

Holme Valley Parish Council

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 02 JULY 2007 -

Those present :

Chairman : Cllr R P Dixon

Vice-Chairman : Cllr Mrs B E Smith

Councillors : Cllr M Bower, Cllr T Dearnley, Cllr T W Dixon, Cllr J M Greenwood, Cllr C M Kaye, Cllr R Oldfield, Cllr A R Otterburn, Cllr P Robinson

Officers : Mrs MA Bewick

One Member of the Public was present.

Cllr. Dixon, Chairman of the Committee, welcomed everyone to the first business meeting of the new civic year.

Apologies for Absence

No apologies were given.

(Cllr. Kath Smith submitted apologies the day after the meeting.)

07 03 Disclosure of Interests

Cllr. Dixon declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 14 (9), in that any potential sale was being handled by his company.

07 04 Admission of the Public

It was agreed that agenda item 14 required to be taken in private session in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

07 05 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Finance and Management Committee held on 24 April 2007 numbered 06 98 - 06 112 inclusive, and on 17 May 2007 numbered 07 01 - 07 02 inclusive be received and adopted as true records of the meetings.

07 06 Correspondence arising from the Minutes

Members noted that acknowledgements of grants awarded had been received from Holmfirth Festival of Folk and Hepworth Band.

07 07 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.

07 08 Annual Accounts

(1) RESOLVED: That the report of the Internal Auditor be accepted and that his completion of the Annual Return be noted.

(2) Members considered the information relating to new requirements of the Annual Return outlined in the Clerk's report. Points raised by the Clerk in this connection were discussed, and the Committee agreed that the advice offered by YLCA for reviewing the effectiveness of the internal audit process was far more relevant to this Council, than the checklist supplied by Mazars. It was agreed that Cllr. Greenwood be authorised to relay this view back to the South Pennine Branch of YLCA.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Committee considers that the present system of internal controls contained within its Financial Regulations, as recently reviewed, is adequate and fit for purpose

(2) That the system, as proposed by the Clerk for reviewing the effectiveness of the

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independent internal audit system be adopted for the future, and offered as assistance to the other Local Councils using the same Internal Auditor to keep costs at a minimum

(3) That, given the above resolution, a qualified "yes" be given on this year's Annual Return in answer to question 6, section 2, with an explanation of the system to be introduced for the future

(4) That the information relating to the new information about the Council acting as Sole Trustee managing trust funds or assets be noted, and the Clerk's advice re completion of these questions in the Annual Return be accepted and approved.

(3) RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to complete the Annual Return 2006-07 as discussed above, and as advised by the Clerk.

07 09 Financial Statement

Members were circulated with the Financial Summary, Comparison and Income as at 30 June 2007 which had not been posted in view of potential problems resulting from the postal strike. The Clerk explained to Members new to the Finance and Management Committee some details of these reports and informed Members that she would be happy to answer any detailed questions regarding the monitoring reports and the Council's finances generally, but asked that Members arrange a time for any such visits, so that the Clerk can set aside appropriate time.

RESOLVED: That the Financial Summary, Comparison and Income as at 30 June 2007 be approved.

07 10 Applications for Grant

(1) All Saint's Church, Netherthong - A request for assistance with the renovation of the face of the church clock had been received. Members new to the Committee were advised that the Council undertook the costs of an annual service of such church clocks which served as public clocks, but that additional work required as a result of such annual inspections were the responsibility of the owners of the clock.

RESOLVED: That a grant of £100 be awarded to All Saints Church, Netherthong towards the costs of this renovation work.

(2) Maintenance of Public Clocks - The company which undertook the annual servicing of the public clocks within the Holme Valley, had asked if the Council wished to consider entering into a Service Agreement covering a longer period, up to five years, for which a discount would be offered. Such an amount would, however, have to be paid in advance, as opposed to the current situation where the annual amount is paid in arrears. Members discussed whether such action of paying for five years in advance to obtain a discount would outweigh the loss of interest earned, and potential inflation costs.

RESOLVED: That the Council does not wish to enter into a five-year agreement at the present time, but that the possibility will be re-examined at the time of preparing future years' budgets.

07 11 Administrative Matters

Cllr. Tom Dixon left the meeting during this item.

(1) Provision of ID Cards for Councillors - Cllr. Dixon indicated that he had not had time to obtain further costings for this provision. Members, therefore, considered the costings previously obtained by the Clerk.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to purchase the necessary equipment and supplies to provide such cards in-house, expenditure to a maximum of £180 authorised.

(2) Members reviewed the level of travel and subsistence allowances payable to Councillors on previously approved duties undertaken outside of the Parish Council's boundaries under Regulation 26 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances)(England) Regulations 2003.

