



**Minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee Meeting
held on Monday 4 March 2019 at 7.00 pm
at 2 Knowle Park Lane, Fair Oak**

Present: Douglas (Chairman), Goss, McGuinness, Noel & Spearey

Also in attendance: Cllr Bird

Officers in Attendance: Ms M Stephens, Clerk & Mrs J Cahill, Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)

Apologies: Cllr Barrett

There were no members of public present.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Douglas in Minute No. 30.

27 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & Staffing Committee meeting held on 3 December 2018 (approved by the Full Council on 18 February 2019) be noted.

28 REPORT OF THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER (REPORT B)

The Committee considered the report of the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) which showed the Council's budget position as at 4 March 2019.

The RFO highlighted key variances in the budget, including: -

- There had been a significant overspend in the legal and professional fees budget, this was largely due to transfer of open space, Horton Heath Community Centre and the scout lease. The budget for next year had been increased to safeguard against this.
- The business rates budget lines for Horton Heath Community Centre, Woodland Community Centre and the Parish Office were also overspent as the cost of this had been grossly under-estimated. The correct sum for business rates owed on these properties for next year had been reflected in the forthcoming budget.
- The utility fees (gas & electric) for the Woodland Community Centre had also been under-estimated resulting in a significant overspend. The Council would be unable to give an accurate estimate of the cost of this until after a full year of occupation. However, the budget for this had been increased and based on quarterly estimates so far. Members were informed that Eastleigh Borough Council's Energy Officer had undertaken a site visit at the Centre and would advise on how energy costs could be reduced.

The RFO pointed out that whilst some budget codes had been overspent, with underspends in other budget lines, and with only one month before the year end, the Council would be in a healthy budget position.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the RFO be thanked for her due diligence and hard work.

29 ALLOCATION OF CAPITAL RESERVES 2019/20 (REPORT C)

The Committee considered the current capital reserve budget and discussed amendments for the 2019/20 financial year.

Members requested that the RFO action the following amendments to the reserve funds: -

- Code 330 - That the resurfacing and re-netting works to the tennis court be given a project start date of 2022.
- Code 350 – the £34,000 ear marked for Horton Heath Community Centre be allocated to the kitchen refurbishment, toilet and general area refurbishment, equipment for possible new centre at the new Horton Heath development and possible extension.
- Code 365 – that £6,000 be rolled into the general reserves to pay for the May 2019 elections. That £4,000 be rolled into a new maintenance budget for the Community Centres. That the Clerk confirm the cost of a by-election before further decision is made on the remaining £6,000 in this budget code.
- Code 370 – that the full £4,913 ear marked for the footpath leaflet be rolled into general reserves to assist with the cost of the marketing and promotions project and possible HR policy review.

RESOLVED:

That the RFO action the above amendments to the Council's capital reserves for the 2019/20 financial year.

30 GRANT AID PROCESS & APPLICATIONS (REPORT D)

Cllr Mrs Douglas disclosed a disclosable pecuniary interest as her husband was the treasurer of the squash club who had made a grant application. She concluded that there were no grounds under common law to prevent her from remaining in the meeting to speak. She did not vote.

The Committee considered proposed changes to the Council's allocation of section 137 grants.

Members supported the changes to the process and eligibility criteria subject to the following minor amendments: -

- That the "what do we fund" bullet points be removed and replaced with "the Parish Council will grant up to a maximum of £1,000 per application".
- That the bullet point stating each organisation can only apply for one grant each year be removed.

Historical applicants would be written to and advised of the changes to the grant process. The dates for the submission of applications would be advertised on the Council's website, newsletter and facebook page.

Members considered the following requests for grant aid: -

- 1) EBS Counselling, request of £100 for supplies
- 2) Fair Oak Bowling Club, request of £350 for new equipment
- 3) Fair Oak Squash Club, request of £2,000 towards a replacement boiler

Members examined the above requests against the current criteria and set against the remaining budget for section 137 grants. Members expressed the view that the remaining grant funds be allocated, and as such it was: -

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed changes to the grant aid process, as set out in Appendix 1 to Report D be approved;
- (b) That EBS Counselling be awarded a grant of £100;
- (c) That Fair Oak Bowling Club be awarded a grant of £350; and
- (d) That Fair Oak Squash Club be awarded a grant of £1,700.

31 PARISH NEWSLETTER

The Clerk pointed out that the budget for the newsletter had been reduced in last budget planning and options for review of the current format needed to be undertaken.

