

# Holme Valley Parish Council

## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 07 NOVEMBER 2005 -

Those present :

Chairman : Cllr P Robinson

Vice-Chairman : Cllr Mrs H P Smith

Councillors : Cllr Mrs M Bower, Cllr C E Collins, Cllr R N Haynes, Cllr C M Kaye, Cllr G Macpherson, Cllr R Oldfield, Cllr A R Otterburn, Cllr R Rogers, Cllr Mrs J Spencer

Officers : Mrs MA Bewick

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillors Michael Bower, Chilton, Dixon, Firth and Oldham.

It was noted that Cllr. Mrs. Spencer was present as a substitute for Cllr. Michael Bower.

### **05 58 Disclosure of Interests**

Cllr. Mrs. Bower declared a personal interest in item 10 of the agenda, Holme Valley Minibus Services, in that she served on West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority. She also declared a personal interest in item 11(3) of the agenda, West Yorkshire Pension Fund, in that both she and her husband were members of the fund.

### **05 59 Admission of the Public**

It was agreed that no items needed to be taken in private session.

### **05 60 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2005 numbered 05 41- 05 57 inclusive be received and adopted as a true record of the meeting.

### **05 61 Correspondence arising from the Minutes**

Since issue of the agenda, the Clerk had received two items of correspondence relating to the Minutes: Members were circulated with copies of the correspondence.

(1) Lease of Hollowgate Shelter, Holmfirth: Members noted the action taken by the Council's Legal Advisers, and the tenant's reply.

(2) Public Conveniences, Hepworth Road, Jackson Bridge (minute number 05 53(2)) - Kirklees MC had indicated that there had been interest expressed in use of this building, and, therefore, queried whether this Council wished to proceed with its demolition immediately.

RESOLVED: That, in view of this information, demolition should be delayed until further information can be sought from interested parties as to potential uses for this building; Clerk to report back to the next meeting.

### **05 62 Investment of Income**

RESOLVED: That the Clerk's action in the investment and withdrawal of the Council's funds be approved and the current rates of interest applying to the Council's accounts be noted.

### **05 63 Financial Statement**

RESOLVED: That the Financial Summary, Comparison and Income as at 31 October 2005 be approved.

In connection with the Financial Comparison and a recent press report, the Chairman expressed his concern about an allegation of misuse of Council funds which had appeared in the newspaper. As the Chairman had not, as yet, drawn his Chairman's Allowance, such a statement was unfounded and should not have been made. He reminded the Committee that Members should think about the impact

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on the Council and be assured of facts, before making public comments on financial matters.

RESOLVED: That the Finance and Management Committee recommends that the Council issues a press statement refuting any allegation of financial impropriety in respect of the Chairman's Allowance, as based on current information, advice and practice.

### **05 64 Applications for Grant**

An application had been received from the Wooldale Christmas Tree Fund for assistance from the Council with the provision of a Christmas tree to be placed in the park in Wooldale. The Clerk reminded Members that the Council already provided 4 Christmas trees in the Holme Valley (with Kirklees MC providing a further one free of charge), and that Members needed to be aware that support for this request might occasion other requests for assistance with providing Christmas trees to other communities in the Holme Valley. Members noted the Clerk's comments, but felt that such an initiative on the part of the local community should be supported, at least in the first year.

RESOLVED: That a grant of £100 be awarded to the Wooldale Christmas Tree Fund, but that the organisers be made aware that the award of a grant this year should not be taken as approval of grants in future years; such applications would have to be considered on their merit.

### **05 65 Audit of Accounts**

(1) Annual Return for 2004-05 - the Clerk reported the completed Annual Return had been received with the External Auditor's Certificate and unqualified opinion. The Auditor had, however, raised two points for the Council's attention, in that the minute approving the appointment of the Internal Auditor had not given the name of the company so appointed.

