

# WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** held on 15th November 2016 at the Parish Centre.

## **PRESENT**

Councillors Mrs M P Bucknell, R J Dykstra, Ms L A Gifford, Mrs M H Harlock, J A Parker, Mrs J E Tavener, G C M Willis and Dr S C Withams

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms H A Backhouse, Mrs J M Cole, D W England, R A Payne and Mrs A R Wyatt and Mr G Hansell (Internal Auditor).

## **01/16 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

It was moved by Councillor Dr Withams, seconded by Councillor Dykstra and

## **RESOLVED**

that Councillor Mrs M P Bucknell be elected Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

**Councillor Mrs Bucknell in the Chair.**

## **02/16 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

It was moved by Councillor Ms Gifford, seconded by Councillor Parker and

## **RESOLVED**

that Councillor Dr S C Withams be appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

## **03/16 MINUTES**

Upon being moved by Councillor Dr Withams and seconded by Councillor Mrs Harlock, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st March 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **04/16 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

All Members had previously declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the setting of the Council's budget and Council Tax precept (Minute No. 9/16) but had been granted a dispensation by the Council to speak and vote such matters.

## **05/16 MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee noted the following matter arising from the Minutes of its meeting held on 21st March 2016:-

### **(a) Asset Register**

Further to Minute No. 13/15, the Clerk informed Members that he would be arrange for another inventory check to be carried out by the Chairman and the Internal Auditor.

## **06/16 PARISH CENTRE**

The Committee considered a report by the Clerk, a copy of which had been circulated, with regard to the operation of the Parish Centre over the previous year and in the current year to date.

The Committee was informed that income for the hire of the Parish Centre had risen marginally to £9,717 in 2015/16 compared with the previous year. Total income had been £10,090 in contrast with expenditure of £12,262, although the latter had included repairs to the flat roof costing £1,900 and to a CCTV camera costing £280.

Members were reminded that the Council had taken a decision to dispense with subsidised bookings of the Parish Centre with effect from the beginning of 2014 but had subsequently decided to provide grants equivalent to the previous subsidies to three organisations. The Clerk pointed out that this was the equivalent of about £1,250 in income to which needed to be added a further £500 notional income for the use of the building for Parish Council meetings and the Council's workshops.

With regard to the current year, Members were informed that income to date was slightly lower than for the comparable period in the previous year but that total income for the year was expected to be similar to 2015/16. With expenditure likely to be similar to the previous year, a break-even was again anticipated.

Members were informed that while the Government's rate relief for small business had continued in 2016/17 which had saved the Council approximately £1,000, there was no guarantee that this would continue in future years.

## **RESOLVED**

- (a) that no increase be made in the charges for the hire of the Parish Centre for 2017/18; and
- (b) that the tennis court continue to be made available for use without charge.

## **07/16 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

By means of a report by the Clerk, a copy of which had been circulated, the Committee was reminded of the arrangements for the payment of allowances to parish councillors. Members were informed that parish councils had to have regard to the recommendations of an independent remuneration panel of their respective district council in deciding whether to pay allowances to its councillors. Although the

Huntingdonshire panel had recommended the payment of a parish basic allowance to parish council chairmen, the Clerk pointed out that Warboys, in common with the other parishes in Huntingdonshire, had not implemented the allowance.

Members were advised that the mileage rate above which tax was deductible had been retained by HM Revenue and Customs at 45 pence per mile.

In addition, the Clerk pointed out that a parish council could continue to pay its chairman an allowance under the Local Government Act 1972 to help offset the costs incurred in carrying out the duties of the office. The allowance of £80 currently paid to the Chairman had been increased from £75 in 2012/13.

## **RESOLVED**

- (a) that no change be made to the members' allowances scheme for 2017/18 with no parish basic allowance paid and the mileage rate retained at 45 pence per mile; and
- (b) that the Chairman's allowance be increased to £100 in 2017/18.

## **08/16 REVIEW OF WAGES/SALARIES**

The Committee reviewed the salaries and wages of the persons employed by the Council with the aid of a report by the Clerk (copies of which had been circulated). Members were informed that the pay award for local authority employees in 2016/17 comprised a two year agreement which provided for a pay rise of 1% for most spinal column points in April 2017 but with a slightly higher increase for those on the lowest scales.

