

## NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021, commencing at 7.00p.m.

*Following the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (c.7) Councils were unable to meet in person during the COVID emergency. This meeting was, therefore, held via a Zoom link, with Councillors connecting remotely.*

Present:                    Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)                    Cllr P Godwin (Vice-Chairman)  
                                 Cllr C Blackmore (until/from FIN/06/21)   Cllr MacTiernan  
                                 Cllr E Phennah (from FIN/04/21)        Cllr G Shelton  
                                 Cllr S Terry                                        Cllr T Treacy  
                                 Cllr S Ward

In Attendance:        Mrs C Woodward, Clerk of the Council  
                                 Mrs L Stewart, Clerk's Assistant

### FIN/01/21 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

### FIN/02/21 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest, as required by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Parish Council on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012 (Minute Ref C/159/12), including paragraph 12(2), were made.

### FIN/03/21 Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Cllr Terry PROPOSED approval of the Minutes of the Meeting that took place on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020. Cllr Shelton SECONDED.

FOR:                        Cllr Terry                                        Cllr Shelton  
                                 Cllr Blackmore                                Cllr Godwin  
                                 Cllr MacTiernan                               Cllr Roberts  
                                 Cllr Ward

ABSTENTIONS:        Cllr Phennah                                Cllr Treacy

### FIN/04/21 Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

***FIN/65/20 The Public Sectors Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications (No2) Accessibility Regs 2018*** – An online review was given for Utopia who developed the new website.

***FIN/67/68/69/20 Smart Meters*** – The Clerk had accepted an offer of Smart Meters for the Village Hall, Changing Rooms and Community Hub; however, the Council had since been notified that it did not 'fit the criteria' for two of them.

7:05 p.m. – Cllr Phennah joined the meeting.

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FIN/04/21 **Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes** (continued)

*FIN/68/20 Changing Rooms – Galvanised protection covers had been purchased and Cllr Ward had installed these.*

FIN/05/21 **Internal Audit**

The Clerk tabled quotations from GAPTC, Kevin Rose IAC and Auditing Solutions in relation to the Internal Audit for 2020/21 Financial Year.

The Clerk pointed out that the Council had used IAC for the 2019/2020 Financial Year and for the current financial year the Clerk had sought quotations from three organisation GAPTC, IAC and Auditing Solutions. All three Auditors had no conflicts of interest with the Council or its Officers and were suitably qualified.

Members went through the three options IAC (used previously), GAPTC (who provided a trained Clerk for the service) and Auditing Solutions. Members were impressed with the information provided by Auditing Solutions, which included samples of their work and how reports would be presented as well as their previous experience. Their fees were £450 per day and there would be a requirement for two days work. This would be reduced to a total of £675 for the second year, assuming no significant concerns were identified in the first year's review.

Cllr Roberts PROPOSED that the Council should accept the quotation from Auditing Solutions based on the information provided and the fact that the price would go down if they were used again. Cllr Shelton SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/06/21 **Reserves Policy**

7:11 p.m. – Cllr Blackmore left the meeting.

A draft Reserves Policy had been circulated to Members. Cllr Terry PROPOSED approval and adoption of this policy. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

7:13 p.m. – Cllr Blackmore re-joined the meeting.

FIN/07/21 **Financial Requirements for the Year 2021/2022**

- a. **Draft Council Budget for 2021/22** – Members of the various Committees had put their bids together for consideration for the 2021/22 budget. The figures were now clearer showing Month 8 rather than 6 and following a visit from DCK Accounting Solutions a few amendments had been made and the Clerk went through those recommendations as follows:-

**Cost Centre: 101 ADMINISTRATION 1102, 1103 and 1105** – National Insurance for the Clerk had been underestimated, as well as pension in relation to the Clerk and Clerk's Assistant, these figures had been amended accordingly.

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FIN/07/21 **Financial Requirements for the Year 2021/2022** (continued)

**Cost Centre: 101 ADMINISTRATION 1121 Telephone and Broadband** – Originally set at £1,200.00 it was felt that, because the Council had approved having broadband installed at in the Store at the Playing Field, this figure should be increased to £1,550.00.

**Cost Centre: 101 ADMINISTRATION 1122 Postage** – This figure was increased from £500.00 to £700.00.

**Cost Centre: 101 ADMINISTRATION 1124 Subscriptions** – A subscription sent through during December had not been accounted for in the initial calculations, therefore this figure was increased from £1,950.00 to £2,200.00.

