

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee  
held virtually commencing at 7.30pm on 8 September 2020**

**Present:** Cllrs Tidridge (Chair), Dean, Parker-Jones and Toher

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

**Public Attendance:** 0 members of the public were present

**FGP\_2021\_M01/**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies had been received and were accepted from Cllrs Harris, Thornton and Winstanley.

**2 To accept as a true record, and sign, the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2020**

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

2.2 Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Cllr Parker-Jones, **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020 be accepted as a true record.

**3 To consider Matters Arising from the above Minutes**

3.1 Minute FGP\_1920\_M11/116.1

Councillor Tidridge informed the Committee that in the recent work at the Sewall Drive junction by Hampshire County Council the water pipes had been damaged causing Southern Water to have to come out to repair them.

3.2

Councillor Tidridge asked if there was any news on the insurance payment for the bus shelter. The RFO replied that she had reported to the August meeting of the Full Council that the payment from the insurance company had been received. The only cost to Bishopstoke Parish Council had been the excess.

**4 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

4.1 There were no declarations or requests.

**5 To receive the RFO's Report, and approve Budget Monitoring and Payments Reports for March 2020**

5.1 The RFO's report had been included in the document pack for the meeting. It is included in the minutes as Appendix A. The Committee agreed to note the report. Cllr Parker-Jones asked for an update on the Memorial Hall reopening. The RFO informed the Committee that a risk assessment was in place and was being updated as new information comes to light. Additionally, each hirer has to provide their own risk assessment over and above the Council requirements. The building is currently only being hired out to existing hirers.

5.2 The Budget Monitoring and Payments Report for March 2020 had been included in the document pack. Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Cllr Tidridge, **RESOLVED** that the Committee approve the Budget Monitoring and Payments Report for March 2020.

**6 To approve the Budget Monitoring and Payments Reports for the 1st quarter of 2020-21**

6.1 The Budget Monitoring and Payments Report for the first quarter of 2020-21 had been included in the document pack. The RFO informed the Committee that various styles of reports were available from the new software package and that we would be investigating different ones to determine which one best suits the needs of the Council.

6.2 Proposed Cllr Toher, Seconded Cllr Tidridge, **RESOLVED** that the Budget Monitoring and Payments Reports for the first quarter of 2020-21 be approved.

**7 To approve the current list of direct debit payees**

7.1 The direct debit payee list had been included in the document pack.

7.2 Proposed Cllr Parker-Jones, Seconded Cllr Tidridge, **RESOLVED** unanimously that the direct debit payee list be approved.

**8 To receive the Clerk's Report, including an update on Parish Council assets**

8.1 The Clerk's report had been included in the document pack. It is included in the minutes as Appendix B. The Committee noted the report.

8.2 Cllr Tidridge asked whether, in light of recent events on Otter Close open space, the Council should consider having a policy on encampments. The RFO noted that Colden Common council have such a policy and she offered to forward it to the Clerk for inspection and adaption. Cllr Toher added that Bishopstoke Parish Council should always be a compassionate council first, only seeking a legal option if absolutely necessary.

**Action: RFO**

8.3 Cllr Tidridge also noted various issues with Church Road Play Area. These are included, with the current update, as Appendix C in the minutes. Cllr Parker-Jones noted there is a tree by the play area which may be a cause for concern. The Clerk was asked to determine whether any work to this tree may be necessary.

**Action: Clerk**

**9 Date, time, place and agenda items for next meeting**

9.1 The next meeting is scheduled to be on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020 at 7:30pm online. Agenda items for this meeting should be received by the Clerk no later than Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October.

*There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.20pm*

Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Finance & General Purposes RFO's report 8 September 2020

### RFO's Report

#### Payments List:

##### February 2020

Significant items for February included removal of a dangerous tree at Old St Mary's, grants to various organisations (as resolved by Full Council), and purchase of digital mapping software to enable the tree surveys to proceed.

##### March 2020

Significant items for March included renewal of the 20 email accounts through wix, new laptop and phone for new Cemeteries Officer, tree survey costs, continuation of repairs to St Mary's wall, remedial electrical repairs to the BMH (as resolved by the Buildings Committee), and pathworks to both the Cemetery and St Mary's Churchyard.

##### April 2020

There were no significant items for April to highlight due to few payments made in lockdown.

##### May 2020

Significant items for May included tree work to the Cemetery as highlighted in the tree survey and the annual levy for HALC/NALC affiliation. This year, HALC offered a small discount in the HALC part for payment by BACS.

##### June 2020

Significant items for June included stocking up on stationery for new Cemeteries Officer, replacement locks and key cutting, re-filling discharged fire extinguishers, webcam after discovering first unauthorised entry to Memorial Hall, payment of replacement bus shelter (insurance claim received in July), groundwater risk assessment at the cemetery.

As previously mentioned at August Full Council meeting, the HMRC and Hampshire LGPS payments failed in May and was not picked up until June. Therefore June payments included both May AND June.

#### Banking:

Cashflow has remained healthy throughout the first quarter of the new financial year thanks to a combination of a large transfer made from the savings account at start of lockdown and the VAT for 2019/20 claimed and received in April. The RFO will begin to investigate options for new savings account as we are not completely happy with the service provided by EBC regarding the savings account. We will also investigate possible alternatives for the current account following issues encountered with Co-operative Bank's changes to its online banking facility.

The new Cemeteries Officer has now received her debit card and the bank mandate is now changed to include her.

