

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on Monday, 27th January 2021, commencing at 7.53p.m., following an Extraordinary Council Meeting.

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	Cllr E Phennah
	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/16/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Cllr MacTiernan had tendered her apologies. No further apologies for absence were received.

FIN/17/21 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Roberts declared an interest in item 10 (Health and Safety). No further declarations of interest, as required by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Parish Council on 1st July 2012 (Minute Ref C/159/12), including paragraph 12(2), were made.

FIN/18/21 **Minutes of the Previous Meetings**

Cllr Terry PROPOSED approval of the Minutes of the Meeting that took place on 11th January 2021. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/19/21 **Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes**

***FIN/05/21 Internal Audit** – Auditing Solutions had been contracted to undertake the Internal Audit.*

***FIN/07/21 Financial Requirements for the Year 2021/2022** – The precept request was forwarded to Tewkesbury Borough Council and an acknowledgement had been received.*

FIN/20/21 **Parish Council's Accounts up to 31st December 2020**

a. **Review of Statements/Invoices** – Cllr Roberts offered to attend the Parish Office to undertake a review of the statements and invoices to ensure there were no discrepancies as part of the Council's Risk Management Programme. Cllr Roberts PROPOSED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

b. **Bank Reconciliation and Balance Sheet** – Members had been circulated copies of the bank reconciliation and balance sheet; no queries were raised. Cllr Terry PROPOSED approval. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

FIN/20/21 **Parish Council's Accounts up to 31st December 2020** (continued)

- c. **Budget Statement** – Members had been circulated a copy of the Budget Statement (detailed income and expenditure). The Clerk explained that in the third quarter it would be expected that budget expenditure would be at approximately 75%, however, there were a few variations.

It was noted that the Employers NI Caretaker heading was high because there had not originally been a budget set for the Caretaker under Admin, it had been incorporated into the Hub as it was a contracted role which then became an employed role, and not enough had been allocated for the year hence the overspend. Similarly, the internet budget was higher because the webpage was showing under this heading, but the cost was counteracted as a £4,000 income under 4999 (Transfer from EM Reserve). Advertising heading was very high due to advertising required in relation to the Changing Room Lease which the Council had not anticipated. The water rates were also higher, the Council had been in ongoing discussions with Water Plus regarding this and they planned to replace the meter in February.

Cllr Godwin PROPOSED approved of the Budget Statement. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- d. **Projected Over/Underspends** – Members reviewed the projected over and underspends and considered whether any virements were necessary.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council had previously agreed to year end surplus funds being put into the Rolling Capital fund (Min Ref: FIN/07/21 refers). When the Council was setting budgets, it had agreed a sum under Professional Fees to cover the cost of a H&S consultant, should the Council require one. However, the accountant had looked over the figures and, not knowing this, he moved it into the surplus funds. Cllr Terry PROPOSED that the funds should be vired back into the Professional Fees heading at year end. Cllr Ward SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/21/21 **Review of Effectiveness of Internal Audit**

Members reviewed this document and Cllr Phennah PROPOSED that it be approved without need for any amendments. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/22/21 **Review of Risk Assessment**

Members had been circulated a copy of the Council's Risk Assessment. The Clerk mentioned that Cllr Blackmore had queried the empty column on the Risk Assessment which, as she had suggested, would be sensible to use for indicating whether a risk was Low/Medium/High. The Auditor had confirmed that the document appeared to be fit for purpose and so it was agreed that the work to include ratings be added at a later date. Cllr Roberts PROPOSED approval.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

Cllr Blackmore offered to work with Cllr Roberts on the L/M/H ratings.

Members went through the Risk Assessment and minor alterations were suggested, as follows: 'Maintenance of Buildings' heading should be changed to 'Maintenance of Buildings and Assets' to include assets such as the Play Park, etc. and mention that regular inspections were undertaken.

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

FIN/22/21 **Review of Risk Assessment** (continued)

Removal of mention to 'quarterly inspections' under 'Liability' as these no longer took place.
Mention of controls relating to website and CCTV (logical/physical) under Computer Data heading.
Reference to the Council's F.O.I. policy under 'GDPR' heading, to confirm that provision was in place.

Cllr Ward PROPOSED approval, with minor alterations. Cllr Phennah SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/23/21 **Review of Direct Debit Policy**

Members had been circulated a copy of the Council's Direct Debit Policy, as well as a list of the current recipients of payments via this form. Cllr Terry PROPOSED approval. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/24/21 **Website**

Members received an amended version of the webpage write-up relating to the Community Hub, as submitted by Cllr Treacy (Min Ref: FIN/11/21 refers). Members were generally happy with the wording, but Cllr Ward felt it would be beneficial to keep the estimated times of how long it took to walk to the shops, railway station, etc.