The format of the newsletter had not been reviewed for some time. Given budgetary constraints and the fact that the Council would not be able to sustain the current format due to the increase in the number of residents, particularly following completion of the Horton Heath development, it was now time to consider alternative, more modernised formats such as a monthly e-newsletter. This would ensure that the information communicated to residents was timely and up-to-date.

Members noted that as the newsletter was sent out four times per year, the information contained in each newsletter went out of date very quickly. Members also conceded that production costs of the newsletter (printing and distribution) would likely escalate, following the completion of the large developments taking place across the parish, should the Parish wish to continue the current format and circulate the newsletter to all parish households.

The Clerk understood that West End Parish Council, in responding to budgetary cuts, had reduced their newsletter to 3 per year and had also further reduced its costs by asking Parish Cllrs and Ground staff to distribute the newsletter.

The Clerk advised that sending newsletters by email would be an ideal cost-effective solution for the Council. Mailchimp, a popular and easy to use format could be used and would be free up to 2,000 subscribers. Smart Marketing had indicated that they would set up an account and template for the Council free of charge.

Some members expressed the view that a change in format was needed given the continued increase in the number of residents. Other members expressed the view that residents be adequately informed of the proposed change in format, with a phasing out of the current hard copy newsletter over three editions in the forthcoming financial year.

Members requested that editions would ask residents to sign up to the e-newsletter. Members requested that these editions coincide with key parish events. It was also suggested that the new e-newsletter be printed in-house and distributed to key locations across the parish such as the surgery, halls, parish office, so that residents not on email were still able to have access to this information. Members supported this approach.

As such it was: -

RESOLVED

- a) That a hard copy newsletter be produced three times for the year 1 April 2019-31 March 2020;
- b) That the remaining hard-copy newsletters be published to coincide with Parish Events, i.e. delivery in May for Carnival, October for Remembrance and February for Annual Parish;
- c) That the May and October editions inform residents that the Parish Council would cease hard copies from April 2020;

- d) That the February 2020 edition inform residents that it would be the last hard copy newsletter produced and ask residents to sign up to the new e-newsletter;
- e) That from April 2020 a monthly e-newsletter be produced using mailchimp; and
- f) That approximately 100 hard copies of the new e-newsletter be distributed at key locations around the village, i.e. Village Hall, Woodlands Centre, Horton Heath, Library & Parish Office.

32 HORTON HEATH COMMUNITY CENTRE KITCHEN

The Clerk advised that the kitchen at the Horton Heath Community Centre was tired and outdated and did not currently comply with various health and safety and food hygiene regulations. As such the Clerk had sought quotes from three separate contractors for a complete re-fit of the kitchen. These quotes varied considerably. This was largely due to the different specification. One quote was for a replacement basic domestic kitchen, the other for a half-way approach between domestic and commercial and the final quote, being the most expensive, was for a commercial kitchen which would comply with environmental health hygiene safety standards.

Members were informed that the Parish Council had received approximately £11,000 from the Community Association which had been ear marked specifically for the kitchen. The Council also had funds in reserves for Horton Heath Community Centre which could be used to top-up this budget if necessary.

All hirers had been given advance warning of the Council's plans to refurbish the kitchen.

Members considered the future use of the building in the context of the new development which would likely have a new community centre. Members expressed the view that despite this, the Parish Council should retain the current building as a small community hub. In valuing the building and seeking to improve the offer available at the Centre for local residents, Members requested the Clerk seek a further two quotes for a commercial kitchen.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk seek a further two quotes for a full commercial kitchen refurbishment at the Centre for final approval at the next Full Council meeting.

33 PLAY AREA CONSULTANCY

The Committee considered three quotes received for project management of the installation of new play areas at New Century Park and Crowdhill Green.

Given the extensive local knowledge and detailed services received, Members agreed that the contract be offered to Mr Bowen at 8% of the total project(s) costs.

As the Council had completed its first stage consultancy with residents via online surveys, that Mr Bowen could oversee both play area projects simultaneously with the aim of completing on these by the summer holidays.

RECOMMENDED

- a) That Mr Bowen be awarded to project management contract at a cost of 8% of the total project costs for each play area; and
- b) That both play area projects be conducted at the same time with the aspiration of completing by the summer holidays.

34 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the work programme and made minor amendments.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be approved.

35 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

RESOLVED

“That, under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960, the public and the Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information which would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature (staffing matter)”

36 PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

There is a confidential minute for this item.

37 WORKFORCE BUDGET

There is a confidential minute for this item.

This was all the business and the meeting finished at 9.10 pm.

Signed..... Chairman