

FELSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 9 October 2019 at 5.00 pm in the United Reformed Church Hall, Committee Room.

- Present** Councillors John Moore (Chairman), Graham Harvey, Alan Mackrill and Frances Marshall.
- F19/18 **Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**
Apologies had been received from Cllr Peter Rose. There were no Declarations of Interest.
- F19/19 **Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2019**
The Minutes of the meeting were agreed and were signed by the Chairman.
- F19/20 **Matters arising from the July meeting**
20.1 Woodleys Car Park resurfacing (Item F19/10.1) – Members noted that the PC had accepted a quotation, at their September PC meeting, from Ted Anderson, totalling £1222 (charging for materials only), to carry out the remedial work.
20.2 Review of Quickbooks accounting system (Item F19/12 d)) – The Clerk had established that the only training available was via Quickbooks itself. Members discussed possible future staffing arrangements (see Item 19/20.3 below) and agreed to delay the training until a new RFO was in post.
20.3 Future staffing arrangements (Item F19/16.1) – The PC had agreed to the principle of appointing a separate RFO at their August meeting. The Clerk reported that her research had shown that the average salary point for a local RFO was in the region of NJC Salary Points 27-31. She had kept a record of hours spent on financial matters over the last 2 months and from these had calculated that a separate RFO would be required for an average of 3-4 hours per week although the volume of work fluctuated quite considerably over the year. Members found these figures very helpful when considering the likely costs of appointing a separate RFO. It was agreed that the HR Working Group would meet urgently to review the Council's staffing arrangements going forward and that the Clerk and Asst Clerk would attend the meeting to provide input into the decision making process. The RFO position would not be advertised until this exercise had been completed.
- F19/21 **Bank Reconciliation and PAYE records**
The Chairman signed the Barclays Bank Reconciliations and PAYE records for July to September 2019. The Chairman also signed the Metro Bank Reconciliations (Nature Area account) for 2018-19 and noted the transactions/balance to date.
- F19/22 **Consideration of the External Auditors Report for 2018-19**
Members were pleased to note that PKF Littlejohn LLP had reviewed the 2018-19 Audit Return (AGAR) and found the information to be "in accordance with Proper Practises". They also noted the external auditors comment regarding the documentation submitted which related to the consideration of risk management arrangements. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was currently being displayed on the PC website and notice boards.
- F19/23 **Review of Felsted Nature Area account processes (Draft financial policy)**
Members considered the draft policy which had been prepared by the Clerk, taking into consideration comments received at the September NAWG meeting. After some discussion it was unanimously agreed that the PC should not require any reimbursement of administration costs (management charge) from the Nature Area account and that item was accordingly deleted. The remaining 4 items relating to separation of the accounts, signatory requirements, accrued interest and VAT repayments were agreed and would be referred to the next full PC meeting for formal approval.
Cllrs Graham Harvey, John Moore and Alan Mackrill agreed to meet as a matter of urgency and visit the Metro Bank to complete the necessary paperwork to change the signatories on the account (delete former Cllr Chris Woodhouse and add Cllrs Moore and Mackrill).
- F19/24 **Disaster Recovery policy**
Cllr Graham Harvey agreed to produce a draft policy for consideration at the February 2020

Finance Committee meeting

F19/25 Review of Financial Risk Assessment

Members considered the draft Financial Risk Assessment which had been prepared by the Clerk and unanimously agreed the proposed amendments. These included an update on the Nature Area bank accounts and a review of the Quickbooks accounting package in Spring 2020 (rather than in October 2019 as originally proposed). The document would be formally approved at the November PC meeting.

F19/26 Review of Asset Register

Members considered the revised Asset Register compiled by the Clerk and unanimously agreed the suggested amendments. The document would be formally approved at the November PC meeting.

It was agreed to carry out a review of the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders early in 2020.

F19/27 Review of accounts for the current year to date Members studied the Budget Comparison prepared by the Clerk and agreed the following changes to the 2019-20 Proposed Budget:

27.1 Receipts

The 'Grants' figure was amended to £3500 in anticipation of an application be made for a UDC Community Projects Grant

27.2 Payments

- 'HMRC Tax & NI' amended to £4300 to cover 2018-19 underpayments and ongoing liability
- 'Telephone/Broadband' increased to £1000 to cover increased fees
- 'Professional Fees' figure was amended to £1250 to cover FCT fees and potential grant to West of Braintree fund
- 'Training' was increased to £1500 to cover 4 x new Councillors courses and Asst Clerk Cilca
- 'Election expenses' increased to £120 to cover invoiced costs
- 'Hedgecutting/Tree maintenance' increased to £4600 to cover agreed projects
- 'Play equipment repairs' increased to £12000 to cover expected refurbishment costs
- 'Planting' increased to £1550 to cover trial wildflower block
- 'Beacon' increased to £100 to cover cost of safety fencing

The above amendments would result in Proposed Receipts of £75,900 and Proposed Payments of £110,700. The Council's year end reserves were projected at £116,443.

F19/28 Initial consideration of expenditure/ projects for 2020-21

Members considered the ongoing proposal to extend the Crix Green Mission Hall to provide modern kitchen and toilet facilities and so encourage greater use of the hall by the community. The Crix Green Mission Hall Trust (CGMHT) had substantial funds available but, having received 2 quotes for the work to date, it was clear that these funds would only cover about half of the total cost of the project. The Finance Committee agreed to support the proposal to fund the outstanding balance. It was agreed that the CGMHT would obtain a third quotation for the work. A meeting would be arranged for Councillors to view the property prior to the November PC meeting when the matter would be included on the Agenda for further consideration.

F19/29 Urgent matters and proposals for future Agenda items

None.

F19/30 Next meeting

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 November at 5.00pm

..... Chairman

20 November 2019