**Other Matters:****Edge Software**

As previously communicated during August Full Council meeting, the Edge software is now in use with the RFO having received several hours training. Q1 transactions are fully posted and finalised, including the monthly bank reconciliations. Now information on the savings account has been received from EBC, the savings account is also reconciled, and VAT claim will be made using the software for Q1, and claims will be made quarterly going forward.

There are still tweaks to be made to the coding structure as the financial year progresses, but overall, it has been a smooth software implementation process and a good learning experience. For example, whilst entering LGPS transactions into the new software, it was discovered that rounding and formula errors had meant underpayments made to the scheme, which wouldn't have been picked up otherwise. This was rectified in July.

The budget monitoring report presented to Councillors for Q1 of 2020/21 is one of various report options available on the system, and there is also an option to request the software development team create new report layouts if the Council wish to change the format.

**Memorial Hall**

The major focus for the RFO during the Summer and into next week has been project managing renovation work to the Memorial Hall and aiming for re-opening on 7th September. Work has been carried out to fix actions outstanding from the Fire Risk Assessment to make the hall safer in event of a fire, the contents of the kitchen cupboards have been rationalised and tidied, and two other storage cupboards tidied and contents disposed of. Asbestos products discovered during the renewal of the Asbestos Risk Assessment have been disposed of safely and the front steps have been re-paved. Further electrical works will have also been carried out. Detailed spend reports will be taken to the Buildings Committee and will be shared with the Finance Committee.

By the time of opening, the hall will have been deep cleaned and covid-fogged, with the cleaner moving from one 2hr session per week, to two 1hr sessions. Each hirer has to provide a risk assessment for their activities, with the Council having written their own. The Clerk and RFO will monitor the situation and Government advice closely to review when things need to change.

On behalf of the Charity, the Council applied for a small business grant and was successfully granted £10,000. This has kept the Charity's cashflow secure during the lockdown period and helped mitigate against loss of income since the hall temporarily closed to hirers on 18th March.

**External Audit**

The period for Public Inspection rights began on 1st September and will end on 12th October. The full documentation for the external audit of the Council's accounts for the financial year 2020/21 has been submitted to PKF Littlejohn and we will await their reply.

NALC published the agreed new scale point rates on 26th August after NJC and other unions agreed rates with the Government. The back pay was calculated and paid to staff alongside new rates in August payroll.



## **Finance & General Purposes Clerk's report 8 September 2020**

### **Clerk's Report**

#### **Matters Arising:**

There were no matters arising to report on.

#### **Parish Assets:**

**Allotments** There is nothing new to report on allotments since the last report at Full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

**Burial Matters** Between April 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup> there were 14 interments – 4 new burials with 6 re-openings and 4 new ashes plots with 1 re-opening. There is currently 1 scheduled interment in September. Progress is still being made at St Mary's with the latest work scheduled being the removal and replacement of dangerous fencing. There is also work being planned to make safe various trees in the churchyard. We still await news of when the cemetery extension will begin the twelve month maintenance period.

**Parish Office** We still await confirmation from Smart Offices as to their proposals for changes to the fire door. We may have to consider calling in a local company to install an improved fire door if Smart Offices are unable to help.

**Play Areas** Various repairs have been ordered across the parish for our play areas. There is more to be considered following the latest round of inspections. Sadly, there is also occasional vandalism which is both frustrating and expensive. Quotes have been sought for the play area signage and funding for this will be on the Full Council agenda at the end of September.

**Trees** Work from the tree survey has been ongoing through the summer and will continue until complete.

#### **Other Matters:**

**Otter Close** Councillors will be aware of the situation at Otter Close over the past two weeks. All agencies involved have been striving to find the best solution for the people concerned but there have been several stumbling blocks along the way. They have now moved on from Otter Close to another location – not within the Parish – and I am told they have no plans to return. Agencies continue to work with them to find a permanent solution.



## **Finance & General Purposes Church Road Play Area 8 September 2020**

**Points raised by Cllr Tidridge with notes on the current status (in blue text):**

### **Timber Trail**

The timber trail is broken for the second time in a year. Can it be replaced with something that is more durable?

It is a question of whether the damage is wear and tear or deliberate. Any timber trail will always be vulnerable to deliberate damage. In the immediate future I will arrange for repairs and we can then look at whether something more resistant to damage can be found that will do the same job. Church Road Play Area as a whole was only installed in 2013 and so is one of our most recent play areas and as such is not due for a complete overhaul.

### **Electricity Substation**

There is no fencing between the play area and the electricity substation. This seems unsafe. Can this be investigated?

The substation and provision of any fencing has been discussed several times with the electric company as I am told that it would be their responsibility to provide such fencing. They have repeatedly declined to do so. I will happily contact them again

### **Grubby Equipment**

A lot of the equipment is now grubby. Can this be cleaned please.

I am arranging a full clean of the equipment.

### **Fencing**

Replacement of the unsightly fence has had funds available I believe from EBC from its s106 pot - can we look to get this work done? I believe it was to be combined with moving the fence on the east side a couple of metres in so as to facilitate a seating area and new noticeboard just outside of the play area. Now that I have been formally informed of the allocated amount I am proceeding with obtaining quotes and designs.

### **No Ball Games**

The sign stating "no ball games" is still there. This is outstanding from 2016.

I have asked Vitaplay to remove this when they attend the site for already booked repair work.

### **Parking**

With my EBC hat on, I am pushing for parking markings as there is at least 1 car regularly blocking the path on the west side and it is a difficult road for children to cross safely.

Thank you. Anything that ensures clearer visibility or slows down traffic at that point would be useful.