

# WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Finance and General Purposes Committee** held remotely on 15th March 2021.

## **PRESENT**

Councillor Dr S C Withams, Chairman

Councillors R J Dykstra, D W England, Ms L A Gifford, Mrs M H Harlock, J A Parker, P S Potts and G C M Willis.

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Mrs J M Cole, Mrs C Evans, S J Green, Mrs S J Wilcox and Mrs A R Wyatt.

## **10/20 MINUTES**

Upon being moved by Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Dykstra, the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2020 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

## **11/20 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No Members declared interests in respect of the items appearing on the agenda for the meeting.

## **12/20 MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee noted the following matters arising from its meeting held on 16th November 2020:-

### **(a) Review of Wages/Salaries**

Further to Minute No. 08/20, the Committee noted that the Council had considered a report on the hours worked by the Clerk and holidays taken by employees in 2020/21 at the meeting held on 8th March 2021.

### **(b) Budget 2021/22**

Arising from Minute No. 09/20, the Committee noted that the level of Council Tax precept for the Parish in 2022/23 would be as calculated, comprising a band D level of £81.60 and an income of £125,256.

### **13/20 ASSET REGISTER**

The Clerk circulated copies of the Council's current asset register sub-divided into categories for land, play equipment, miscellaneous equipment and property. Members were informed that the register was kept up to date to include new equipment, disposals and items that had been scrapped.

Due to the pandemic restrictions in place, it had not been possible to undertake the annual inventory check involving the Chairman, Clerk, Senior Handyman and Internal Auditor in 2020 but Members were informed that a check would be made as soon as this became permissible.

### **14/20 RISK MANAGEMENT**

As more extensive assessments were being prepared for the risks encountered by the Council, the Clerk explained that it was impractical to copy and circulate the information to all Members.

### **RESOLVED**

that the situation be noted by the Committee.

### **15/20 INTERNAL CONTROL**

Members' attention was drawn to the requirement in the Accounts and Audit Regulations for the Council to review the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and internal audit as set out in the Practitioners' Guide to Governance and Accountability in Local Councils in England and Wales published by NALC and SLCC.

The Clerk submitted a checklist (a copy of which had been circulated to all Members) summarising the controls that should be in place and explained the measures that were undertaken by the Council. Under the circumstances, the Committee expressed its satisfaction as to the effectiveness of the existing controls.

### **16/20 INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

The Clerk submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) on the need for the Council to review its Investment Strategy annually to comply with guidance issued by the Secretary of State under the Local Government Act 2003. The guidance required authorities to include information about their investment activity, including the use of performance indicators in the strategy and was now mandatory for parish councils with reserves in excess of £100,000. However the Clerk pointed out that many of the requirements were not applicable in the case of Warboys.

Having regard to the nature and extent of the Council's investments, the Committee did not consider there to be a need for any additional capacity or skills in terms of either Members or the Clerk in managing the Council's assets.

## **RESOLVED**

that the Council be recommended to approve the Investment Strategy appended to the report now submitted.

### **17/19 PARISH CENTRE – CONDITIONS OF HIRE**

The Committee reviewed and confirmed the conditions of hire of the Parish Centre (copies of which had been circulated).

Members were informed that the pandemic restrictions had meant that the Parish Centre had been closed for most of 2020/21. Its use had only been permitted for a relatively short period between the end of July to mid-December and not all of the previous hirers had been willing to return at that time. Certain exempt activities had been allowed to continue to use the Centre, primarily the Day Centre as they provided a service for vulnerable adults. However they also had suspended meetings from December pending a return at the end of March.

Members were informed that various grants had been received under the Government's measures to recompense businesses that had been forced to close.

(Councillor Willis logged on to the meeting during the consideration of the above item.)

### **18/20 INSURANCE POLICY**

Members were reminded that Community Action Suffolk had brokered a new group insurance policy with RSA that had been specifically designed for local councils and this had resulted in a lower premium being paid. A summary of the main aspects of the policy had been circulated to all Members.

### **19/20 SECTION 137 LIMIT**

Members were advised by the Clerk that the appropriate sum set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the purposes of Section 137 expenditure by local authorities for 2021/22 was £8.41. As the number of people on the electoral roll for Warboys on 1st January 2021 had been 3,330, this meant that the Council's expenditure under Section 137 should not exceed £28,005.30 in 2021/22.

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

**Chairman**