

BENSON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Benson Parish Council Finance Committee held on On Tuesday 20th October 2015 at 7:30PM in the Parish Hall Lounge

Present:	Cllr J. Fowler	(JF)
	Cllr R. Jordan	(RJ)
	Cllr T. Mcteague	(TM)
	Cllr P Baylis	(PB)
	Cllr M Winton	(MW)
Also Present:	Peter Eldridge	(CLK)
Proper Officer:	Anna Field	(RFO)

1. **Apologies** – Cllr Pat Peers
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 15th September 2015 were deferred to the next Benson Parish Council meeting on 22nd October 2015 as there were insufficient members of the committee in attendance to approve them.
5. **Update of Standing Orders and Finance Regulations:**

Mrs T Ingham is due to attend on 21st October to review and update the Standing Orders and Finance Regulations. It is anticipated that a new draft will be available for review end January 2016.
6. **Investments:**

RFO circulated a Cooperative Bank Authority for the RFO to be an 'Authorised Account Person' as the bank have changed their security and no longer recognise the authority letter that was previously provided. This was signed by members of the Committee.

RFO circulated a summary of the current rates available in High Street savings accounts for the Bloomfield Bequest, following the maturation of the previous 3 year fixed rate bond.

Recommendation: A 1 year Fixed Rate Business Saver Account is opened with Nationwide for the Bloomfield Bequest.
7. **Utilities Review:**

RFO reported that the payphone contract had now been terminated and that BT had reviewed the office phone contract, reducing it by approximately £40 a year.

RFO circulated the revised renewal quotes from British Gas for the supply of gas and electricity at 5 sites. The Parish Hall gas contract does not expire until 2018 and the Youth Hall gas contract is currently a better rate than the renewal offer so these will be left for the time being. A new contract for supply of electricity at 5 sites fixed for 1 year shows a saving of approximately £500.

Recommendation: A 1 year fixed rate contract is entered into with British Gas for the supply of electricity to Parish Hall, Youth Hall, Pavilion, College Farm and Millstream Toilets.

8. **Account Signatories.**

RFO is in the process of putting together a plan for updating all account signatories but has been delayed whilst Cooperative Bank await the signed authority. See item 6 above

RFO

9. **Grant Application Offer from SSE:**

This is now being progressed and a decision is expected before the end of October 2015

10. **VAT on developments:**

RFO reported that there are a number of guidance notes available relating to VAT on Parish Council Capital developments. In addition to understanding the principles, it would be important to identify the pros, cons, costs and benefits of VAT election.

RFO was asked to prepare a simple summary and circulate to all councillors

RFO

11. **Allotment Charges**

JF reported that Cllr Stevenson had been tasked with looking at the allotment charges and making a recommendation as to whether the charges should be raised for 2016/2017 (The Parish Council have to give 12 months' notice of any charge increase). As no conclusion had yet been reached it was decided to leave the charge at the current rate for 2016/17 and review for the following year. Item to be placed on the next Recreation and Lands Agenda

Recommendation: That allotment charges for 2016/17 are held at the current rate and are to be reviewed for 2017/18 by the Recreation and Lands Committee

12. **2015/16 Budget half year review including projects**

RFO reviewed the 2014/2015 full year budget to note items that had a large variance from the budget set. A number of issues arose

RFO

a Water bills seemed either very high or very low and may have been based on estimates. RFO to check whether meter readings are being used

b The tennis club don't appear to have been invoiced. RFO to check

c Sunnyside income is currently grouped with allotment income. RFO to create a separate nominal to split it out

The half year review of the 2015/16 budget raised a number of issues;

a The audit costs appeared to be high as an accrual had been entered. RFO to reverse accrual

b Office costs are high but some expenditure could legitimately be moved to other budgets eg cleaning machine to furniture and equipment budget. RFO to sort

c Grants – RFO to total current grant commitments and report back to next Finance Committee

d Historic Villages signs to be moved out of signage budget and taken from

- projects budget
- e Footpath 8 costs to be moved from footpaths to projects budget
 - f Paddling pool costs to be moved from paddling pool maintenance to projects budget
 - g The Projects list contains an item called 'Premises Development Fund' which is broken down into a number of projects that are either completed, cancelled or have been changed over the years. JF to review the Premises Development Fund and provide a sub list of current projects that draw from this fund. RFO to circulate updated Projects list and expenditure monitoring at the next Finance Committee JF
RFO
 - h The following half year budget adjustments were agreed RFO
 - i Bank charges budget to be increased to £100
 - ii Office budget to be increased to £700
 - iii Office consumables budget to be increased to £1.2k
 - iv Architects fees for the Hall extension amounting to £4300 + VAT to be taken from the premises development fund
 - v Youth Hall flooring cost of £6000+VAT to be taken from the premises development fund
13. **2016/17 Budget and Precept**
- As a start point to preparing the 2016/17 budget, RFO to prepare the budget sheets using the same figures as 2015/16 and the same tax base. RFO
- Clerk to chase OCC for the Working Together figures CLK
- The Committee provided RFO with a 'wish list' of projects from their other Committees to be included for consideration in the 2016/17 budget
14. **Any Other Items to Note or for the Next Agenda.**
- None reported
15. **Date of Next Meeting.** 17th November 2015.

Anna Field Responsible Finance Officer 28th October 2015