The Committee was reminded that the Council had reviewed the salary of the Clerk at its meeting in February 2005 following the receipt of new conditions of service negotiated by NALC and SLCC. In 2015, the Clerk's hours of employment had been increased to 24 hours per week in recognition of the fact that the average number of hours that he worked was significantly higher than his contracted hours. It was reported that the hours worked by the Clerk in the current financial year averaged 30 per week in the year to date.

It was reported that the Senior Handyman and Handyman each worked 30 hours per week on SCPs 14 and 13 respectively which would increase to £8.722 and £8.571 per hour in April 2017. The equivalent full time salaries were £16,781 and £16,491 respectively. Members were informed that the national minimum wage set by the Government had increased to £7.20 and the living wage for employees promoted by the Living Wage Foundation to £8.25 per hour.

With regard to the Cleaner, Members were informed that the rate of pay had last been increased by £1 to £27.00 per week with effect from April 2016 and that the cleaning fees paid by hirers increased to £6 for the Hall and £4 for the Meeting Room in April 2005. As the other employees would be in receipt of the national pay award, Members felt that an equivalent increase in the weekly wage paid to the Cleaner would be appropriate.

The Clerk reported that the Timebank Co-ordinator was currently employed for 10 hours per week on spinal column point 26 which would increase to £23,398 in April

2017. Members were reminded that the honorarium for the Clockwinder and Internal Auditor currently were £220 and £100 per annum respectively.

In response to a question by Councillor Ms Gifford, the Clerk advised that the Council had not met with employees informally at Christmas or otherwise in the past and it was suggested that the Council meeting in December would provide an opportunity for Members and employees to meet socially prior to the meeting starting.

## **RESOLVED**

- (a) that the NJC pay award for local authority employees with effect from April 2017 be noted;
- (b) that the Council be recommended to increase the salary of the Cleaner from £27 to £28 per week plus £6 and £4 for each booking of the Hall and Meeting Room respectively at the Parish Centre with effect from 1st April 2017;
- (c) that the Council be recommended to retain the honorarium paid to the Internal Auditor at £100 with effect from 1st April 2017;
- (d) that the Council be recommended to retain the honorarium paid to the Clockwinder at £220 per annum in 2017/18; and
- (e) that arrangements be made for Members and employees to meet at 6.00 p.m. prior to the meeting of the Council on 12th December with light refreshments to be provided.

## **09/16 BUDGET 2017/18**

The Committee considered the revised budget for the current financial year and the estimate for 2017/18, having regard to the budgets recommended by the Allotments and Leisure Areas Committees.

A copy of the financial statements together with a covering report by the Clerk had been circulated to all Members.

Members were informed that the Earmarked Reserves at the beginning of the current financial year had been £203,640, made up as follows:-

Parish Centre	£60,000
Allotments	£103,883
Maintenance of open space/playgrounds	£24,447
Replacement of van	£ 500
Potential fees – landfill site	£14,194
Community Infrastructure Levy	£ 616

The unallocated balance at the beginning of the financial year had been £34,212.

In terms of the current year, the Clerk reminded Members that the precept had been increased to £97,200 to enable the Connections Bus to continue and to introduce a Timebank scheme in Warboys. Further income was anticipated of £40,756 which included CIL payments of £24,454. Expenditure was forecast to be £122,486 as a

result of which an unallocated surplus was expected to be carried forward of £26,145 and earmarked reserves as follows:-

Parish Centre	£ 70,000
Allotments	£102,221
Maintenance of open space/playgrounds	£ 14,722
Replacement of van	£ 1,000
Potential fees – landfill site	£ 14,194
CIL	£ 25,070
Total	£227,207

Members were reminded that the County and District Councils were still being required to reduce their expenditure in 2017/18, although few details had emerged of the cuts that were likely to be made.

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had been notified of reductions in the number of roads that would be gritted to make a budget saving of £650,000. This would result in the bus route of Statfold Green, Humberdale Way and School Road not being gritted which could be subsidised by the Parish Council if Members so wished. The Committee acknowledged the necessity for the Parish Council to continue to fund the gritting of Puddock Hill but were not prepared to recommend the funding of Statfold Green etc. as the roads were on level land and within the built-up area of the village where speeds were restricted.