**Cost Centre: 101 ADMINISTRATION 1158 Other Professional Fees** – Initially set at £7,500.00 this figure had been reduced to £6,000.00.

**Cost Centre: 103 NORTHWAY COMMUNITY HUB 1311 Rates** – A slight increase in the business rates brought this figure up to £9,600.00.

**Cost Centre 103 NORTHWAY COMMUNITY HUB 1316 Waste Disposal** – This figure had gone down from £480.00 to £300.00.

**Cost Centre 106 CHANGING ROOMS 1637 Gas** – This figure had been reduced from £250.00 to £200.00.

**Cost Centre: 201 GENERAL PURPOSES 2102 Salaries** – The initial figure of £8,150.00 had been recalculated and raised to £8,450.00.

**Cost Centre: 201 GENERAL PURPOSES 2103 Covid** – Due to there being a Covid heading elsewhere this figure had been set at NIL

**Cost Centre: 201 GENERAL PURPOSES 2138 Litter Bins** – The Accountant pointed out that purchase of any new/replacement bins (as well as notice boards, etc.) could come out of Rolling Earmarked Capital funds, this budget was, therefore, reduced from £2,000.00 to £800.00 to allow for maintenance costs only.

**Cost Centre 201 GENERAL PURPOSES 2143 Joan's Field** – This figure was reduced from £800.00 to £600.00,

**Cost Centre 201 GENERAL PURPOSES 2150 Notice Boards/Newsletter** – As with the bins any new/replacement notice boards should be funded by Rolling Earmarked Capital funds, this figure was reduced from £2,960.00 to £1200.00.

**Cost Centre 301 PLANNING 3120 Contingencies** – The Clerk reminded Members that £10,000 had been placed in this heading to allow for potential hire of a planning consultant in regard to the Garden Town/Bridge. As there was now to be a Carbon Neutral Working Party the Clerk put this figure in 401 CAPITAL PROJECTS 4159 Consultancy (Planning/Carbon Neutral) so that the Council could consider funding a consultant for either group.

The Clerk also went through the estimated income: £3,000.00 had been put in the Community Hub income heading in the hope that there would be half or, at least, quarter of a years' worth

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FIN/07/21 **Financial Requirements for the Year 2021/2022** (continued)

of room hire income. In addition to this, £200.00 relating to solar panels, £400.00 Village Hall rent, £300 Changing Rooms rent, as well as £1,000.00 grant and £1,000.00 payment from Tewkesbury Borough Council relating to grass cutting.

With the expenditure set off by the income, these calculations and recommended amendments, the estimated budget amounted to a total of £187,700.00. Cllr Shelton PROPOSED that a budget of £187,700.00 should be approved for recommendation to Full Council. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- b. **Tewkesbury Borough Council** – Members received information from Tewkesbury Borough Council that the Tax Base for 21/22 had been set at £1,386. This had gone down from the previous year's figure of £1,406. The explanation for how the Tax Base is calculated was attached to Members Agenda, the most likely reason for the drop was probably down to more properties in the Parish claiming for discounts in Northway.
- c. **Precept 2021/22** – The Clerk tabled two proposals for consideration, although amendments could be made to either:

**Option 1** - A precept of £196,700.00 which would be an increase of 5.99%, although this would show on a domestic rates bill as an increase of 7.50% due to the drop in tax base (monthly rates increase of 0.82 pence on a band D property). This still allowed for £19,000.00 to be placed into the Rolling Capital Programme.

**Option 2** – A precept of £187,700.00, an increase of 1.14%, showing on a domestic rates bill as an increase of 2.58% due to the drop in tax base (monthly rates increase of 0.28 pence on a band D property). This allowed for £10,000.00 to be placed in the Rolling Capital Programme instead of £19,000.00. If this option was approved the Accountant recommended that the Council should get back on track by reverting to at least £19,000.00 going into the Capital Programme next year. Also there could be a year end surplus of £20,000.00 and he would recommend that this was moved into the Rolling Capital Programme.

Members considered the options and strongly felt that, due to Covid-19, the job situation and the state of the economy, that they would like to try and keep any increases to a minimum.

Cllr Ward PROPOSED that Option 2, a precept of £187,700.00 was recommended to Full Council, as well as agreement with the Accountant in relation to surplus funds being put into the Rolling Capital fund. Cllr Phennah SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/08/21 **Northway Community Hub and Parish Office**

- i. **SK Heating and Cooling** – The Clerk confirmed that repair work had been undertaken to the duct heater (FIN/69/20 refers). SK Heating had encountered problems on this job because the heater turned out to be incorporated into the duct work and required more parts and manpower (although they had not charged the Council any more than initially quoted).