The Auditor was also recommending that the Council should adopt a policy of reviewing its Standing Orders and Financial Regulations regularly, either annually, or at a minimum every two years. Members discussed these points, noting the Auditor's comments. It was agreed that a regular review of the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations should be adopted as policy, to be carried out every two years. Given the changes in the membership of the Council to be introduced at the next elections in 2007, it will then be necessary to make changes to the Standing Orders, and it, therefore, seemed appropriate for the first such regular review to be carried out in time for these changes.

The Clerk reported that she would also have to take the necessary actions to publish the closure of the audit and the availability of the accounts.

RESOLVED: (1) That the above information be noted and the actions to be taken by the Clerk approved  
(2) That the matters raised by the External Auditor be noted and actioned  
(3) That, in future, the Clerk will review the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for their adequacy and appropriateness every two years, reporting to the Finance and Management Committee on any alterations or additions to be considered by the Council; the first such review to take place in the financial year 2006-07 prior to changes to be introduced following the Periodic Electoral Review by the Boundary Committee for England.

(2) Internal Audit arrangements - The Clerk reported that Torevell Dent Ltd had indicated that there would be an increase of 5% in the fee for the 2005-2006 audit. The fee had been held for the previous three years, as agreed at £937 for the three Councils. The Internal Auditor was expected to carry out all tests and investigations as outlined in the Practitioners' Guide, issued by NALC and the SLCC, in respect of Local Councils' Governance and Accountability Guidance, and to report thereon to the Council by completing the appropriate section of the Annual Return, together with any additional report, if he felt this was necessary.

RESOLVED: That the increase in the internal audit fee of 5% be accepted, and that Torevell Dent Ltd. be appointed as the Internal Auditor for the 2005-06 audit, on the terms of reference listed above, following the Practitioners' Guide.

### **05 66 Holme Valley Minibus Service**

(1) Route Changes - H1/H2 and H5 - Members noted that WYPTE would implement the suggested change to routes H1/H2, although this would make the timings very tight. The changes would start on 11 December 2005, and new timetables would be issued for this date.

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Changes to route H5 would not be contemplated unless highway improvements could be carried out in Leas Avenue. Comments had been sought from Kirklees MC in this respect, and a reply was still awaited.

RESOLVED: That the above information be noted and received.

(2) 25 years of the Holme Valley Minibus Service - the Clerk informed Members of the arrangements which had been made for 15 November 2005 to celebrate 25 years of the Minibus Services. Members were asked to let the Clerk know if they hoped to attend these celebrations.

RESOLVED: That the arrangements made by the Clerk for this celebration be approved.

(3) Free travel on Holme Valley Minibus Service for under 16's - Members considered this suggestion further in the light of questions posed by WYPTE about how such a scheme would operate, and be monitored, and potential related issues.

RESOLVED: That this suggestion be considered at a later date.

### **05 67 Administrative Matters**

(1) Front Line Service Points - The Clerk reported on the current situation in this respect. Kirklees MC had indicated that, as Members knew, it was difficult to find a site in Holmfirth which would be fully accessible for a whole range of people. In the meantime, the Kirklees Officers had offered to meet with the Parish Council regarding relocating temporarily to provide disabled access for meetings. Members were reminded by the Chairman that a considerable amount of work had already been done to see if access could be improved to the Council Chamber but the likely cost proved prohibitive. Cllr. Macpherson commented that from his point of view and knowledge, full implementation of the act would be very expensive, was not always useful to disabled users, nor always successful; he cited acoustics in the Civic Hall, Holmfirth to illustrate this.

An inquiry had also been made by Kirkburton Parish Council, as to consideration of any financial contribution by the Council towards the establishment of Front Line Service Points. This question had not yet arisen, as discussions in the Holme Valley were still at an early stage.

Members agreed that the Council would wish to continue to be involved in discussions to provide Front Line Service Points for the Holme Valley in one building, which would include the Parish Council, but that in the meantime, it felt that it would be expensive, and not necessarily successful, for the Parish Council to relocate temporarily. Measures had already been taken to accommodate disabled users as much as was feasible in the Council Offices, and the Clerk had been given authority to relocate any meeting, if any disabled person contacted her, wishing to attend a meeting.