When looking at the webpage, it was felt that there should be more of a gap between the link to 'Terms and Conditions' and the text, and an 'Introduction' heading placed in that space. Cllr Roberts PROPOSED. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/25/21 **Health and Safety**

The Clerk had obtained quotations from three different firms offering Health and Safety consultant services. Details of these had been circulated to Members as options A, B and C for comparison.

It was felt that each of the options offered different aspects and, whilst A seemed more driven to online dealings, option C appeared to take on a lot more of the paperwork side of things. Cllr Blackmore pointed out that option A was the only firm that offered a competent person to mitigate risk, although Cllr Roberts pointed out that this would not mitigate the responsibility of the Parish Council to put things right. Option B seemed less relevant to local government organisations, such as the Parish Council.

Cllr Phennah PROPOSED that the Council should contract Option C to provide Health and Safety consultation services to the Parish Council. Cllr Ward SECONDED.

FOR: Cllr Phennah Cllr Ward
Cllr Godwin Cllr Terry
Cllr Treacy

AGAINST: Cllr Blackmore

ABSTENTIONS: Cllr Roberts Cllr Shelton

It was confirmed that NFU Mutual had been successful in securing the contract at a cost of £1680.00 + VAT for a one-year contract with additional support if and when required.

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

FIN/26/21

Banking and Investments

- i. **Internet Banking** – The Clerk explained that Councils had only in the last few years been authorised to do internet banking, although some banks were better equipped than others when it came to the internal controls necessary to ensure this could be in accordance with Local Government policy. HSBC did not currently offer what was required to allow the Council to make payments with the authorisation of two other councillors which meant that many Parish Councils were moving away from HSBC. Feedback on Barclays and Lloyds was somewhat better and Unity bank came in as the forerunner amongst Parish Councils. They did charge a monthly payment of £6 per month as well as 15p for each credit or debit but were very ethical (details could be found on the website). If the Council wanted to start internet banking, then it would need to switch to a different bank.

It was also noted that the Tewkesbury branch of HSBC was scheduled to close, although the Clerk felt that this would not cause too much of an issue as the Post Office could be used for paying in/withdrawing money.

Cllr Phennah asked about services that Lloyds bank offered, the Clerk said she had heard some positive feedback regarding Lloyds but Unity still seemed to be the better option. Cllr Terry PROPOSED that the Clerk should bring more information relating to Lloyds bank to the next Finance Committee Meeting so that Members could better compare them to Unity. Cllr Phennah SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- ii. **Investment Strategy** – Members considered whether Northway Parish Council should have an investment strategy. It was felt that this might be a good idea, so long as it was low risk. Cllr Roberts pointed out that, even if the Council opened a bank account that required 30-90 days' notice the most that it would offer was 2% interest, however, he offered to do some internet research. He also felt it might be worthwhile if he sat down with the Clerk to go over different ideas and options.

FIN/27/21

Covid-19

- i. **Business Interruption** – The Clerk confirmed that she had written to Zurich Insurance to enquire whether the Council would qualify for a Business Interruption payment because of Covid-19. They had responded that the Parish Council did not qualify as Zurich's policy wording was deemed correct.

She had also queried as to cover in relation to the Play Park and was informed that so long as the Council was following up-to-date guidelines they would be covered. Additionally, she had been advised that volunteers would be covered so long as risks were being monitored. Home working cover did not extend to trips/falls but long-exposure risks e.g. eyesight or posture problems were included. Lastly, for leased building cover during the pandemic because unoccupied buildings posed higher risk it was requested that they be inspected at least every 30 days. Cllr Ward PROPOSED that the Youth Club Trustees and the Football Club be asked to undertake regular checks. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- ii. **General** – No further actions were considered necessary.

FIN/28/21

Northway Community Hub

- i. **Shutter Servicing** – The Clerk explained that it was not a legal requirement to get the shutters serviced but it was best practice. The service had taken place the previous year and engineers, being happy that everything was functioning correctly, provided a service sheet. However, a couple of days later two different engineers from the same firm appeared and said that the previous engineers had forgotten to check something. They then advised that a lot of work needed doing to the shutters and

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

FIN/28/21 Northway Community Hub (forthcoming)

spoke to the Chairman about this. They said a further report would be forwarded but this was never forthcoming. The Clerk did mention that the shutter which automatically closed in the event of a fire had been sticking a bit. Cllr Ward suggested that the Caretaker ensure both shutters were opened and closed weekly. Cllr Roberts PROPOSED that the shutters should be serviced but closer to a time when the country was not in 'lockdown'.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- ii. **Heating & Cooling** – Following a recommendation from the Engineer that the control panel should be moved from the loft to the kitchen (Min Ref: FIN/08/21 refers), further communication had been received stating that they had looked again at the recommendations of the Engineer and the controls were currently in the corset position as they were for programming the units in the plant room only and therefore there would be no benefit to having them moved. Cllr Ward PROPOSED no further action was taken. Cllr Godwin SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

- iii. **Replacement Bollards and Extras** - Members received a quotation to replace the bollards at the front of the building as well as the fan in the staff toilet (which was not working). The quotation also included the cost of a stand-alone electrical usage meter for the CCTV in the storeroom attached to the Changing Room. The Clerk explained that it had taken a year to get a quote and she had been promised a further one.

