

## BENSON PARISH COUNCIL

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### Minutes of the Benson Parish Council Finance Committee held on On Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 7:30PM in the Parish Hall Lounge

Present: Cllr J. Fowler (JF)  
Cllr R. Jordan (RJ)  
Cllr T. Mcteaugh (TM)

Proper Officer: Anna Field (RFO)

1. **Apologies** – Cllr Pat Peers, Cllr P Baylis, Cllr M Winton
2. **Declarations of Interest** – None declared
3. **Public Session** – There were no members of the public present.
4. **Minutes of the last meeting** – The minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015 were approved and signed at the meeting of the full council held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015

#### 5. **Update of Standing Orders and Finance Regulations**

The Council's Standing Orders and Finance Regulations have not been reviewed for some years and need updating. Trish Ingham (the temporary RFO who worked for the Council earlier in the year) can do this as she is a CiLCA trainer and well acquainted with recent legislative changes. The anticipated cost is maximum £100.

**Recommendation: That Mrs T Ingham is engaged to carry out a review of the Standing Orders and Finance Regulations for a maximum cost of £100**

#### 6. **2014/15 Financial Statements:**

These have now been completed and are available for public inspection.

#### 7. **External Audit** – issues raised.

There were two issues raised in the external audit report. The first was a 1p discrepancy in the figures transposed from the 2013/14 Annual Return. The second was the omission of the minute record as the return was submitted before the minutes were prepared. It was submitted subsequently and accepted.

The date for submission of the 2015/16 Annual Return was selected as 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

#### 8. **Project Funds.**

RFO explained that there is likely to be fuller scrutiny of Council reserves in the future requiring evidence of project expenditure. There are several versions of the current project list in existence and these haven't been updated for some time with project expenditure. The committee reviewed the lists and detailed known expenditure to date. RFO will develop a proper project monitoring system. RFO

## 9. Investments

The Bloomfield Bequest 3 year fixed rate bond has matured and the balance has automatically been transferred into a current account with negligible interest. RFO circulated a list of current fixed rate accounts and investment possibilities for consideration. Cllr Jordan expressed concern that several options did not comply with the Councils Investment Strategy and these were therefore dismissed. RFO was asked to investigate the best rates from high street banks and building societies and report to the next Finance Meeting

RFO

## 10. Utilities Review:

- a. Gas and Electricity - A number of utilities contracts have expired or are expiring around 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. RFO presented options for contracts with different suppliers and renewal with existing ones. Whilst there appeared to be financial advantages of taking contracts with new suppliers, many of these were not familiar names and in some cases, savings were marginal. RFO was asked to speak to the current supplier, British Gas again to see if they would match the lower quotes.
- b. Phones – There are three landlines at the Parish Hall, the office, the helpline and the payphone. RFO was asked to contact Virgin again to see if the landlines could be included in the current Broadband package at little extra cost. If not then the current contract with BT can continue subject to monitoring annually. The payphone costs £185 a year and has not been used for at least 12 months. The committee agreed that this could be removed.

RFO

**Recommendation: That the Parish Hall payphone contract is terminated.**

## 11. Account Signatories.

RFO reported that all accounts needed to have past Councillors removed as signatories and new Councillors added. The process involves large scale form filling and the supply of proof of identity documents by every Councillor affected. RFO suggested a carefully coordinated schedule of form filling was required, possibly by an appointment system before a Full Council meeting. RFO was asked to put a plan together and submit to Cllr Fowler

RFO

## 12. Barclaycard and Direct Debit Procedures

RFO expressed concern that Barclaycard and Direct Debit payments go out of the account without further approval from the Council. Cllr Fowler requested that they are detailed in the monthly cheques lists and receipts attached to the monthly statements..

RFO

## 13. Funding for the Refurbishment of the Sunnyside Play Area

Cllr McTeague reported that with the play area development plans proceeding quickly, the Wickstead proposal to refurbish the existing play areas at a cost of £10k needs to be reviewed, especially as a recent play area inspection report did not highlight any urgently required repairs. Cllr Fowler will discuss this with Cllr Baylis and the Lands Committee. Further discussion on the refurbishment quote is deferred.

JF

A question was asked about the disposal of existing playground equipment should the redevelopment plans proceed. This will be discussed at a future

date.

14. **War Memorial Funding For Repairs**

This item was deferred

15. **Grant Application Offer from SSE**

This item was deferred

16. **Salary Transfer Letter by Email**

Currently the salary transfer letter is signed at Full Council and faxed to the bank. RFO asked for permission to scan the signed letter and email it. There would be no effect on payment times.

**Recommendation: That the salary transfer letter is scanned and emailed rather than faxed.**

17. **VAT on Developments**

Cllr Winton had asked for Andrew Marsden's guidance on VAT election on developments. Andrew Marsden is not available for a few weeks but RFO will go on a course on the subject at the end of the month and any queries can then be raised with Andrew.

18. **Allotment Charges**

RFO reported that the 2015/16 allotment charge increase had been approved last year and would be implemented in the renewals process next month. If the allotment charges were to be reviewed for 2016/2017 we would need to give 12 months notice. RFO provided a rough comparison of current charges against other local councils. Cllr Fowler will discuss with Cllr Stevenson

JF

19. **AOB**

**Suspend Standing Orders**

Members unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders for the purpose of discussing renewal of the councils insurance policy

RFO reported that the Councils insurance policy is due for renewal on 1<sup>st</sup> October with Aviva via brokers Came and Company. The Council have a three year agreement with Came and Company that expires in 2016 but they have offered a £300 discount in premium if we take out a new three year agreement with them now. The premium this year will be circa £6000 which was felt by some members to be high. RFO was asked, in the next 12 months, to research alternative insurers and gather comparable quotes.

RFO

**Recommendation: That the insurance policy with Aviva is renewed for a further year but the long term agreement with Came and Company is reviewed upon expiry next year.**

Members unanimously agreed to resume Standing Orders.

**Resume Standing Orders**

**Date of Next Meeting.** 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

Anna Field Responsible Finance Officer 16<sup>th</sup> September 2015