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Parish Room
Old School Centre
Porlock
Somerset, TA24 8NP

Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting **The Parish Room, Old School Centre, Wednesday 6 March, 4pm** *Copies of minutes and reports are available on request*

Present: Cllr. L Thornton (Chair), Cllr. D McCanlis, Cllr. D Thornton

Also present: Parish Clerk, Johnathan Jones

1) Apologies accepted by Council

Cllr. S Colson

2) Declarations of interest and disclosable pecuniary interest dispensations

No interests declared

3) Items to be dealt with after the public, including press, have been excluded.

There were no items to be dealt with

4) Public participation

There were no members of the public in attendance at the meeting.

5) Minutes for the meeting held on the 4 January '24

The minutes were approved and signed

6) Outstanding items from meeting held on the 4 Jan '24

a) Heating System

Cllr. D Thornton explained the challenges and inefficiency of the systems and in finding a company. Clerk to find appropriate companies who will be able to provide a report on efficiency improvements, costs to implement and any potential savings

b) Water butts for floral maintenance

Cllr. L Thornton to discuss with Council Caretaker size, location and installation. No budget implications as funds already allocated under floral maintenance

c) Grounds Maintenance Contract

Contract to be renewed in Autumn – Cllr. L Thornton and Clerk to talk to current contractor about renewal and tender process

d) Public Toilet Cleaning contract

Contract to be renewed in Autumn – Cllr. L Thornton and Clerk to talk to current contractor about renewal and tender process and explore the option of employment.

Updates to be reported back to Finance Committee before being taken to Full Council.

Proposed: Cllr. L Thornton

Seconded: Cllr. D McCanlis

All Voted in favor

7) Somerset Council Financial situation and devolution opportunities

Cllr. D McCanlis provided a brief update noting that there was no new information at this stage. Somerset Council are getting serious about devolution of Highways, but no real detail is forthcoming at this stage. Agenda item to be removed from future Finance Committee meetings until further notice.

8) Quarterly budget review 1 Jan – 29 Feb 2024 and the EMR

Cllr. L Thornton highlighted some overspends and income shortfalls all of which were discussed, including:

101/1090 Miscellaneous Income of £9047 as refund for over paid/charged Business rates since dating back to 2019

101/4039 Other expenses as mileage for Clerk

225/1089 D/Hay toilets cash collection income decrease

206/4127 Dog bins & Signs – idverde contract not included in previous budget

It was also highlighted that a review of where grants are paid from is to be carried out.

It was agreed to review the EMR list at the end of the year to ensure accuracy and transparency of reporting. This will help ensure that the monies that are allocated to the Allotment Trust Fund are spent on local causes through grants as required

War memorial restoration, previously the Council approved the allocation of £10K from reserve funds to the War Memorial EMR. Cllr. L Thornton raised concern that they have been unable to get more than one further quote for funding as required and it is also felt a grant unlikely to be awarded, as advised by the War Memorial Trust, although eligible, as funding is limited

Cllr. L Thornton highlighted that the working group are keen to progress the renovation process urgently as this year sees the D-Day 80th anniversary commemorations, and next year the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2. It is hoped by the WG to use these events and the renovation of the War Memorial as part of further historical promotion of Porlock to attract visitors.

Recommendation to full Council that full funding is approved and to go ahead with the quote from the War Memorial Restoration Company.

Proposed: Cllr. L Thornton

Seconded: Cllr. D McCanlis

All voted in favor

9) Asset Register – to review/update and make recommendations to Full Council

Asset register requires updating ahead of audit, Clerk to complete

Clerk to discuss with Auditor, prior to the meeting with the DMMC, about Doverly Manor remaining on the register and insurance implications in light of the change to charity status

10) Porlock Youth Club

Recommendation to full Council as a grant has already been given in this financial year, not to enter into a service level agreement this year and timetable to review later in the year ahead of budget setting

Proposed: Cllr. L Thornton

Seconded: Cllr. D Thornton

All voted in favor

11) Internal audit arrangements

Internal auditor has been booked for the 24 April '24. Clerk to review the last audit to ensure all recommendations/actions, check status and report back