Members considered waiting for a second quote, if forthcoming, and bringing it back to another meeting. Cllr Ward PROPOSED that this was not delayed further and because the work needed to be progressed the Clerk should be given delegated powers to accept the cheaper of the two quotations. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

FIN/29/21 Changing Room Lease

Members were updated and informed that the Lease had now been signed and returned to One Legal for dating.

FIN/30/21 Northway Village Hall

Members were reminded about the invoices that Tewkesbury Borough Council kept sending stating there was a payment required relating to the period of time the Parish Council occupied the Village Hall during the works to the Community Hub (Min Ref C/224/20 refers). The Clerk was pleased to report that a 'nil' payment required invoice had now been received.

FIN/31/21 CCTV

- i. **Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)** - Members had been circulated a copy of the DPIA with their agenda. Cllr Blackmore ran through the document with Members explaining the questions and responses as well as the risk ratings. She also pointed out that the completed document needed to be included on the web site. Cllr Roberts said, that looking at the document, it was very clear the amount of work and effort that had been put into it, he thanked Cllr Blackmore for undertaking this task on behalf of the Council. Cllr Ward PROPOSED approval of the document. Cllr Terry SECONDED.

FOR: UNANIMOUS

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

FIN/31/21 **CCTV** (continued)

Cllr Blackmore added that that the Council needed to be aware that CCTV images could only be viewed when necessary, i.e. crime, vandalism etc, it would not be suitable for someone to say they heard a noise and wanted the cameras checked out. Also, software would need to be purchased to allow any images to be redacted if necessary as well as encrypted data sticks if a recording were made.

- ii. **Signage** - Members were informed that the signage was now ready, and it was hoped a contractor would install the following week.
- iii. **Broadband Installation** – The Clerk reported that Open Reach had attended the site with the intention of installing a line for broadband. Upon inspection it was clear to them that the existing telegraph pole at the entrance to Oak Drive would not be suitable for use as the line would be too low and impact vehicles entering the car park. They looked at the possibility of using the existing telegraph pole on 'The Plateau' (west side of building) but again this would bring the wire too low and it would be caught on the football posts. The Engineer had to leave the site and advised that a supervisor would come back and look at other possibilities. No further information was currently available.

The Clerk reminded Members that this was the same scenario as when the Parish Council had tried to install a line at the Village Hall in 2016 when the only option was going to be the erection of a new telegraph pole on the grassed area directly outside the Hall at a cost of over £900.00.

- iv. **Related Matters** - The Clerk tabled a quotation of £125.00 for the installation of a standalone electrical usage meter for the power supply to the CCTV which ran off the Village Hall electricity. Members debated the necessity of this and were reminded that when the Council had asked the Trustees of the Youth Club whether it could plug in to their electricity supply, they were assured it would metered and they would be reimbursed. Members considered, as the usage would be so low, a one-off payment of £100.00-125.00 or an annual donation rather than installing the meter as they would rather the Trustees had the money. It was noted that if, for some reason, the electricity costs at the Village Hall increased the Parish Council be unable to evidence that it was not as a result of the CCTV. After further consideration, Cllr Ward PROPOSED that the meter was installed at a cost of £125.00. Cllr Blackmore SECONDED.

FOR:

Cllr Ward	Cllr Blackmore
Cllr Phennah	Cllr Roberts
Cllr Shelton	Cllr Terry
Cllr Treacy	

ABSTENSIONS: Cllr Godwin

FIN/32/21 **Correspondence for Information**

- i. **United Kingdom Debt Management Office (previously PWLB)** – The Clerk tabled the latest statement showing the payment required in February.
- ii. **Fire Extinguisher Servicing** - The Clerk confirmed that Edgefire had been contracted to continue the annual servicing of the fire extinguishers at the Community Hub, Village Hall and Changing Rooms.

The Clerk reported that, during the tendering process, the Council had contacted a firm (Min Ref FIN/71/20 refers) and, as a result, a Freedom of Information Request had been received. The Clerk had responded to this with appropriate information following which someone impersonated the Parish Council and tried to obtain further information from the firm (Min Ref FIN/71/20 refers). If the firm had done their due diligence, they would have recognised that this name and email was completely different to previous correspondence with the Parish Council.

NORTHWAY PARISH COUNCIL

FIN/33/21 **Correspondence received after 21st January 2021**

- i. **British Telecommunications** – Members received information relating to proposed price increases. The Clerk added that, from what she could tell, this would be approximately £2.00 per month.

As there was no further business the meeting ended at 9.47 p.m.