RESOLVED: That the rate of 40p per mile (Inland Revenue approved limit) will continue to be paid for mileage allowances, but that the subsistence allowances be increased in line with those agreed for Kirklees MC Councillors with immediate effect.

(3) Members considered whether the purchase of digital mapping software would be beneficial, but felt

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that at the moment it was unclear whether the benefit offered would match the cost involved. Cllr. Greenwood offered to investigate such software further, and the Clerk supplied details of various companies offering such software to Local Council.

RESOLVED: That further consideration of such a purchase be deferred for the time being.

(4) Members were asked to approve the purchase of a new edition of a reference book for Councillors and of a subscription to the NALC Direct Information Service. It was felt by Members such a new subscription should be approved if it would assist the Clerk in identifying, quickly, information relevant and helpful to Councillors.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be authorised to purchase the latest edition of the Parish Councillor's Guide at a cost of £14.50 and that the Council enters into a subscription to NALC Direct Information Service Extra at a cost of £105.75 including VAT.

(5) Council's crest - From 2007 Parish and Town Councils are eligible to be granted a heraldic shield. Whilst Members would be interested in having the Council's crest so recognised, it was felt that the cost indicated was too high.

RESOLVED: That the information about granting heraldic shields be noted but that no action be taken at this time.

(6) Possible membership of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations was considered but no action was recommended.

(7) Holmfirth Artweek - The Chairman reported that the Clerk had sought Council's permission to offer emergency backup printing facilities to Holmfirth Artweek to print labels following to a computer problem with Artweek equipment. It was agreed that as the Chairman of the Council acted as President of the Macmillan Cancer Support Holmfirth Committee, the Council should be supporting this major local event.

RESOLVED: That, in future years, the Council, on request, will be happy to offer emergency back-up printing facilities in preparation for Holmfirth Artweek, and that the action taken by the Clerk for Holmfirth 2007 be approved.

The Clerk had declared a personal interest in that both she and her husband were involved in the organisation of Holmfirth Artweek. She thanked the Council for its willingness to support this activity.

07 12 Code of Conduct

(1) As advised at the Annual Meeting of the Council, the Council is now required to adopt the new national Code of Conduct which covers all local authorities. Members discussed points in the Clerk's report and accepted her recommendations in relation to Paragraph 12 of the new Code which is not mandatory for Parish and Town Councils.

It was also agreed that the Clerk should investigate any possibilities for joint training in the new Code. Detailed guidance is being circulated to all Members. The Clerk also indicated that the amended Standing Orders which would be placed before the Council for adoption would take account of the new Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to adopt the generic Code, including paragraph 12 in its entirety, and that the ten general principles be included as an appendix as these are the principles under which the Code was compiled.

(2) RESOLVED: That the Council should participate with Kirklees MC and other Parish and Town Councils in the publication of a joint advertisement regarding the adoption of the Code of Conduct.

(3) RESOLVED: That the procedure suggested by the Clerk in relation to the amended Register of Interests forms be approved and that she be authorised to take the necessary actions to ensure compliance with the regulations.

(4) RESOLVED: That the Clerk is authorised to make the necessary arrangements to create a Gifts and Hospitality Register and that Members be advised that gifts amounting to £25 must be registered.

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07 13 Representation

Members considered attendance at the following events/seminars:

- (1) SLCC and University of Gloucestershire - Summer Seminars at the Spa - 11 - 12 July 2007 - Cheltenham - noted, no representation
- (2) YLCA - Councillor Training - various dates and venues - Booking already provisionally made for five Councillors to attend - approved
- (3) NALC - Cracking the Code Conference - The New Ethical Regime for Councillors - 19 July 2007 - Birmingham - noted, no representation
- (4) SLCC Hampshire Branch - Training event - 26 - 27 July 2007 - Winchester - noted, no representation
- (5) NALC National Conference - 5 - 7 October 2007 - Bournemouth - refer to full Council, Chairman of Council indicated his interest in attending
- (6) NALC Northern Regional Conference - 23 - 24 November 2007 - Skipton - refer to full Council

RESOLVED: That the above actions be approved.

07 14 Consultations

RESOLVED: That it be noted that Kirklees MC is carrying out a review of Polling Districts and Polling Stations and that individual Members may respond with personal comments, if they so wish.

07 15 Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED: That the business of this Committee now to be transacted be not open to the public or press on the grounds that the matters to be considered are of a confidential nature (agenda item 14).

