

**BENSON PARISH COUNCIL**

Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, Wallingford. OX10 6LZ  
Tel: 01491 825038 e-mail: [bensonparish.council@virgin.net](mailto:bensonparish.council@virgin.net)

**Minutes of the Benson Parish Council Finance Committee held on  
On Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at 7:30PM in the Committee Room**

Present: Cllr P. Peers (PP)  
Cllr J. Fowler (JF)  
Cllr R. Jordan (RJ)  
Cllr T. Mcteaugh (TM)  
Cllr P Baylis (PB)  
Proper Officer: Anna Field (RFO)  
Also Present: Stephen May – Benson Outreach Post Office

1. **Apologies** – Cllr M Winton
2. **Declarations of Interest** – None declared
3. **Public Session** – Stephen May addressed the Committee to explain how Benson Post Office central funding has been reduced, that they are making a loss and are having to consider the future of the service. He requested a rent reduction in line with the reduced attendance fee.
4. **Minutes of the last meeting** – The minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 were signed at the Benson Parish Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015.
5. **Actions from last meeting:**

- a Electricity Recharging: RFO reported that electricity had now been recharged for College Farm and the Tennis Courts. College Farm had been paid in full, payment is awaited from the Tennis Club. RFO to chase RFO
- b Reorganisation of Bank Funds: Deferred to next meeting
- c Football Club liaison and VAT: PB clarified the VAT position with regard to charging the Football Club to use the Pavilion. TM and PB to set up a meeting with the Football Club TM  
PB
- d Rent Reviews: RFO summarised the rent review clauses in leases of Millbrook Mead, Paddock, Tennis Club and Cuckoo Pen. RFO  
RFO to obtain a quote for legal advice on managing the lease of Millbrook Mead RFO

**Members resolved unanimously to make the following recommendations to Full Council**

**Recommendation to Full Council to increase the rent for the Paddock by 2% in line with past annual reviews. Monthly rental will rise from £26.78 per month to £27.30 per month effective 1/4/2016**

RFO to provide written summary of lease terms of all properties to Finance Committee

RFO

6. **Hall Hire Rates 2016/17.**

Item deferred awaiting recommendation by Halls Committee

a Post Office Rent: PP explained the financial implications of various scenarios including losing the Post Office and reducing the rent. TM reported that the Post Office is already aware that there may be an opportunity to move into the main building as part of the regeneration plans. Members agreed that the village needs to retain a post office service.

**Members resolved unanimously to make the following recommendations to Full Council**

**Recommendation to Full Council to reduce the Post Office rent of the Pavilion to £58 per week (£14.50 per day) from £85 per week effective 1/4/16**

Once agreed at Full Council, JF to publicise in the Benson Bulletin that the Parish Council have chosen to subsidise the outreach Post Office.

JF

7. **Q3 Budget Monitoring:** RFO reported nothing of major concern in the Q3 budget monitoring. College Farm electricity costs appeared to be over budget but have recently been recharged and this will be reflected in Q4. The Public Toilet budget was overspent due to the new door lock and the Rivermead maintenance budget was overspent due to the summerhouse brickwork.

RFO

With regard to Project Monitoring the following changes we made;

a £678 residue from the Xmas lights fund to be returned to central funds

b £695 residue from YH flooring fund to be returned to central funds

c £3400 surplus from paddling pool fund to be returned to central funds leaving £600 for repairs to the slab surrounds

d £400 snow shovels fund to be returned to central funds

e £1486 residue to electrical works at Bobs corner to be returned to central funds

f Costs of Millstream slab works and Toilet lock to be taken from Millstream Rose Garden fund.

**Members resolved unanimously to make the following recommendations to Full Council**

**Recommendation to Full Council to transfer £1500 from the Millstream Rose Garden budget to offset the £1500 cost of the brickworks to the Rivermead summerhouse.**

g £1000 to be transferred to the Allotment fences fund from the Millstream Rose Garden budget and the remainder to be returned to central funds subject to £1000 remaining in the rose garden fund

h £3000 to be allocated to the Legal Fees fund

i £1000 to be allocated to the War Memorial fund

8. **Internal and External Audit Arrangements:** RFO explained that whilst the

external audits are currently carried out by BDO, their contract is expiring 2017/18 and a new sector led body is being proposed by NALC who are ensuring the external audit requirements are in line with the Transparency Code. The Council have two options, either to appoint their own external auditor and external audit panel or to accept the sector led auditors. Costs are expected to be in line with current rates

**Members resolved unanimously to make the following recommendations to Full Council**

**Recommendation to Full Council to accept the sector led external audit body to be appointed by NALC for 2017/18 at a cost not to exceed £800 plus VAT**

The Council need to appoint an internal auditor for this current financial year. RFO outlined three options;

South and Vale at an approximate cost of £1500 plus VAT (a comprehensive service more suited to larger councils)

Stuart Wilbur who carried out the internal audit last year at a cost of £335 plus VAT per day with an audit expected to take 2 days.

Trish Ingham at a cost of £300

It was felt that whilst Mrs Ingham would provide an excellent service, her appointment would not satisfy the requirement to be 'independent' since she had been on the payroll in the current financial year

**Members resolved unanimously to make the following recommendations to Full Council**

**Recommendation to Full Council to engage Stuart Wilbur to carry out an internal audit for the year 2015/16 at a cost of £670 plus VAT**

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| 9.  | <b>Finance Regulations and Standing Orders Review:</b>  | RFO |
|     | RFO to summarise the key issues that need to be reviewed and circulate asap.  |     |
|     | Clerk to do the same with the Standing Orders   | CLK |
| 10. | <b>VAT Reclaim:</b>   |     |
|     | RFO reported that the VAT reclaim had been checked by Andrew Marsden and a claim for approximately £16k (plus interest) had now been submitted to HMRC.   |     |
| 11. | <b>Project Expenditure Review:</b>  |     |
|     | RFO to reorganise funds as above and summarise the split of reserved and unreserved funds.  | RFO |
| 12. | <b>Any Other Items To Note or For the Next Agenda</b>   |     |
| 1   | JF reported that the Neighbourhood Plan consultant had been engaged and his costs are to be monitored against the Neighbourhood Plan budget   | RFO |
| 2   | JF reported that OCC had confirmed a willingness to lease or sell the St Helens salt store land at a 'market rent' but hadn't confirmed a figure.<br>RFO to ask OALC if SODC have a District Valuer who could advise on the 'market rent' | RFO |

- 3 RFO reported that the revaluation of the Councils property assets is due very soon being 9 years since the last one. RFO to ask Adkins to quote for the revaluation RFO
  - 4 Salary reviews to be on next agenda
13. **Date of Next Meeting:** 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Anna Field Responsible Finance Officer 17<sup>th</sup> February 2016