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FIN/08/21 **Northway Community Hub and Parish Office** (continued)

In their report following the work, SK Heating made mention of the fact that the controls (being in the loft) were not easily accessible and they could not understand why a panel had not been fitted in the kitchen so that the unit could be operated from there. Members wondered if it might save the Council money by operating this manually.

Cllr Roberts PROPOSED that a quotation was sought for installing a control panel in the kitchen.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- ii. **Defibrillator** – The Clerk mentioned that pads for the defibrillator in Lee Walk had expired and so replacements had been ordered at a cost of approximately £90.00.

Cllr Ward PROPOSED that this expenditure was ratified. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- iii. **Replacement Bollards** – A quotation was still awaited for the cost replacement bollards at the Hub.

- iv. **Duty of Care – Controlled Waste Transfer Note 2021** – This form had been completed and returned. Cllr Terry PROPOSED ratification. Cllr Ward SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/09/21 **CCTV**

- i. **Update** – The Clerk confirmed that the CCTV had been switched off (as agreed under Min Ref C/243/20) until all the necessary signage was in place (currently on order). Cllr Blackmore had been assisting the Clerk including completing a Data Protection Impact Assessment which was nearly finished. Cllr Blackmore explained to the Council why this was needed and the requirements associated to data handling. Cllr Roberts thanked Cllr Blackmore for taking this work on.

It was AGREED that this matter should be considered further at the Finance Committee Meeting scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2021.

- ii. **BT** – The Clerk confirmed that BT were due to install broadband at the Store Room, Northway Playing Field on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Cllr Blackmore pointed out that if the Council was planning on viewing the CCTV data remotely it would need to look into data encryption and questions had been relayed to Laser Alarms relating to this.

- iii. **Working Party** – Members considered whether issues relating to the CCTV should be looked at by the Working Party prior to the Finance Committee Meeting but it was AGREED that this could be dealt with by the Finance Committee.

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FIN/10/21 **Changing Room Lease Renewal**

The Clerk confirmed that the lease renewal compiled by One Legal and had been signed and witnessed. Members AGREED that they were happy for the form to be returned.

FIN/11/21 **Website**

- i. **Opening Page** – Members received an offer from Cllr Treacy to re-write/update the opening page of the website relating to the Hub. Cllr Ward PROPOSED approval of this. Cllr Shelton SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

It was agreed that a draft should be submitted to the next Finance Committee Meeting.

- ii. **what3words** – Members considered whether ‘what3words’ should be promoted on the website. Cllr Ward felt that ‘what3words’ was worth promoting on the website but he did not think it would be beneficial for the Council to incorporate it into how residents might report issues at a certain location (e.g a damaged bin).

Cllr Ward PROPOSED that the Council should promote ‘what3words’ on its website. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/12/21 **Fire Extinguisher Servicing**

The Clerk tabled quotations from three firms in relation to fire extinguisher servicing (Min Ref: FIN/71/20 refers).

Cllr Ward PROPOSED that the Council continued to contract the firm Edgefire that it had used for a number of years - on the grounds of best value as they had provided excellent service. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/13/21 **Correspondence for Action**

- i. **Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC)** – The Clerk reported that GAPTC was issuing a small increase in subscription fees for the upcoming year (0.22 pence per electorate). Cllr Roberts PROPOSED approval

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- ii. **DCK Accounting Solutions** – It was noted that a 5% increase was being implemented across all of DCK Accounting’s services, as standard. This was the first increase the firm had made to its fees in three years. Cllr Terry PROPOSED approval. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

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FIN/13/21 **Correspondence for Action** (continued)

iii. **RBS Rialtas**

- a. The Clerk confirmed that RBS Rialtas was maintaining its current charges due to the financial effects of coronavirus. Cllr Roberts PROPOSED approval.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- b. The Clerk mentioned Facilities Booking Software that RBS could supply. It was AGREED that this should be considered at a later date i.e. when the Council was taking regular bookings again, but that the Clerk should continue to look out for different options.

FIN/14/21 **Correspondence for Information**

- i. **Royal Mail** – Price changes effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- ii. **SSE Business Energy** – Details of temporary increase to non-commodity charges.

FIN/15/21 **Correspondence received after 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

None received.

As there was no further business the meeting ended at 7:50 p.m.