

LONG ASHTON PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

19:30, 5th October 2020

Held remotely by video conferencing



Present: Ms S Hardingham – Chairman
Mr C Cave
Ms C Fagg
Mr M Harris
Mr P Jackson
Mr C James
Mr D Johnson
Ms McAllister Kemp
Ms C Sellars
Mr A Wilkinson

Absent:
Ms L Anderson
Mr A Cartman
Mr A Johnson
Mr O Lloyd-Jones

In Attendance: Dr Janet Turp (The Clerk), Cllr D'Alesio

F20.021 - Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Anderson and Lloyd-Jones.

F20.022 - Declarations of Interests and Grant of Dispensations

Interests to be declared during the meeting. No dispensations were requested.

F20.023 - Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th February 2020 copies having been circulated and it was RESOLVED to accept the minutes as a correct record and agreed that these will be signed by the Chairman at the earliest opportunity. Proposed by Cllr Hardingham and seconded by Cllr Jackson. All in favour.

F20.024 - Exclusion of the press and public

If any members of the press or public present they will be excluded from item 21 as it relates to staff salaries.

F20.025 - Matters arising for information

F20.026 - Payment of accounts and Payments to Council

A list of payments and receipts was presented at the meeting. It was noted that the receipts for September were not complete as the statement had not arrived. Updated figures will be provided at the next meeting. It was RESOLVED to approve expenditure during June to September of £67,438.00 and to note receipts of £3,910.11 over the same period. Proposed by Cllr Hardingham and seconded by Cllr Harris. All in favour.

F20.027 - Bi-monthly statement and Bank reconciliation

The bank reconciliation at 13th February 2020 and summary was presented. The total amount in all accounts is £585,603.28 including £41,600 in a long-term investment. It was RESOLVED to approve the bimonthly statement and bank reconciliation. Proposed by Cllr Jackson and seconded by Cllr Sellars. All in favour

F20.028 - Review of Expenditure against Budget

Total income was noted at £105,893 with total expenditure at £67,789 - 30% of budget.

F20.029 - Covid support steering group update.

No meeting of the steering group has taken place recently because of the issues surrounding the network split. A small group of Councillors have met with both groups to understand their positions and intend to provide some recommendations to Council as to what the PC role should be going forward, noting that neither group is a PC body. It was recognised that the issue of representation on NS Together needs to be addressed.

F20.030 - New Clerk Induction.

- a) To agree handover arrangements. The new Clerk, Scott Jacobs-Lange will start on November 2nd. A two week handover with the present clerk was initially suggested but it is thought, given the current situation, up to three weeks may be more appropriate. The outgoing clerk will then be available on a flexible basis up to Christmas and if necessary to the end of the financial year. It was RESOLVED to have a handover period of up to three weeks, proposed by Cllr Hardingham, seconded by Cllr Jackson, all in favour.
- b) It was RESOLVED to agree to all reasonable initial training such as for example ILCA, Cemetery management, alpha accounting package, cemetery mapping and planning. Proposed by Cllr Hardingham, seconded by Cllr Jackson, all in favour.
- c) It was agreed that Cllrs would be involved in a Parish familiarisation programme, including socially distanced walks around various parts of the Parish, for the new clerk which would have the added benefit that Cllrs and the clerk will be able to get to meet each other. Cllr Hardingham will circulate a list of areas for Cllrs to sign up to.

F20.031 - Working groups

- a) Skate Park – Cllr Jackson's report below was noted:

The consultation questionnaire and the set of Qs & As prepared by the skatepark working group have been approved by the community engagement working group. The questionnaire to understand more about residents' views to the proposed skatepark will remain open until 12th November and is available in hard copy, including the village newsletter, and online. Fundraising for the skatepark is planned to get underway in early 2021. In preparation for this the creation of a CIO is being explored to act as the non-profit organization for the fundraising activities. Preparation of the tender documentation for selection of the skatepark designer is getting underway by the working group with a plan to issue in early 2021.

It was confirmed that the tender would be to a fixed construction budget of 90k (there is an extra £5k allowed for local landscaping). A fundraising strategy is being put in place.