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council had referred a decision on the funding of the District Council's Tree Warden Co-ordinator to the Committee for consideration as part of the budget process. Unless the salary of £13,000 could be found before March 2017, the post would be made redundant. Councillor Parker reported that the District Council were exploring a number of options and had appointed a working party to investigate. As a number of Parish Councils had already refused to contribute towards the costs, Councillor Parker suggested that it was unlikely that sufficient funding would be generated by the parish councils for the post to be retained.

With regard to the Timebank scheme, the Clerk reported that the estimated cost in the first year was £10,000. As the Co-ordinator had commenced work in October, the Clerk suggested that 50% of the budget would be expended before the end of March 2017 and the remainder in the following year. The scheme was subject to review after 12 months' operation but the Clerk advised that unless a further £3,500 was included in the budget to provide a full year of operation in 2017/18, the scheme would have to close.

With regard to the Connections Bus project, notification had been received that the cost would increase by 1% in 2017/18 which in the case of Warboys would result in a cost of £10,536 for 39 sessions during term time. Members were informed that average attendances during the current term was 28 per evening and reminded that at the Council meeting on the previous day, Sergeant Street of Cambridgeshire Constabulary had spoken of the benefits achieved by the sessions in Warboys in reducing criminal damage and anti-social behaviour.

As the Leisure Areas Committee had deferred the replacement of safety surfaces and a set of swings at Adams Lyons and Orchard Close playgrounds for further quotations for alternative types of equipment, the Clerk suggested that provision be made for the

expenditure of £20,000, 50% to be met from the accumulated Section 106 fund and 50% from the current year's budget.

Members were reminded that £70,000 had now been earmarked for a replacement Parish Centre and the Clerk suggested that a further allocation be made of £10,000 in 2017/18.

The Clerk reported that the Council had agreed to include a sum of £2,000 in the budget towards the Minor Highways Improvement bid to be submitted to the County Council for 2017/18 and to make a grant towards the resurfacing of the Sports Field car park of £750. In addition the Clerk reported upon the need to replace one of the mowers used by the Handymen which was now 10 years old and no longer repairable.

The Clerk reported that he had now managed to obtain a quotation for a tree survey to be carried out at Adams Lyons playground at a cost of £450 and Councillor Willis suggested that the arboriculturalist be requested to undertake a similar survey at Jubilee Park at the same time.

With regard to The Weir, Members noted that a sum of £20,000 had been included in the budget for 2016/17 to dredge the pond but it had subsequently been decided to take no further action while the effects of the application of Siltex and subsequently Diofix to reduce weed growth be assessed. No provision had been made in the budget for 2017/18. Members also referred to the possibility of developing the Heath Pond and Sheepwash as a small nature area but again no provision was made in the budget for this purpose.

Members were reminded that the Government was consulting on the introduction of capping the percentage increase for parish council precepts without a referendum having been held. No information was available as to whether this would be introduced for the 2017/18 precept. Members were reminded that the District Council was still retaining a grant to offset changes in council tax which had been made available to parishes by the Government and that this situation was unlikely to change in 2017/18.

The Clerk reported that the Council Tax base for Warboys was unlikely to be reviewed by the District Council before the beginning of December. However this was likely to rise with the new development forecast in the Parish which would result in additional income from the parish precept.

## **RESOLVED**

that the Council be recommended to -

- (a) allocate a further £10,000 in 2017/18 to the earmarked reserve for a replacement Parish Centre;
- (b) make provision of £8,500 in the budget for the Timebank scheme;
- (c) continue with the Connections Bus project at a cost of £10,536 in 2017/18;
- (d) include a sum of £20,000 in the budget for the current year for replacement safety surfacing and swings, with 50% of the cost to be met from the Section 106 fund;

- (e) continue to meet the cost of gritting Puddock Hill but no additional routes in Warboys;
- (f) not make a contribution towards the funding of the District Council post of Tree Warden Co-ordinator;
- (g) accept the quotation for the tree survey of Adams Lyons and also carry out a survey of the trees at Jubilee Park; and
- (h) subject to the above, approve the budget and set a council tax precept of £99,150 for 2017/18 which would represent an increase of 2%.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed.

**Chairman**