

WATERBEACH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance Committee** of Waterbeach Parish Council held on 24th January 2012 at 7.30 p.m. at the New Pavilion, Cambridge Road, Waterbeach.

PRESENT

Councillor M Williamson, Chairman

Councillors B J Bull, C Grant, N Kay, P Johnson, A Lloyd and J M Rabbett.

APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor C Smith.

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor D Smart

19/11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25th October 2011 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

(Councillor Grant requested that her name be recorded as abstaining from the vote on the approval of the minutes as a correct record.)

20/11 MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made in respect of items appearing on the agenda.

21/11 FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Committee considered a summary of income and expenditure for the first nine months of the year and a projection for the end of the current financial year which had been prepared by the Chairman.

Members were informed that total expenditure was £7,292 less than budgeted as at the end of December 2011 and was forecast to be £14,149 less at the end of the financial year. However attention was drawn to outstanding costs in terms of contributions to schemes that had still to be requested and to the representation of the Council in the case of the dismissal of the former Clerk.

The Chairman also reported that income from the Sports Clubs had yet to be received. The Acting Clerk advised that the invoices to the clubs appeared to have been despatched in January in previous years but that there appeared little information available as to how the amounts had been calculated. In response to a question as to whether agreements existed between the Council and the clubs, the Acting Clerk indicated that he had been unable to locate copies, although Councillor Grant suggested that these had been signed. Councillors Kay and Bull explained that this had been raised with the clubs at meetings of the Recreation

Users Committee and that although the clubs claimed that agreements existed, they had failed to supply copies when requested to do so. The only exception had been the Bowls Club who had supplied a draft agreement, indicating that when they had suggested amendments to the wording the matter had not progressed further.

With regard to the cemetery, Councillor Grant queried how many grave spaces remained but was advised that this information would have to be provided to her after the meeting.

In answer to a question by Councillor Grant with regard to the cost of the Tillage Hall, the Chairman replied that this information had been provided at the previous meeting of the Committee and there had been little change since that time. Members were reminded that the Chair of the Council had requested Members to notify either herself or the Clerk if they were aware of any issues outstanding with the Tillage Hall so that they could be taken up with the project manager before the end of March.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and the Chairman thanked for his efforts in producing the budgetary control report for consideration by the Committee.

(Councillor Lloyd arrived during the course of discussion on this item.)

22/11 BANK RECONCILIATION

The Committee received the bank reconciliation statement for the third quarter of the current financial year which the Chairman indicated he would check. These showed balances carried forward at the end of the quarter in the business saver account of £238,751.90 and in the section 106 account of £3,848.95, although the Chairman reported that in excess of £90,000 had been transferred subsequently from the former to the latter accounts which had been received from section 106 agreements.

23/11 TENNIS NETS

Members were reminded that several members of the public who used the tennis courts had attended the Open Forum prior to the meeting of the Council earlier in the month to comment over the poor state of repair of the courts and the nets, as a result of which it had been agreed to refer the request for replacement nets to the Finance Committee.

Having been advised that new nets were in the region of £100 per set, Members considered that the cost could be met from section 106 agreement money received for sports provision in the parish. With regard to the correct tensioning of the nets, Members were of the view that it should be sufficient for the nets to be wound by the Groundsman each week. It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to purchase three new tennis nets, the cost to be met from the section 106 agreement fund.

24/11 WATERBEACH AND LANDBEACH ACTION FOR YOUTH

The Acting Clerk reported that WAY had written to the Council in the previous autumn to explain that, as a result of their grant from the Government through the Youth Service having been lost, they anticipated having to reduce the number of evenings per week when they provided sessions for youngsters at the Tillage Hall. As a result the Council had awarded a grant of £2,000 to WAY and had agreed to review the position further at the Finance Committee meeting.

Members were advised that WAY had provided updated information on their financial position and that, as a result of the grant from the Council, an auction of promises and individual donations, the current projected deficit for their financial year which ended on 30th June 2012 was between £7,500 and £9,500. Members also referred to donations that had been made recently by the Church of £3,000 and by Waterbeach United Charities. As a result, it was thought that WAY should have sufficient funding in the current year.

In terms of the situation for 2012/13, the Chairman suggested that a figure of £5,000 be included in the budget. Members also commented that as WAY accommodated youngsters from Landbeach, that Parish Council might contribute more than they currently did to help finance the organisation. It was also felt that WAY should provide some form of holiday scheme for youngsters in the summer holidays.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Council be recommended to include a sum of £5,000 in the budget for 2012/13 as a contribution to WAY, subject to the organisation providing a summer holiday scheme of some form for youngsters; and
- (b) that WAY be encouraged to also seek financial support from Landbeach Parish Council.

25/11 DAY CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

Following the attendance of a representative of Waterbeach Day Care for the Elderly at the Open Forum prior to the meeting of the Council in December, the Acting Clerk reported that the organisation had submitted a request in writing for financial assistance. Members were informed that the organisation's grant from Cambridgeshire Community Foundation had been reduced from £3,000 in 2009/10 to £1,800 in the current year and would be withdrawn entirely in 2012/13.

The organisation had indicated that they had sufficient reserves to continue for approximately two years and a grant of £1,500 had also been made by Waterbeach United Charities in the current year.

