

## BENSON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, Wallingford. OX10 6LZ  
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### Minutes of the Benson Parish Council Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at 7.00pm in Benson Parish Hall Lounge (moved from Pavilion)

Present: Cllr J. Fowler (Chairman)  
Cllr D. Rushton (Vice-Chairman)  
Cllr P. Baylis  
Cllr R. Jordan  
Cllr P. Peers

Proper Officer: Elizabeth Lemaire  
Peter Eldridge

The meeting was scheduled to be held in the pavilion, but was moved to the lounge following a last minute cancellation.

1. **Apologies** – None
2. **Declarations of interest** – None.
3. **Minutes of the last meeting**  
The minutes of the finance committee meeting held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 were approved and signed at the meeting of the full council held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014.
4. **RFO vacancy CV sift**  
Two applications were received for the post and the committee felt that perhaps the timing of the advertisement over the Christmas period meant that it hadn't been widely seen.  
**Action:** Cllr Fowler to conduct initial telephone interview with the two applicants – question list to be devised.  
**Action:** The position is to be re-advertised in The Henley Standard for one week as soon as possible (Clerk) and a half page advert in the Benson Bulletin February issue (Cllr Fowler).  
**Action:** RFO to investigate if SODC can offer any temporary cover.  
The Hall's Manager role is to be extended to cover more office work including hall invoicing and allotment management.
5. **Youth Leader pay scale**  
The committee reviewed the rate of pay for the youth leader, currently an hourly rate of £8.71, since 2009/10.  
Recommendation to full council to put the youth leader role on to the NJC payscale at LC1 SCP18 £9.207 per hour, subject to the Youth Leader accepting the increase
6. **LGPS Pension Administration Strategy**  
Recommendation to full council to sign and return the LGPS Pension Administration Strategy to OCC Pension Services together with a completed contact sheet

7. **Projects**
  - Parish Hall extension business plan

The business plan was discussed at the recent Halls meeting and there being no further comments from the committee, has been returned to SODC officer Jed Casell for further review.
8. **Review of asset register and insurance**

The committee reviewed the figures included in the asset register for the play equipment. The older pieces of equipment have been valued based on current Wicksteed prices for new similar pieces of equipment. The total figure for play equipment in the three play areas is currently £135,769.25 (not including fences).

**Action:** RFO to contact Came & Co for quote to insure the play equipment
9. **Hall hire rates**

The committee discussed the current standstill in inflation and felt that it should be taken in to consideration with the rates for 2015/16.

**Recommendation to Full Council to retain the hall hire rates for April 2015 to April 2016 at the current levels.**
10. **VAT advice**
  - meeting with Andrew Marsden

The RFO reported a very useful meeting with the VAT advisor Andrew Marsden with regard to partial exemption. He felt that the instructions given during a VAT inspection were not Local Authority specific and there could now be a reclaim of understated input VAT due.

**Action:** RFO and Cllr Baylis to go back 4 years and recalculate the VAT returns. Andrew Marsden will then help compose a letter to HMRC.

  - Opting to tax

Following the recent advice, it was felt that opting to tax was not an urgent matter to consider. Cllr Peers reminded the committee of the importance of all invoices being addressed to Benson Parish Council.
11. **Banking and investments**
  - Nationwide Treasurers' Trust account and Co-operative Business Select 14 day account interest rates and withdrawal terms

Information not available to discuss, to be carried forward to next agenda.

**Action:** RFO to chase Government Procurement Card application submitted to Barclaycard.
12. **Election costs May 2015**

The clerk has received notification from the SODC electoral team that the likely cost of a contested election for a parish the size of Benson would be £4,000. The finance committee has over the past few years been budgeting for the election based on the 2012 election cost and has £1,600 set aside. The Committee felt the increase in amount, and late notice of the increase, should be challenged.

In light of this information coming in after the initial precept deadline, the SODC finance team has agreed to accept amended precept forms up until 23<sup>rd</sup> January should the council decide to increase the budget to cover the potential cost.

**Action:** Full Council to discuss this under correspondence on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015 with a view to increasing the precept by £2,400 to cover the higher than anticipated cost. Revised form to be submitted to SODC by 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2015.
13. **Any other items to note or for next agenda**
  - Budget monitoring to be on next agenda

The Parish Council has received a request from Benson CofE School for grant funding. The committee felt that the council needs to draw up a policy and set criteria for grant funding as with OCC budgets being cut, there will be increased requests for funding from Parish Council level and the Council must be clear on its spending powers and limits. The RFO highlighted that the amount the Parish Council can request as precept at this time is not capped.

**Action:** Cllr Rushton to draw up list of criteria

Cllr Jordan reported that the Youth Facilities Working Group is unable to get a survey inserted into the Benson Bulletin February issue and will be investigating paying local youth groups to deliver the survey to all households.

Cllr Peers highlighted the statement by The Millstream Day Centre in their grant request letter dated July 2014, that the Day Centre had only received funding from the Parish Council for 5 out of the past 13 years. The Parish Council has in fact given grant funding for every year.

**Action:** Clerk to respond to The Millstream Day Centre detailing grants provided.

The Clerk reported that the Grant budget for the year 2014-15 has enough to cover the allocated Millstream Day Centre grant for the year and any further grants will be an overspend. The committee agreed that should this occur, a proposal will be put to Full Council to move funds from the unrequired amount budgeted to cover non-reclaimable input VAT.

Cllr Rushton reported there was insufficient funding set aside to purchase the required number of litter bins for the village. Recommendation to full council to move £250 from the unrequired budget heading non-reclaimable input VAT for the purchase of one additional bin.

Cllr Rushton reminded the committee of the action to investigate the water usage of the Millstream Public Conveniences.

**Action:** RFO to advise Clerk of Thames Water Contact so that this matter can be pursued.

14. **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015

The meeting closed at 8.45pm



Mrs Elizabeth Lemaire Responsible Financial Officer