

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee Held on Tuesday 25th February 2014 at 8.25pm in the Community Office

Present:

Councillors:

Tim Horton –Chairman
Roddy Orr – Vice-Chairman
Ian Hill
Tony Williamson
Barry Adby

Officer:

Kristina Tynan

14/14 Apologies for absence

There were none.

15/14 Chairman's Remarks

TH said in relation to item 6, Report on Staff Reviews, this could be discussed tonight or if felt necessary could be deferred to the next meeting.

16/14 To approve the Minutes from the Meeting on the 7th January 2014 which were received by Council on 14/1/2014

Resolved: That these minutes are a correct record of this meeting and that they be signed by the Chairman.

17/14 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising other than agenda items.

18/14 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest notified.

19/14 Budget/Reserves

a) **Neighbourhood Plan Draft Budget** – This is in the NPCC Minutes.

IH stated that this was a hard exercise but some things can be reasonably cost defined. There are some things that are notional at this stage.

TH said that there will be £10,500 in Reserves on the 1/4/2014 and £10,000 that SODC are bound to allocate to the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan. There could be £7,000 available from the Locality Fund. This would mean that there could be £27,000 available to spend on this over the next 3 years.

After discussion it was agreed that this seems to be a good start and it would be important that there would be an ability to vary between headings on an annual basis. IH and KT to get together to work out how this could work in practice. It was also noted that the NPCC need to start looking at recruiting an administrative officer.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That Council support advertising for an administrative officer for the NPCC on the basis of the budget which has been drawn up.

b) **Boiler for Community Office** – TH reported that we need to make a statement of how we make a payment for something that is not in the budget. We could use part of the contingency for Central Services or use all or some of the uncommitted reserves. We could take £500 out of the Central Services contingency this year and use some of next year's Central Services contingency in advance. There was discussion on this issue.

Resolved: That we use £500 from the Central Services Contingency from this financial year and use £1500 from the uncommitted reserves.

c) **Any Other budget/reserve items.** – There were no items raised for discussion.

20/14 Staff Issues

1. **Report on Staff Reviews.** – The reviews have taken place and a record will be available in due course when IH has written up the notes on the appraisal. IH and TH conducted the Clerks review and IH and KT conducted the reviews for the Caretaker and the Assistant to the Clerk. TH suggested that the paperwork and forms will need to be reviewed before next years annual appraisals and we will need to consider this at a future time. TH stated that all the reviews were satisfactory in every regard and he proposed that there should be an increase in salaries from 1st April 2014. Further to discussion the following was agreed:

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That the Clerk, Assistant to the Clerk and the Caretaker have increases in their salaries in line with the NALC guidelines. It was noted that this seems to be a better time of year for staff reviews rather than the summer and it was agreed that the annual reviews take place in February in future.

21/14 Other Financial Issues

a) **Proposal for a 'Watlington Fund'** –TH had submitted a note to the meeting on this which is held on file.

TH stated that we should consider a new initiative to provide improved structure for those who may wish to leave in wills and through other bequests lasting and permanent gifts to the community of Watlington. He said that this should not be undertaken by the Council but that it should be either a new charity and run by trustees outside of the Council. An existing charitable body may wish to take up this matter and bring it to a contemporary interpretation. TH said that he has been asked on occasion about granting of gifts that would be specific in benefit.

It was thought that in the first instance that the Watlington Charity Trustees could be approached for their views on this. Consideration could also be given to a wholly new initiative. After discussion it was:

Resolved: That TH and TW do some further work on this and bring this issue back to the next meeting.

b) **Grass Cutting Tenders** – Three tenders have been received which BA and KT have gone through carefully. The Clerk had put together a comparative spreadsheet on the tender costs which was sent to members. Discussion took place on this and it was noted that of the three tenders one was deemed not adequate, one was too expensive which therefore only left 1 company in the running which is our current contractor.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That we appoint Berinsfield Community Business as our Contractor for the next three years (1/4/14 – 31/3/2017) subject to an agreement that if the rates are to vary after 1 year that Council will need to agree to any increase in costs.

c) **Financial Briefing from NALC re current position on Legislative Reform Order which will repeal s150(5) of the Local Government Act 1972.** –this was attached to the agenda. It was noted that as more information becomes available this will be sent to us by OALC. This relates to the repeal of the requirement for cheques or other payable orders having to be signed off by two signatories and would allow Councils to pay by BACS or other means subject to having in place effective systems an arrangements compliant with the proper practices before it seeks to abandon the two signature rule. This was discussed and the following agreed:

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That we support the principle of this subject to further detail from NALC

d) **OALC – Message from Justin Griggs NALC concerning the Government’s Announcement regarding Council Tax Referendum principles** – this was attached to the agenda.

This message was noted.

e) **Internal Audit for 2013/2014 – Appointment of Internal Auditor**

There was discussion on this and the following was agreed:

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That we appoint Roger Symes as our internal auditor for Year End March 2013

f) **Depreciation of Assets** – RO – last year’s asset list is attached

It was noted that we need to make a list of things that will need at some point to be repaired and replaced and a strategy of how we would finance these things. RO said that small things would be done as a matter of course but would need to look at larger things. It was agreed that we produce an inventory of larger items by October. TH and RO will do this and also develop some sort of methodology.

g) **Review of the Effectiveness of the Internal Audit.** – Following discussion it was agreed:

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: To agree the following statement;

‘The main role of the Internal Auditor is to check all the financial and accountable records that the Clerk must keep. This is done soon after the end of the financial year and involves all the financial transactions and both the legal authority and procedural authority for such transactions - eg the signed minutes of all meetings. Once the Internal Auditor is satisfied with the accounts and records, the Clerk prepares the relatively brief submission to the External Auditor. During the year the Clerk occasionally seeks his advice - eg in transferring the Receipt and Payment accounts, operated through the year, into Accrual accounts needed for audit. Were the Clerk to leave or become temporarily unavailable, the Internal Auditor would assist a new or acting clerk’.

h) **Car Park Contribution Review** – list of payments to date was attached to the agenda.

It was noted that we have received £7220 to date. It was agreed that TH and KT go through the list to see has not contributed.

22/14 General Issues

a) **Sign for Recreation Ground** – request from Operations Committee

It was agreed that we look into SODC grants for this. TH/BA and KT.

23/14 Correspondence

1. **IAC Audit** – information on their company- **Noted.**
- 2 **Martin Edis** – Youth Club are applying to become a CIO –**Noted.**
3. **David Dibbens** – Parish Precept – **This was considered and it was agreed that TH respond to him on this.**

24/14 Items for Next Meeting.

Staff Review Notes- IH/TH
Watlington Fund –TH/TW

25/14 Any Other Business

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS THE MEETING CLOSED AT 10.09PM