Members referred to the number of equally worthwhile causes in Waterbeach that provided services in the community and it was suggested that there was a danger of reacting to applications on an individual basis. Nevertheless, Members commented on the value of the service provided by the Day Care organisation to the elderly in the village.

It was therefore

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Council be recommended to make a grant of £1,000 to Waterbeach Day Care for the Elderly in the current financial year; and
- (b) that the Council be recommended to make a provision of £2,500 for financial assistance to organisations in the budget for 2012/13 and applications be invited via the Beach News for an annual distribution of grants.

26/11 FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered the level of fees and charges to be set for services provided by the Council in 2012/13.

With regard to the sports clubs, there was some uncertainty as to the basis upon which charges had been calculated in previous years, particularly with regard to the football clubs and the extent to which the clubs were being subsidised by the Council in terms of the expenditure incurred on personnel, materials, energy charges etc.. Under the circumstances, it was felt that a working party should be established in an attempt to determine the costs to the Council of the various sports using the Recreation Ground with a view to determining an equitable level of charges.

In terms of cemetery fees, the Committee was informed that the Church of England had decided not to increase fees for interments, monuments etc. in 2012/13. As the Council's fees usually corresponded with the fees set nationally, Members were of the opinion that fees should not be increased for the ensuing year, although it was confirmed that the rate for the burial of non residents with no connection to the village should be set at 10 times the normal fee for parish residents.

Following the approval of conditions for the letting of open spaces by the Council at its meeting in December, Members were reminded that the determination of fees had been referred to the Finance Committee for consideration. Following discussion, Members decided to seek further information from Sawston and Cottenham Parish Councils on the fees that they charged for fairs and circuses.

RESOLVED

- (a) that consideration of the charges for sports clubs for 2012/13 be deferred and a working party comprising Councillors Bull and Kay be requested to investigate the cost to the Council of providing pitches and pavilion facilities and report back to a future meeting;
- (b) that the cemetery fees be retained at their present level in 2012/13, with the fee for the interment of non residents with no connection to the parish being set at a multiple of 10 times the fee for residents;
- (c) that Councillor Rabbett be requested to obtain details of the charges made by Sawston and Cottenham Parish Councils for fairs and circus visits to their parishes and to report back to a future meeting;
- (d) that the charge for the use of The Green, The Gault and the Recreation Ground for events of a commercial nature be set at £250 per day (inclusive of electricity);

- (e) that consideration of the charge for the use of The Green, The Gault and the Recreation Ground for fund raising events be deferred; and
- (f) that no charge be made for the use of The Green, The Gault and the Recreation Ground for non commercial events for the benefit of the community.

27/11 RESERVES

Further to Minute No. 17/11, the Chairman submitted a report on the opportunities available to invest reserves at a more competitive interest rate than currently offered by the bank currently used by the Council. As there were no immediate plans to spend a significant proportion of the money recently received from section 106 agreements, it was recommended that investments be made in the Cambridge Building Society and CCLA of varying amounts and lengths of time.

Members were reminded that the Investment Strategy approved by the Council had made provision for decisions on investments to be delegated, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council's Proper Officer be authorised to invest sums from the Council's reserves with the Cambridge Building Society and CCLA, after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

28/11 BUDGET 2012/13

The Chairman presented a draft budget for 2012/13 for consideration by the Committee.

In addition to the discussions earlier in the meeting, Members noted/proposed –

- that local government salary levels would be frozen in 2012/13;
- that provision had been made of £5,000 in both the current year and 2012/13 for the forthcoming and any future bye-elections;
- that the recruitment costs for a new Clerk should be met from the training budget;
- that provision had been made for the cost of the Chapel Street highway improvements to be met from a PWLB loan at an estimated cost of £4,819 in the first year;
- that provision be made for the installation of a replacement kitchen in the New Pavilion of £500; and
- that a reserve provision be made for the Library of £750.

It was proposed that the cost of refurbishing the Old Pavilion for use as the Council's office be met from the replacement and refurbishment reserve which currently stood at £20,995. In addition, it was suggested that the wording of the section 106 agreements be examined to clarify whether the cost of pitch improvements and new machinery for use at the Recreation ground could be met from this source.

The Acting Clerk pointed out that the Localism Act had now introduced an ability for the Secretary of State to prevent all local authorities including parish councils from increasing Council Tax precepts above a level which he would set each year unless a referendum was

held in the area affected that would need be paid for the authority proposing the increase. The Secretary of State had now written to authorities to set the level of increase for 2012/13 above which a referendum would be required at 3.5% for principal authorities and 4% for police and fire authorities. No limit had been set for parish councils, although the Secretary of State had warned that he would be monitoring the precepts set by parishes and would consider setting a maximum limit for 2013/14 if he thought the increases in the current year were unreasonable.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the budget for 2012/13 to include the matters referred to earlier in the meeting and accordingly to increase the precept by 3.95%.

29/11 COSTS

Councillor Smart had asked for an item to be included on the agenda with regard to the cost of maintaining the Recreation Ground but indicated that he was satisfied that this had been dealt with earlier in the meeting when the fees and charges for 2012/13 had been discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 9.40 p.m.

Chairman