

LONG ASHTON PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

19:30 – 14TH December 2020

Held remotely by video conferencing



Present: Ms S Hardingham (Chairman)

Ms L Anderson

Mr J D'Alesio

Ms C Fagg

Mr P Jackson

Mr C James

Mr D Johnson

Ms R McAllister Kemp

Mr A Wilkinson

Absent:

Mr M Harris

Mr C Cave

In attendance - The Clerk, Mr Scott Jacobs-Lange, J Howell (minutes) and one member of the public.

F20.042 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Harris and Cave.

F20.043 Declarations of Interests and Grant of Dispensations.

Cllr Jackson raised a pecuniary interest in item 4. (Grant application: Long Ashton Youth Club) and requested a dispensation be granted in order to take part in discussion adding that he would withdraw from the meeting before any vote took place.

RESOLVED: That the committee grant Cllr Jackson a dispensation to remain and take part in discussion for item 4 – Youth Club grant.

F20.044 Minutes of previous meetings

RESOLVED: That the minutes of this Committee held on the 5th October (previously circulated) were approved as a correct record. The minutes will be signed when practicable

F20.045 Exclusion of the press and public

Not required.

F20.046 Matters arising

a. F20.033 – Overhaul of the Parish Council's website including accessibility issues
Discussion took place around the need to upgrade the website in order to meet the 2018 Accessibility Regulations. Initial quotations from two providers obtained for new website and hosting. A Cllr suggested a search function should be included on the new website. Other considerations covered include: domain hosting, email– currently two different email systems, rights to the current '.gov.uk' domain name and a requirement to rationalise email system and ensure compatibility with other systems including Microsoft Teams.

Cllrs Anderson, James and McAllister Kemp to work together with the Clerk. Firm proposal to be brought to the next F&GP.

b. F19.124 - Reinvestment of Hampshire Trust Bank Bond

Members noted update of bond reinvestment as agreed.

F20.047

Payment of accounts and payments to Council

A report of expenditure for October and November had previously been circulated.

It was RESOLVED that the Parish Council approved expenditure report for 01 October to 30 November 2020 and noted the receipts 01 September – 30 November 2020.

F20.048

Bi-monthly statement and Bank reconciliation

a. Appointment of Councillor to review the bank reconciliation.

Cllr Anderson was appointed.

b. Bi-monthly statement and bank reconciliation (Sept – Nov).

It was RESOLVED that the committee approved the bi-monthly statement and bank reconciliation (Sept – Nov). Clerk to circulate report of totals to support the individual account reconciliations.

F20.049

Review of Expenditure against Budget

Members noted the review of expenditure against the budget at 11th December 2020.

Key categories of spend were reviewed.

F20.050

Budget 2021/22

a. Draft budget and precept requirement

Members were asked to agree the draft budget, including consideration of funding requests from: LACA and Long Ashton Youth Club. Cllr Hardingham introduced the draft budget for 2021/22 (draft and notes having been circulated) and invited questions from members. Headlines included:

- NS have indicated a reduction of about 10 Band D equivalent households, taking into account those now needing council tax support. Accordingly to achieve a nil increase in Band D council tax, this means a slight reduction in the total from £188,000 in the current year to £187,250 proposed.
- Library – as plans were shelved due to the pandemic, the £9,000 running costs for 2020/21 will not be needed this year so will fall into general reserve.
- Road safety – there is support from residents for increased road management and further enhancement of the public space. £9,000 built into 2020/21 budget to be added to earmarked reserve plus £2,000 requested by Environment Committee for next year to build road safety provision.
- VES – £21,630 left in earmarked reserve for next phase e.g. Piccolo's forecourt area.
- Skate park: £2000 is in the draft budget, with the intention that this is funded from CIL (British Legion site – already received). This is in addition to the existing provision for £5000 (i.e. £2000 is already in EMR and it is proposed that this year's £3000 provision is added to EMR). The working group would like some certainty as they approach a key stage, so it is recommended to Council that this allocation from CIL is specifically approved at the Jan meeting and that £2,150 is also vired to the skate park from the EMR for Tydings Close, in lieu of the £2,150 expected from NS.
- Grants below £2000: the budget allows for £5000 in total and the applications will be considered at Feb F&GP.
- Grant request: Long Ashton Youth Club – request held at previous year's rate of £18,000. Youth club management committee to engage in fundraising for additional activities of street-dance and trips. It was reported that the Youth Club have done well to engage with members online. Cllr Jackson provided a short report on Youth Club finances and impact of coronavirus.
- Ongoing support for LACA for the 2021/22 financial year was considered. The committee agreed that the Community Centre is at the heart of the community.
- LACA: the budget shows 2 headings. The usual grant is set at £33,000 for planned property maintenance, repairs and renewals. This schedule has been

reviewed with LACA to enable a clearer picture of the future works and smoothing expenditure over the next 6 years. In view of the financial crisis facing the Community Centre however, it is possible that some of this funding may have to be used to subsidise the running costs, with the detrimental effect of delaying necessary maintenance.

