

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade on Tuesday 8 January 2013 commencing at 7.32 p.m.

Councillors present – Mr I Davies (Chairman), Mrs. P. Brooks, Mr Vic Davies, Mr Bob Hinder, Mrs Wendy Hinder, Mrs K Macklin, Mr. K Perry and Mr. G Smith together with the Clerk.

1. Apologies and non-attendance.

All members were present.

2. Declaration of Interest or Lobbying.

Cllr Wendy Hinder reminded members that she was a Borough Councillor.

3. Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2012.

The minutes of the meeting were **signed** and **agreed** as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising.

4.1 Minute 2484/4.1 Weaving Diamond Jubilee Orchard lease. **Noted** the amended lease had arrived and was being checked. **Action** – Clerk.

As no members of the public were present the meeting was not adjourned.

5. Financial report.

5.1 Income/Expenditure report of 2 January 2013. **Received and noted.**

5.2 Reconciliation of accounts report of January 2013. **Received and noted.**

5.3 Reconciliation of December 2012 bank account statements. **Received and signed off.** It was **agreed** to amalgamate items 5.2 and 5.3 in future. **Action** – Clerk.

5.4 Investment Bonds: Members were informed that the NATWEST paperwork was awaited. Members **agreed** that the maturing Cooperative 6 month bond would be reinvested in a 3 month bond. The Clerk confirmed that the two required signatures would be obtained when the form was received. **Action** – Clerk.

6. 2013/14 Draft Budget.

Members considered the draft budget and what adjustments were necessary in view of the loss of the annual MBC Concurrent Functions Grant of £33,000, reduced from £48,000 in 2011). Members were notified that on present information, only £550 would definitely be forthcoming from the replacement Parish Services Scheme. Members expressed concern about the lack of any final confirmed figure from MBC given that its deadline for parishes to set their precepts was the end of January.

A lengthy discussion ensued covering the impact on residents of any precept increase; the use of parish council reserves; the amount required to meet possible legal and contractual commitments; and the need to fully explain to residents that any increase in precept was because of the loss of the MBC grant. After considering whether to cut grants to local groups etc; how much should be drawn down from reserves and the impact on residents, using the average (Band D) precept, of various amounts of increase to meet the shortfall; it was proposed by Cllr Macklin and seconded by Cllr Bob Hinder that **“The budget be recommended to the parish council with a precept of £114,682 being set.”** This was **agreed** (6 for, 1 against and with the chairman abstaining).

7. Policy and procedures reviews and adoption.

7.1 Review of the Policies and Procedures Calendar 2013–2014: the document with a slight amendment was **agreed**.

7.2 Committee review of Financial Regulations: the Clerk’s report was received and the suggestion for an update to standing order 11.3 to reflect a recent committee decision **agreed**. **Action** – Clerk.

7.3 Review of banking arrangements: Members’ confirmed that they were happy with the current arrangements.

7.4 Procedure for payment of staff salaries by BACS: Members **agreed** the policy and procedure.

7.5 Reserves policy: After a request from Cllr Macklin that, in the interests of transparency, the text should be re-written on Plain English lines, it was **agreed** to defer the item to the next meeting for which the Clerk should produce a revised version. **Action** – Clerk and agenda.

8 **St Mary and All Saints Closed Churchyard**

Members considered a letter from St Mary and All Saints Church asking that the parish council retain responsibility of the churchyard. After discussion, Cllr Vic Davies proposed, seconded by Cllr Macklin that **the parish council approach Maidstone BC to request that it takes over responsibility for the closed churchyard. Agreed** (7 for with the chairman abstaining). The chairman requested that a letter be sent to the church saying that that the council understood its concerns but thought them unfounded as its own experience of MBC grounds maintenance had been good. **Action** – Clerk.

9 **Grant Requests.**

None received.

10 **Solar panels.**

The financial benefits or otherwise of such an installation and the future of the currently available Government Feed-in Tariff were debated at length. A number of members expressed disquiet about making such an investment in the current economic climate, while others expressed disbelief that there would be the promised financial return on the investment, quoting the experience of neighbours etc.

Cllr Vic Davies expressed concern at the possibility of the funds being withheld. The Estates Committee had investigated the subject in depth. Of quotations obtained from four companies, three had agreed that such an installation would be productive and would realise a financial benefit for the council. After full consideration, the Committee had decided to proceed, in accordance with its remit "to reduce the parish council's carbon footprint". He felt it would be wrong to now deny the funds to do so.

After further discussion, in which the lack of wall insulation at the hall was highlighted and members recognised that this should be installed, the chairman confirmed that it was indeed open to members to refuse to release funds if they were not satisfied that this would be money well spent, and after taking into account the reduction in the carbon footprint.

Cllr Wendy Hinder then proposed seconded by Cllr Macklin that "**The Finance Committee shall not allocate funding from reserves for solar panels**". This was **passed** (4 for, 2 against with 2 abstentions including the chairman).

Cllr Vic Davies then proposed seconded by Cllr Smith that "**£1,000 be allocated from reserves for wall insulation at Beechen Hall**". This was **agreed** (6 for, 2 abstentions including the chairman). **Action** – office.

The Chairman asked that thanks be minuted for the considerable work that the Estates Committee and the Assistant Clerk had undertaken on this aborted project.

Cllr Smith notified members that he was unhappy with the decision regarding solar panels and will be considering a resolution to revisit the decision.

11 **Matters for Information.**

None as yet received.

12 **Date of Next Meeting.**

Tuesday 12 March 2013 at Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close, Walderslade commencing at 7.30 p.m. Items for the agenda must be with the parish office no later than 3rd March 2013.

Meeting closed at 9.16 pm.

Signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

Chairman.....Date.....