12) End of year close arrangements

Clerk to arrange year end close down date with A Dallaway and report back. As a fall back we can call upon Rialtas if time constraints or any other unforeseeable events require

13) Risk assessments review prior to audit (as part of Business Risk Assessment)

Cllr. L Thornton raised an issue regarding caretaker not having keys to access Council properties in emergencies, out of hours. Also the council not having a complete list of who has keys to what/or how many keys exist. In addition passcodes and passwords to key safes locks, accounts etc. all need to be changed and an accurate log implemented is maintained

Recommendation to full Council is that the Clerk obtains a quote for lock changes to the OSC and review security arrangements with Coomers incl contact numbers, passwords and codes

Proposed: Cllr. D McCanlis

Seconded: Cllr. L Thornton

All voted in favor

Cllr. L Thornton raised the issue of the Clerk's laptop continuing to crash several times a day, with a 2hrs post-crash lock out security protocol before being able to log back in. A quote was obtained from A&R computing for replacement as previous attempts to repair have been unsuccessful. Due to critical requirement needing a device to carry out daily duties, emergency funding was requested

In addition Cllr. L Thornton highlighted the current inadequacies and security risks of the historic IT infrastructure set up as a critical business risk. The Clerk will get a proposal to be reviewed at full Council

Emergency funding was approved to purchase HP 250 G9 Laptop £732.99

Proposed: Cllr. D McCanlis Seconded: Cllr. L Thornton All voted in favor

14) Rialtas contract renewal

Recommendation to approve Rialtas quote of which includes 3 Year contract for the Alpha Financial Management Software (2 Users) incl Alpha Annual Support and Maintenance and Rialtas Cloud Multi (5 Users Licence) at a cost of £937 an increase in current fee of £85 in support of business resilience

Proposed: Cllr. L Thornton Seconded: Cllr. D Thornton All voted in favor

15) Review clerk consultancy work

Clerk gave an update on the current status of the budget spent, which remains being under spent, the first month charge was under £500 and ongoing support arrangements incl year end have been discussed as being remote which will reduce costs. Clerk to monitor and advise if current budget is likely to need reviewing.

16) Nat West Bank Mandate

Recommendations to Council to approve

- a) adding J Jones, Parish Clerk to Bank Mandate March '24
- b) removing A Dallaway once the addition of J Jones has been completed by the bank

Proposed: Cllr. L Thornton Seconded: Cllr. D McCanlis All voted in favor

17) Payroll arrangements for next financial year 24/25

Cllr. Thornton raised future possibility of bringing payroll in house however not at this time due to onboarding priorities of new Clerk. In addition HMRC Real Time Information login access will be required by the new payroll provider. Clerk will liaise and report back once resolved.

Recommendation to full Council to approve Dorrell Accountancy as new payroll provider from April '24 and that the Clerk will liaise with the outgoing and incoming payroll providers to ensure there is a complete and full handover including HMRC RTI input.

Proposed: Cllr. L Thornton Seconded: Cllr. D Thornton All voted in favor

18) Expenditure exceeding £200 – to consider and make recommendation to Full Council

- a) Old School Centre (OSC) electrical installation quote from Crosswells
Cllr. D Thornton gave a brief overview of works required to bring the OSC up to 'satisfactory' and more importantly safe.

Recommendation to full Council to approve the quote of £2,045 +VAT.

Proposed: Cllr. D Thornton Seconded: Cllr. L Thornton All voted in favor

- b) OSC Shed/Storage quote from Taunton Sheds for supply and installation
Cllr. L Thornton raised that obtaining three quotes had proved unsuccessful

Recommendation to full Council to approve the quote of £1,658.34 +VAT.

Proposed: Cllr. D Thornton Seconded: Cllr. L Thornton All voted in favor

- c) Repairs needed to OSC roof
One estimate received from G Bloys

Recommendation to full Council a budget of **£2,500**, two additional quotes are required

Proposed: Cllr. D Thornton Seconded: Cllr. L Thornton All voted in favor

19) Business Rate Liabilities for Council assets

Ongoing - Clerk provided an update that the Valuation Office have been chased for an update regarding High Bank Car Park

Meeting closed 17.15