- In addition, provision is made for a contingency fund of £24,000 to assist LACA if necessary with the operating costs in the months before normality returns to the usage of the Community Centre.
- Given the uncertainty surrounding the situation, it is suggested that both these funds are made available to LACA only as staged grants, on a draw-down basis as needed after approval by the joint PC/LACA working group. If all is drawn down, this will represent 30% of the precept.
- In providing these funds, the PC can reasonably expect that LACA will commit to working with the PC on a Covid crisis plan towards finding fresh energy and skills from the community. Fundraising is essential both from the residents who enjoy and value the Centre and also from grants aimed at the financial havoc caused by Covid.
- The budget enables only limited progress on the priority projects which the PC had intended in the PC Plan but instead allows for additional support to the Community Centre if needed.
- In view of the serious economic circumstances, members supported that the draft budget proposes no increase in precept for band D equivalent properties.
- General reserves were considered. It was noted that the budget deficit of £24,000 would take the Parish Council below the target of 6 months of normal expenditure in general reserve. Accepting that these reserves are reduced significantly in view of the pandemic emergency, the proposed budget will however provide a safety net for the Community Centre.

Cllr Jackson withdrew from the meeting and was placed in the waiting room.

RESOLVED: That the committee approve the £18,000 grant to the Youth Club.

Cllr Jackson was re-admitted to the meeting at 20:29 hours.

RESOLVED: That the committee recommend a grant to LACA of £33,000 and a contingency fund of £24,000 both of which if approved by the full council would be made available to LACA as staged grants on a draw down basis, as needed after approval by the joint PC/LACA working group.

RESOLVED: to recommend to full Council this budget and a precept of £187,250 which will mean a nil increase for a Band D equivalent property at £68.57.

The committee recognised that whilst they make these recommendations, the Council will formally consider and set the budget and precept at the full council meeting on 18th January 2021. Social media release discussed and to include communication of committee recommendation to full council on precept, Youth Club grant, skate park (funding from developers through s106 and CIL) and 2021/22 funding for LACA. The committee highlighted that with regards to the emergency grant, LACA would have had enough reserves in usual circumstances but coronavirus has been unprecedented.

9b. Future working with LACA on a COVID crisis plan

This item has been covered during the extraordinary Council Meeting held earlier in the evening at 7pm. Clerk to circulate COVID-19 crisis plan to LACA trustees.

F20.051

Finance Items

a. Online banking:

The Clerk introduced a short report on online banking and options available.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk investigate and make a recommendation around suitable online banking for the council's current account to next F&GP

F20.052 Update from the Skate Park Working Group

Survey results and findings were shared. Headlines included:

- Survey received 460 returns from 1098 residents.
- Strong support for skate park in LA.
- Data received will be used to inform design and tender phase.
- No specific actions required from PC at this time.
- Launch of social media activity in the coming week.

Thanks to the team for preparing a clear report.

In recognition of interested parties setting up an incorporated skatepark charity to fundraise for this project, members were asked to consider whether the Parish Council would seek to have a Parish Councillor representative as an 'Organisational Trustee' within that charity.

Members note appointing of trustees at full council. View of this committee that no need for PC representative on the skate park committee at this time.

F20.053 Taylor Wimpey Areas

- a. Transfer of the Taylor Wimpey areas (Peel Park and others) to Council and lease to LACA. No update. Clerk to follow up.
- b. Public Art – update from Taylor Wimpey. No update from Taylor Wimpey or NS. Clerk progressing.
- c. Perry Road Play Area. Update from Cllr James. Flyer prepared with the intention to circulate around the estate to engage with parents over use of Perry Road Play Area and care of older children kicking footballs around the park when young children are present. Cllr James to take this item to Environment Committee.

F20.054 COVID-19 support steering group update

Clerk to circulate. Regarding the grant from PC to support network: Financial summary and report supplied. Allows support network to continue providing COVID-19 support until the summer.

F20.055 Correspondence

Items of correspondence were noted including:

- CCLA (Local Authority property fund) – PSDF factsheets, market reports and LAPF prices. Clerk to add funds that are property-based funds to risk register.
- Parkinson's partnership - COVID19: Government support for businesses

F20.056 Matters for information

- a. Office arrangements over the Christmas period.
Office closing from midday 24th December 2020. Re-open 4th January 2021.
- b. Extraordinary committee meeting
Members agreed provisional time of 7.15pm on 11th January 2021 in the event a meeting is required as a result of changes or announcements that may impact precept requirement e.g., significant change in council tax base.

The Council Chairman gave thanks to Cllr Hardingham and the clerk for the work on the draft budget. At 21:46 hours, the Chair thanked members for attending, wished everyone a Happy Christmas and called the meeting to a close.

Date of next meeting: Monday 15th February 2021.

Minutes are in draft form until considered for approval at the next F&GP meeting.