Cllr Jackson suggested establishing a small group, to include the clerk, to advise on the process of running a competitive tender and to review the tender documentation. This will also be relevant to the community library and the same group could be involved in both projects. It was recognised that the PC has little expertise in the areas of drawing up tender documentation or project management. The experience of Nailsea and Clevedon Town Councils will help to inform the process but it may be necessary to call on some external expertise. It was noted that the LCC (Local Council Consultancy arm of SLCC) or NSC may be able to provide that service or Cllrs can see if there is a suitably qualified resident with time available who could help. Consultant project managers are likely to be expensive. The tender documents used by Nailsea and Clevedon will be a good starting point.

- b) Library – The procurement issues are as above.

- c) Joint LACA/LAPC Working Group – The working group has met and the PC is waiting for a cash flow projection based on the current income to be provided. Cllr Cave confirmed the current figures indicated that LACA will stay afloat this financial year by relying on its reserves to the extent of about £6,000 a month based on current usage. It is positive that LACA has welcomed back about two-thirds of user groups, but the weekend takings have been heavily reduced in the absence of parties and weddings. A discussion followed regarding the need to cut costs and LACA's assessment of limited scope for that, noting that some leisure centres were considering mothballing their facilities, but also the important community benefit of fitness and mental health and the important position of the community centre in village life and the negative effect that mothballing the facilities would have. A request was made for a calculation of the number of users benefiting at present. Once the PC has a full picture from LACA, it will consider carefully how much of its reserves might be used to subsidise the Community Centre in the future. The request for a grant for the next financial year must be submitted to the PC by the end of November. Cllr Wilkinson will liaise with LACA as to reviewing its repairs programme.

F20.032 - Finance Items

- a) Accounts for the year 2019/20 - To note the external auditor's report if available and to agree any actions to recommend to council. The auditor's report is not yet available.
- b) Reinvestment of Hampshire Trust Bank Bond, to consider the options and to agree how to proceed. It was RESOLVED to reinvest the proceeds of the maturing bond in a one year Hampshire Trust account as long as the rate was greater than 0.9%. If the rate offered is lower than this the clerk to consult with the Chairmen of Council and F&GP. Proposed by Cllr Cave, seconded by Cllr Wilkinson, all in favour.
- c) Wreath for Remembrance Day – It was RESOLVED to approve expenditure up to £30 on a wreath for Remembrance Day (to be paid from section 137). Proposed by Cllr James, seconded by Cllr Harris, all in favour.
- d) To approve the list of frequent payments. The list of suppliers/organisations who payments to do not need to be approved prior to payment had been circulated before the meeting. It was RESOLVED to approve the list of frequent payments. Proposed by Cllr Cave, seconded by Cllr Fagg, all in favour.
- e) Community Grant - Scouts and the spitfire group – update. The spitfire group have produced a smaller scale model of the spitfire but COVID19 restrictions have meant they have been unable to complete the full scale model which had been partially built and the events it was to be used at were cancelled. The grant money had been spent on materials. The scouts are progressing with their planning application and have incurred expenditure on the environment report and architect's fees.
- f) It was agreed to hold an informal workshop about finances and budget setting on November 2nd at 7:30 pm. The new clerk will be invited.
- g) Proposed increase in ALCA subscriptions – to discuss. At the ALCA AGM there will be a resolution to increase ALCA subs by 30% - this will mean the PC paying roughly an extra £150. The association is currently running at a deficit and the increase is needed to maintain services. The benefits of being in ALCA were highlighted and it was noted that the ALCA rates are substantially lower than other nearby county associations. It was agreed that the PC representatives attending the AGM can vote in favour of the increase.

F20.033 - Website accessibility – It was agreed to approach some of the specialist PC website providers and ask them to provide a proposal for a new accessibility compliant website and these could be compared to the present provider's proposal. The clerk will seek quotes following discussion with Cllr McAllister Kemp.