It was suggested as a further improvement to the current location that Kirklees MC be asked to provide an extra handrail for the stairs to the Council Chamber, set at an appropriate point in the staircase, to allow users who are less able to have hand support on both sides. Cllr. Macpherson agreed that this would assist him personally.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Council wishes to continue to be involved in discussions relating to establishing Front Line Service Points in the Holme Valley, but that it will await the outcome of these discussions, as use of another building for meetings would have cost implications and would not necessarily be an improvement on its current meeting place in terms of access and useability for disabled users

(2) That the Clerk asks Kirklees MC to consider the installation of a second handrail on the stairs to the Council Chamber to facilitate use of these stairs by less able users.

(2) The Clerk asked Members to consider the purchase of scanner, digital camera and electric shredder for Council purposes. A scanner and digital camera would assist with the production of the Council's newsletter and other publications, and for providing photographs for the website. Members discussed the advantages of purchasing a scanner combined with fax facilities or with a printer built in.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to purchase, for the Council's use, a flat bed scanner or combined purpose printer/scanner/fax, a digital camera and a shredder, the total cost of these items not to exceed £600.

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(3) West Yorkshire Pension Fund - Members had been circulated with correspondence in relation to an Interim Review and proposed changes to Local Government Pension Scheme. This was a result of new regulations which revoked retrospectively changes to the pension scheme which were to have been introduced in April 2005.

RESOLVED: That the above information in relation to the Interim Review and proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme as submitted by West Yorkshire Pension Fund be noted.

### **05 68 Consultations**

(1) ODPM - Vibrant Local Leadership - Local Vision in partnership with local government - Foreword - Cllr. R. Rogers reported on this document. He outlined aspects of this document, in that it examined ideas of encouraging civic governance, training and guidance for Councillors. This document linked into a further series of reports, copies of which he had obtained.

RESOLVED: That Cllr. Rogers' comments about this paper be noted, and that he be thanked for his synopsis of the document; his summary would be available for any interested Member from the Clerk.

(2) Campaign for the Sustainable Communities Bill - Members had considered information about this campaign at the last meeting, and resolved that it should be supported. The Committee was now being asked whether it wished to take the further step of adopting the detailed resolutions recommended by Local Works in support of this Campaign.

RESOLVED: That the Council should support this campaign in principle only.

(3) Members had been circulated with an Ideas Paper produced by the Commission for Rural Communities and NALC on the Neighbourhood Governance Review and the Role and Contribution of Parish and Town Councils in this respect.

RESOLVED: That this paper be noted.

### **05 69 Awarded Quarries**

(1) Following meetings of the Working Party to check and complete the submission of papers relating to the voluntary registration of awarded quarry plots and other sites vesting in, or owned by, the Council, the file had been returned to the Council's Legal Advisers for final checking and deposit with the Land Registry. No further queries had been received to date by the Clerk, although it was likely that points would be raised by the Land Registry in due course.

RESOLVED: That the action taken by the Working Party in the submission of the information to the Legal Advisers in respect of voluntary registration be approved.

(2) White Wells Road, Scholes - correspondence from the Council's Legal Advisers had been circulated to update Members re boundary issues at this site.

RESOLVED: That the correspondence from the Council's Legal Advisers in this respect be noted, and the actions contained therein approved.

(3) Greengate Quarry - it had been reported to the Clerk that unauthorised tipping was occurring at this site. She had, therefore, arranged for notices to be affixed on the gate to the site. The tipping had ceased but a local farmer had contacted the Council, claiming an interest in ownership of the site. The Clerk had asked him to contact the Council formally with proof of his interest in this land.

RESOLVED: That the action taken by the Clerk in this respect be noted and approved, and that it be agreed that the Council proceeds with voluntary registration of this site.

### **05 70 Freedom of Information Act 2000**

RESOLVED: That, under the Council's Publication Scheme, supporting papers for any items within the public session of the meeting be made available, if requested.

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**Chairman**