

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee on Monday 25th November 2013 at 8.00pm in the Community Office

A G E N D A

Present:

Councillors: Tim Horton – Chairman
Tony Williamson
Barry Adby
Harvey Batten
Roddy Orr

Officer: Samantha Hobbs

56/13 Apologies for absence
Ian Hill,

57/13 Chairman's Remarks

- a. TH had considered cancelling the meeting due to the absences of IH and KT but felt that it was essential to have an early look at the budget figures.
- b. TH reminded attendees that the figures were necessarily provisional as the full information was not yet available

58/13 To approve the Minutes from the Meeting on the 19th September 2013 and from the Special Meeting held on the 8th October 2013 which were received by Council on 8/10/2013 and 12/11/2013 respectively

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

TH explained that although there had been considerable discussion concerning the football barrier, this proposal had to be withdrawn at the Council Meeting. It was noted that Financial Regulations should always apply in the commissioning of new work. He had asked to ensure that there should have been a tendering/like-for-like comparison for the barriers and that appropriate transfers should be made to the Council's accounts prior to commissioning where joint venturing should be taken up. Further that all these matters should be recorded in writing. The committee agreed that the Financial Regulations need be applied. The committee may need to clarify how to work with partner bodies in such cases in future. The barrier potentially needs to be removed at some stage with the cost being borne by the Pavilion Committee – currently estimated at £580 but there are concerns that this may not be enough.

59/13 Matters Arising

1. Depreciation of Assets

RO suggested that many assets depreciate over time which should be seen as an expense and be budgeted for. Property can also be seen as a depreciating asset due to the cost of upkeep. It was commented that this is already provided for with respect to the Town Hall but not the Pavillion and the Office building. To date painting of the Office and the replacement of a computer have been treated as exceptional items. It was noted that the skateboard facilities and play equipment might also be considered. TH mentioned that once the current maintenance deal for the play equipment ends, there could be another arranged for 3 – 5 years.

It was agreed to identify assets and how to deal with them at the next meeting, possibly linked to a discussion concerning the 50% of precept currently in reserve.

TW suggested that all committees be asked to provide details of liabilities.

2. Car Park Contributions –Barclays Bank Contribution

TH – has taken this to the national level within the bank requesting payment and is awaiting a response

3. Floodlight for Sports Field

It was noted that this request has been withdrawn

60/13 Declarations of Interest

HB – Chair of Youth Club

BA – Sports Club

TH – Watlington in Bloom

61/13 Budget/Reserves

TH and KT have worked to make these budgets as accurate as possible building in all that had been anticipated through past meetings of the Finance Committee. TH expressed thanks to KT for all her work presenting an estimate to the end of this year. Nothing has been counted out. IH has raised some issues prior to the meeting including the matter of pensions. The draft for 2014/15 takes into account anticipated trends regarding heating and water.

Pension details are currently missing as this depends on whether employees choose to take them up. If they are taken up, this would cost about £400 for the next year (1% of around £40K total salaries) and will increase in following years. TH has completed and submitted the necessary forms to NEST and is awaiting a response.

Pavillion and Sports Field – TW suggested that more detail might be provided for clarity.

Public Conveniences – TW raised the issue of any excess of funding from SODC going into reserves specifically for the Public Conveniences rather than generally available reserves.

Car Park – TW clarified that initially the Parish Council paid 25% of the Car Park costs, the remaining 75% being paid from voluntary contributions from the Traders. Initially the cost was £10,000; £2,500 being paid by the council, £5,000 by the Co-op and the rest by the other traders. Any excess was to go into two funds; the first, a sinking fund towards resurfacing in 15 years and the second as fund reserved for the Car Park and not to be used by the Parish Council for any other purposes

RO – added that cost is now around £11,000 with the Co-op contributing £8,000 but the other trader contributions are ad hoc.

TH – Mentioned £2,000 for changes to the entrance of the car park and TW wondered if this might come out of existing reserves.

BA – commented that the Council is not currently paying for the electricity in the car park.

He also commented that the amount estimated for Green Maintenance in the car park seemed low

Car Park Drainage – HB concerned that this will be held up if combined with Car Park Entrance issues. A current quote for the drainage is almost £13,000. TH said we should appoint a project leader for work on the entrance and reported that the Operations Committee were waiting to hear from OCC Highways on this matter.

Bollards

BA commented that the amount estimated for Bollards was low – TH says KT is assuming current bollards will be sufficient

Green space maintenance

BA added that Operations Committee had requested an increase of £5,000. This had been spread across separate sections of the Green Space Maintenance section of the budget outline. BA explained that grass cutting and ground maintenance has had to be increased by £2,000 because SODC will be doing less.

Salaries – a 2% increase has been allowed for.

Projected Income

TH tabled a separate sheet that conjectured income for 2014/15 based on 1) no change in the tax base 2) the 'offset subsidy from SODC as suggested by Finance Officers from SODC and 3) no changes in charges or projected increases in subsidy/gift (e.g. in relation to car park) and 4) an efficiency figure of £1000 for 'underspend' in 2013/14.

Shortfall - After adjustment on the treatment of the Public Convenience surplus projected (that ought to be transferred to the special reserve) of £1,152 and the need to include £400 for pensions, an increase of £8,136 might be implied for the precept.

Reserves – There was a discussion concerning committed vs. uncommitted reserves and a comment that the Town Hall reserve situation was improving. It was suggested that for the sake of clarity, the reserves and liabilities might also be listed.

Resolved: that, with the agreed alterations, these interim figures should be presented to the December meeting of the Parish Council for comment.

62/13 Staff Issues

1. **Staff reviews and designated responsibilities** – *Taken in Confidential Session*
2. **Staff training** – BT wishes to attend a First Aid Course
It was agreed that this should be funded.
3. **Remuneration for the Clerk** - *Taken in Confidential Session*
4. **Pensions** - *Taken in Confidential Session*

63/13 Other Financial Issues

1. **New Publication by NALC – Local Councils explained**

It was agreed that this should be purchased.

2. **The Chilterns Conservation Board**

It was agreed to for the Parish Council to join the CCB for an annual £15 subscription, to be seen as a rolling contribution

3. **Watlington Environment Group** – Request for Funding

The request was not attached and will therefore be considered at the next meeting

4. **Asset Register 2013/2014**

As minuted above, this will be discussed further at the next meeting

64/13 General Issues

SODC Meeting on Precepts for Town and Parish Councils

TH reported that SODC will be passing on the imposed cut and anticipated that eventually this grant would shrink to nothing over 5 – 10 years.

65/13 Correspondence

Letter from Youth Club

Letter not attached and will therefore be considered at the next meeting

66/13 Items for Next Meeting.

Discussion of an Asset Register

Watlington Environment Group – request for funding

Letter from Youth Club

67/13 Any Other Business

The date for the next meeting was set for 9th January 2014 at 8pm

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS THE MEETING CLOSED AT 10.05