

BENSON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, Wallingford. OX10 6LZ

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Minutes of the Benson Parish Council Finance Committee held on On Tuesday 20th February 2018 at 7:30PM in the Pavilion

Present: Cllr P. Baylis (PB)
Cllr McTeague (TM)
Cllr Workman (RW)

Proper Officer: Anna Field (RFO)

1. **Chair of Meeting** – Cllr Baylis volunteered to chair the meeting
2. **Apologies** – none
3. **Declarations of Interest** – none were declared
4. **Public Session** – there were no members of the public present
5. **Minutes of the last meeting** – The minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 16th January were signed by Full Council on 25th January 2018
6. **Updates on actions from previous meetings:**
 - i. Green Close –SODC grants window is now closed until new financial year. RFO to diarise next application RFO
 - ii. Millbrook Mead – PB to review draft Heads of Terms and pass comments to RFO PB
 - iii. Millstream Car Park – On hold pending new Councillors
 - iv. Bertie West Forest School – Clk to chase CLK
 - v. St Helens play equipment – now in progress PB
 - vi. Defibrillators – decision by Grundon on funding of defibrillator imminent. RFO to monitor RFO
 - vii. VAT on hall extension – on agenda
 - viii. Online Banking – Application to be started again due to missing Councillor signatures RFO
 - ix. Risk Assessments – RFO requested that the already purchased LCRS software is used as a base to prepare the more detailed risk assessments now required by Came & Co. This would need to be upgraded to Windows 10 version at a cost of £70.70 plus VAT. This was agreed within the current software budget. RFO
 - x. Governance Audit – on agenda
 - xi. War Memorial Contract – this has now been recovered from the contractors and sent to the War Memorials Trust. Once accepted by them we will be able to proceed to the next stage. RFO to monitor RFO

7. **Opting for VAT on the Parish Hall:**

Background summarising the advice given by Andrew Marsden, VAT adviser: - assuming the hall extension cost is £1m, the VAT cost payable on top would be another £200,000. The only way to reclaim this element would be if the Parish Hall (and Pavilion being part of the same physical building) are opted for VAT. This means we would have to charge VAT on all hirings which would effectively put the hall hire rates up by 20%, or we could absorb the VAT element ourselves by making our existing hall hire rates inclusive of VAT. Very roughly if the annual income on the hall is £50k, and we absorbed the VAT element that would become chargeable on all hirings, it would take 20 years before this VAT stopped being offset by the £200k we could reclaim on the build costs. Andrew Marsden felt this was a very clearcut case where it would be in our financial interests to opt for VAT before the build starts.

In reality about 5% of our hirers are VAT registered so we would not have to absorb the VAT element of their hiring.

Recommendation to Full Council: That Benson Parish Council opt for VAT on the Parish Hall/ Pavilion from 1st April 2018

Action: RFO to start the VAT option paperwork with the assistance of Andrew Marsden

RFO

8. **Governance Audit:**

Deferred to next meeting

9. **Grass Cutting Contract:**

The old and new contracts were compared with two small differences discussed.

I. A change from annual invoicing to monthly is not ideal but will be discussed with Azalea

RFO

II. A change from a one month termination clause to three months is acceptable

RFO

Action: RFO is discuss with Clerk and Azalea

RFO

10. **Hall Extension Contract:**

This has now been signed and the next stage is for the architects to revisit the site and recheck their drawings and spec before preparing the tender documents

11. **Parish Hall Dishwasher:**

The dishwasher has broken and two experts have failed to find the reason for the breakdown. They have suggested two options; either it is dismantled and sent to the manufacturer for assessment and repair at unknown cost, or, (as it is 10 years old anyway) we scrap it and buy a new one

Recommendation to Full Council: That a new dishwasher is purchased at a cost not to exceed £1600 plus VAT financed by transferring the cost from the 2017/18 Youth hall Maintenance Budget

12. **Hall Waste Collection Charges:**

SODC have introduced a £75 annual charge for collecting waste from the domestic bins at the Parish Hall. RFO enquired whether the Council wished to continue with these bins or just use the large commercial Waste Wheeler. It was agreed that the Council should encourage recycling as much as possible and should therefore retain the domestic bins

Action: RFO to confirm to SODC that the bins are to be retained and to mark them clearly to encourage users to recycle. Also to review the Grundon charge for emptying the Waste Wheeler to ensure it is competitive

RFO

13. **Current Grant Opportunities:**

RFO currently monitors available grants and commented that they could be available for specific items in the hall extension project eg for the lift, the kitchen, for any improvements that affect accessibility and for aspects that serve particular groups within the community eg, for a counselling room to support mental health needs in the Parish.

Action: RFO to circulate a list of the types of available grants to all councillors with a view to an open discussion about facilities that could be incorporated into the extension supported by grants

RFO

14. **Items to Note or for Next Agenda:**

RFO requested permission to investigate alternative water suppliers as Castle Water are not performing well. There would be no financial impact on change suppliers, therefore this was agreed

Action: RFO to investigate better alternative water suppliers

RFO

15. Date of next meeting 13th March 2018

Anna Field Responsible Finance Officer 21st February 2018