07 16 Awarded Quarries

(1) Members considered quotations for the removal and lopping of trees at Sude Hill, New Mill. Two quotations were to hand, but a third was still awaited from Kirklees MC via Cllr. Firth. The Clerk reminded Members that this land was vested in the Parish Council and that action needed to be taken in this respect. Given this, it was

RESOLVED: That, on receipt of the third quotation, the Clerk, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Finance and Management Committee, be authorised to accept the quotation most likely to achieve an effective and appropriate solution to the problems being caused by the trees.

At this point, Cllrs. Mrs. Bower, Oldfield and Robinson asked that agenda item 14 (10) be taken at this point, as they had to leave the meeting shortly.

(10) Members considered the re-appointment of a working party to progress the charitable scheme with the Charity Commission regarding the Awarded Quarry sites. As there had been a resolution to the dispute on the last site to be registered, it was now timely to start discussions with the Charity Commission.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillors Kaye (Chairman of the Council), Dixon (Chairman of Finance and Management Committee) and Robinson (in view of his past experience as Chairman of Finance and Management Committee) be appointed to this Working Party.

The Chairman of the Committee felt strongly that membership of this working party should be widened to include Members with appropriate experience who did not serve on the Finance and Management Committee. Although Members appreciated this point of view, it was felt that the initial stage of discussing and creating the charitable scheme should remain with the Finance and Management Committee but that the Working Party membership might be enlarged when the future of the sites held in trust was being considered.

RESOLVED: (1) That a Working Party comprising Councillors Dixon, Kaye and Robinson be formed to discuss and develop with the Charity Commission the creation of a Charitable Scheme to cover all the Awarded Quarry sites now registered

(2) That the Clerk contacts the Charity Commission in this respect to initiate these discussions.

Councillors Mrs. Bower, Oldfield and Robinson left the meeting at this point.

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(2) Members discussed correspondence from a resident regarding the formation of a new access to a property at Sude Hill, New Mill. As it was not completely clear how this proposed access related to the land registered to the Council, the Clerk was asked to obtain further information.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Clerk seeks further detailed information which can be compared with the Council's Land Registry details before considering this matter further

(2) That the local resident be asked to supply photographs and plans for this purpose.

(3) The Clerk reported that the issues relating to Towns Quarry had now been settled, with the agreed amount received. A further invoice for legal charges had been received.

RESOLVED: That the information given by the Clerk be welcomed and noted, payment of the invoice was also approved.

(4) White Wells, Chippings Dump, Scholes - Cllr. Christofi had requested further discussion of this item but had not supplied any more information. No response had as yet been received from Cllr. Sims in respect of the Council's offer, and it was, therefore, resolved that these responses should be awaited before any further consideration was possible.

(5) White Wells, Youth Club site - Members considered correspondence between a local resident's solicitor and the Council's Legal Adviser in respect of encroachment on to the Council's registered land. Members noted the resident's offer, and accepted that this indicated his interest in purchasing this land, but the Council was not currently in a position to negotiate about any possible sale until the charitable scheme was established and advice obtained from the Charity Commission.

RESOLVED: That the Council's Legal Adviser be informed again of the above position, and asked to relay this again to the resident's solicitor.

(6) Members noted correspondence and the subsequent action taken by Clerk following an approach from solicitors in respect of an accident at Wooldale Cliffe Road in 2004. She had requested details as to the exact location of this incident, but in the meantime had notified the Council's insurers as to the potential of a possible claim.

RESOLVED: That the above information be noted and the actions taken to date by the Clerk be approved.

(7) The Council's tenant at Meal Hill Road, Holme had expressed some concern at the delay in establishing the Charitable Scheme and the potential impact on his position. Members noted his concerns.

(8) The General Purposes Committee asked that the Finance and Management Committee considers the provision of fencing at Knoll Lane Quarry site, Honley following some illegal tipping. This was not an ongoing problem at this site, and there was also a field gate using the same entrance.

RESOLVED: That the position regarding illegal tipping be monitored, but that no fencing be provided at this site, unless the problem recurs, when the position will be reconsidered.

(9) Use of hanging grounds, Jackson Bridge - Cllr. Dixon declared a prejudicial interest in this item, in that his company was acting for the potential seller. After initial discussions, he was asked to withdraw from the meeting.

With the Chairman's departure from the meeting, the Vice Chairman took the Chair, but the Committee had become inquorate and therefore no formal decisions could be taken. Members discussed this issue informally and expressed concerns that the legal position had not been made clear enough to potential buyers. It was recommended that the Council should be asked to approve further contact in this respect to point out the legal position regarding ownership of this area of land, and the tenancy position of current users of the land.

07 17 Freedom of Information Act 2000

As this meeting was inquorate, with the withdrawal and departure of the Chairman, the Members present were unable to determine the availability, or not, of supporting papers under the Council's Publication Scheme.

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Chairman