F20.034 - Banking arrangements

In view of the current clerk's retirement changes need to be made to the mandates and signing arrangements. It was RESOLVED to delegate to the clerk to make the necessary arrangements. Proposed by Cllr Hardingham, seconded by Cllr Fagg, all in favour.

F20.035 - Planters outside the Post Office – update on progress.

The order for the planters and bench outside the post office has now been raised and they should be in place by the end of the month.

F20.036 - To review the following (previously circulated)

- a) Grant Awarding Policy – this was reviewed and it was RESOLVED to adopt the policy without change. Proposed by Cllr Jackson, seconded by Cllr Fagg, all in favour.
- b) Freedom of Information - available information guide - this was reviewed and it was RESOLVED to adopt the guide policy without change. Proposed by Cllr Wilkinson, seconded by Cllr Jackson, all in favour.
- c) Complaints Policy – this was reviewed and it was RESOLVED to adopt the policy without change. Proposed by Cllr Cave, seconded by Cllr Harris, all in favour.
- d) Policy on residents identified as generating an unusually large volume of correspondence with the Parish Council – this was reviewed and it was RESOLVED to adopt the policy without change. Proposed by Cllr Hardingham, seconded by Cllr Wilkinson, all in favour.
- e) Standing Orders – It was noted that the standing orders were changed last year to allow wider public participation from the January 1st 2020 with the intent that this should be reviewed after six months. Changes due to the pandemic have meant that this hasn't been fully implemented and will be reviewed once normal meetings resume. There were minor changes to the standing orders suggested by NALC to accommodate changes to voting and the annual parish meeting because of the changes in the legislation. It was RESOLVED to accept Standing Orders as circulated. Proposed by Cllr D Johnson, seconded by Cllr Fagg, all in favour.
- f) Financial Regulations. The circulated draft regulations for review contain amendments suggested by NALC. One of these relates to specialist services, in the existing regulations (11.1 a ii) competitive quotes do not have to be obtained for specialist services and in the new regulations that estimates will be required except when relating to a dispute. It was agreed to retain the current regulation where the cost is expected to be below £1000 but to apply the new regulation above this value. Following this change it was RESOLVED to adopt the amended Financial Regulations, proposed by Cllr Hardingham, seconded by Cllr Cave, all in favour.

F20.037 To discuss how the Action Plan, 3yr budget and current budget should be reviewed in light of the impact of COVID 19.

Normally at this time the action plan and 3 year budget would be reviewed to inform budget setting. It was noted that things are very different this year and the PC has its adopted plan in place. It was agreed that these issues would be discussed at the workshop on the 2nd November and recommendations brought to council on the 16th November.

F20.038 - Taylor Wimpey Areas

- a) Transfer of the Taylor Wimpey areas and lease to LACA – no update.
- b) Public Art – this is part of the s106 agreement from the Taylor Wimpey areas and is waiting for NSC to confirm that all other section 106 requirements have been fulfilled. It was agreed that the clerk would follow this up with Taylor Wimpey and NSC. Various options for the art were discussed.

c) Correspondence from resident re Perry Road play area - a resident has raised concerns with how the play area is used with older children playing ball games affecting how younger children can use it. Following discussion about the best way to address these concerns, including putting a play item in the centre to discourage ball games. It was agreed that Cllr James should talk to the parents around the area to see if a way forward can be found and report back to a future meeting.

F20.039 - Correspondence

From CCLA; PSDF factsheets, market reports, LAPF prices and confirmation that the LAPF has again been opened to trading – noted.

F20.040 - Matters for information - None

F20.041 - To agree hourly rate for present clerk to provide support following completion of hand over period. It was agreed that the clerk will stay on payroll, effectively on a zero hours contract, with holiday and pension rolled into the hourly rate. The present hourly rate is £19.69. It was RESOLVED to delegate to Cllrs Wilkinson, Jackson and Hardingham the calculation of the appropriate rate to add in an allowance for pension and holiday. Proposed by Cllr Hardingham, seconded by Cllr Sellars, all in favour.

Meeting closed at: 21:49

Date of next meeting – Monday 14th December 2020