council who had agreed to fund the cost of planting new trees at St Mary's from the Church legacy funds.

36.3 The Clerk reminded the Committee that they should be satisfied the grants would be used to help the Community, and not just individuals.

36.4 The Committee discussed both applications, and felt that as the PCC had already minuted to fund the tree planting, the first application should be rejected, including the request for two new boxes on the existing trees.

36.5 The Committee were also concerned that as it could not be guaranteed where the swift boxes would be installed i.e., not accessible to the community if in individual gardens, it was unable to award this part of the application too.

36.6 The Committee suggested that an invitation be extended to Hampshire Swifts to attend the Parish Assembly in May to give a talk on a plight of swifts, and perhaps invite other organisations to attend to talk about other species of bird or wildlife that also need help. The members of the Church who have indicated willing to install a swift box would be invited to attend the Parish Assembly.

Action: Clerk

36.7 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr Lyon, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council reject both parts of the grant application from St Mary's Church.

The Clerk left the meeting, and Cllr Winstanley moved back to agenda item 4.

37 To approve reports on Council finances

37.1 The payments lists and statement of accounts for October and November 2022 had been included with the document pack for the meeting.

37.2 Cllr Lyon asked the RFO for a general feeling of how the Council's financial position is currently. The RFO replied that overall, the Council is doing well financially, with actual position to budget being fairly accurate.

37.3 The RFO commented that a big impact to the Council was the higher than budgeted salary rise agreed between the NJC and the Government. However due to the new member of staff not starting until September, the increased cost had been absorbed by the underspend in the budget line for the new employee. The actuals for November 2022 include the payment of the back pay salary award to all 5 employees for the relevant parts of the year.

37.4 Arising actions from last minutes included the new insurance policy. The RFO confirmed that the Council had entered into a new 3-year deal with BHIB Ltd. The policy currently includes insuring the Parish Office; when the building is demolished, the policy will be amended accordingly, and a small refund should be due.

37.5 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, Seconded Cllr C McKeone, **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the reports on Council finances.

38 To recommend a virement to a maximum of £5,000 from reserves to the Underwood Road plot clearance budget

38.1 Details of the requirements were included in the document pack.

38.2 Cllr Lyon asked the RFO if the cleared plots are let after the work. The RFO confirmed that the plots are let quickly to people on the waiting list, and the work that has been carried out this year has enabled the Underwood Road waiting list to reduce in wait time from around 21 months to 12 months. The plots are offered with a rental-free period of 1-2 months, then the new tenants are charged for the remainder of the rental year.

38.3 Proposed Cllr Lyon, Seconded Cllr Winstanley, **RECOMMENDED** unanimously that the Council vire a maximum of £5,000 from reserves to the Underwood Road plot clearance budget.

39 To make a recommendation for the budget for the financial year 2023-24

39.1 The forecast of the financial position for the end of 2022-23 and a first draft budget were included in the document pack. This had been prepared by the RFO, and reviewed by the Clerk.

39.2 The RFO commented that the two largest areas of expenditure for the Council are salary costs and the grounds maintenance contract. The new contract includes a clause to factor in a percentage rise each year, or CPI rate, whichever is greater. With current rate of inflation, a 10% rise has been factored into payroll costs.

39.3 The grant budget was increased to £15,000 this financial year for the Jubilee and has been reduced to £6,000 at present for 2023-24. Cllr Winstanley asked if there had been much uptake of the grants; to date just under £6,000 has been awarded. The Committee discussed earmarking the remainder of the 2022-23 unspent budget towards the maintenance cost of the defibrillators and asked the RFO to find out current cost of replacing the pads and batteries to make a decision for year end.

Action - RFO

39.4 The RFO highlighted one area of financial risk is the budget does not include any spend for play area equipment purchase. Brookfield play area has been improved due to the grant this financial year. Due to the refurbishment planned to Glebe Meadow, it is not worth replacing any equipment at that play area.

39.5 The other area of financial risk is with regards to tree work as it is difficult to predict emergency tree work due. The extreme weather so far this year could lead to issues over the winter, despite the Council carrying out the necessary work that arose from the last tree surveys. The budget does include tree work within the Allotments, Burial Grounds, and Play Area and Open Spaces sections of the budgets. The tree surveys are carried out approximately every 15 months and are next due in the Summer of 2023.

39.6 10% increase in costs has been factored into other items such as IT costs, stationery, printing,

39.7 Cllr Lyon asked for clarification between general and earmarked reserves. The RFO replied that the Council can earmark unspent items at the end of a financial year for a specific project, or when the Council receives project income such as the cemetery gates artwork fund, or the play area grant.

39.8 The Committee discussed that certain budgets could be reduced to try to save money, but each area helps a certain part of the village population – e.g. reducing travel tokens budget impacts the elderly, reducing the grant pot impacts community organisations, the carnival is for everyone.

39.9 Cllr Lyon suggested that the RFO and Clerk work through a 2nd draft budget for the Full Council meeting in January, colour-coding items that are fixed and should not be reduced, and areas that are more of an estimate and could be reduced. The Councillors could then decide to find savings in the estimated areas to potentially reduce overall expenditure.

39.10 The Committee asked for the information on the current situation with the Y-Zone contract and funding to be available for the Full Council meeting in January in order to make a decision on future funding.

Action - Clerk

39.11 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, seconded Cllr C McKeone, **RECOMMENDED** unanimously that the Full Council approves the first draft budget for the financial year 2023-24

40 To make a recommendation for funding the budget and the precept request for the financial year 2023-24

40.1 Proposed Cllr Winstanley, seconded Cllr C McKeone, **RECOMMENDED** unanimously that the Full Council considers a precept rise of between 30 and 35% for the financial year 2023-24

Initial: _____ Date: _____

41 Date, time, place, and agenda items for next meeting

41.1 The next meeting of the Finance Committee will take place at 7:30pm on Tuesday 14th February 2023 at the Bishopstoke Methodist Church.

41.2 Agenda items with supporting papers to the RFO by Tuesday 7th February.

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8:56pm

Chair's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Clerk's Signature: _____ Date: _____