

# Holme Valley Parish Council

## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 08 DECEMBER 2008 -

Those present :

Chairman : Cllr R P Dixon

Councillors : Cllr M Bower, Cllr Mrs R Bratt, Cllr J G Cropper, Cllr J M Greenwood, Cllr C M Kaye, Cllr Mrs J Roberts, Cllr P Robinson, Cllr M A Walker

Officers : Mrs S S Barber, Mrs MA Bewick

### **To accept Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were accepted from Councillors Christofi, Dearnley, Oldfield, Mrs B E Smith.

Cllr Cropper was present as a substitute for Cllr Dearnley.

Cllr Mrs Walker was present as a substitute for Cllr Oldfield.

### **08 55 To receive Members' declarations of interest in items on the agenda**

Cllr Kaye declared a personal interest in item 12(1) in that he serves on the Standards Committee at Kirklees Council.

### **08 56 To consider whether items on the agenda should be discussed in private session**

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

### **08 57 Awarded Quarries**

Mr Guy Keating and Mr Richard Govern of the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) were in attendance to address Members regarding the use of Cliff, Holmfirth. Mr Keating presented the BMC's case for the Parish Council giving permission for continued use of the site, and to encourage its possible designation as open access land.

BMC volunteers had recently organised a clean up day at Cliff and would like to encourage responsible use of the site by future climbers. It was encouraging landowners to dedicate sites as open access land which would benefit the BMC and other users. He assured the Council that such a designation would not increase the Council's liability. Several questions were put to the BMC representatives and further information on aspects of such a suggestion was given.

Members pointed out to the BMC representatives that, as part of the charitable scheme, a special committee was being set up to discuss all the options, including the dedication, gifting or sale of various sites and any risk management issues. The Parish Council would then ensure that legal procedures are followed and the future option for uses of the sites were considered fully for the benefit of all Parish residents. Mr Keating offered his services in an advisory capacity to the special committee.

Members thanked Mr Keating and Mr Govern for attending the meeting.

### **08 58 To accept the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Finance and Management Committee held on 3 November 2008 numbered 08 43 - 08 54 inclusive be received and adopted as a true record of the meeting.

### **08 59 Correspondence arising from the Minutes**

Council Minute number 08 62 - Banking crisis - The Clerk reported advisory information from NALC relating to Councils with funding in banks affected by the recent events.

### **08 60 Investment of Income**

Current rates of interest applying to the Council's accounts and the investment of the Council's income were not available at the meeting but would be reported at the Council meeting. This was noted.

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### **08 61 Financial Statement**

RESOLVED: That the Financial Summary, Comparison and Income as at 1 December 2008 be approved.

### **08 62 Applications for Grant**

(1) Holmfirth Festival of Folk - provision of street theatre:

RESOLVED: (1) That this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Finance and Management Committee.

(2) That the Clerk would request a copy of the organising committee's Financial Statements and a breakdown of proposed costs, as these had not been provided in line with the Parish Council's grant criteria.

(2) Holme Valley Business Association - provision of Christmas lights:

Cllr Dixon declared a prejudicial interest; Cllr Kaye took over as Chairman for this item on the agenda.

RESOLVED: (1) That this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Finance and Management Committee.

(2) That the Clerk would request a copy of the Business Association's Audited Accounts particularly in relation to the costs for the Christmas lights, as these had not been provided in line with the Parish Council's grant criteria.

Cllr Greenwood suggested that Kirklees Council should consider "greener" lights in the future, to reduce the running costs for the lights.

Cllr. Dixon resumed the Chair.

(3) Brockholes Methodist Church - provision of handrail:

RESOLVED: That a grant of £200 be awarded to Brockholes Methodist Church towards the cost of a new handrail.

### **08 63 Administrative Matters**

(1) Vice Chairman's Jewel: Members considered the refurbishment or replacement of the Vice Chairman's Jewel.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk should obtain estimates for replacement of the Jewel and purchase of a Chain.

(2) Insurance cover for Chairman's Chain of Office: Members noted the estimate for insurance purposes, provided by Vaughtons.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk should request an increase in cover when the current policy is due for renewal in April 2009.

(3) New Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act: Members approved the new Publication Scheme.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Council be recommended to adopt the Model Publication Scheme as prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner with effect from 1 January 2009

(2) That the Council be recommended to approve the attached Guide to proactively published information for the public with effect from 1 January 2009

(3) That the Clerk be approved to submit the completed Guide to full Council.

(4) Attendance at Conference and Seminars: Members considered the Clerk's report detailing various conferences and training opportunities on offer during the year.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Council approves the recommendations for attendance at conferences and seminars as shown in the attached report

(2) That attendance at occasional or regional events be considered subject to the programme content when known.

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(5) Arrangements for Public Participation Sessions at meetings: Following receipt of updated guidelines from NALC, the Clerk reported on the recommendations to include public participation sessions as part of formal meetings, to ensure openness and transparency.

RESOLVED: (1) That a 15 minute session be included at the start of each Council meeting and at meetings of the Planning Committee.

(2) That the revised guidelines be adopted and laminated sheets produced to hand out to visitors at each meeting.

(3) That Members should be made aware of the implications of these changes, and as they relate to part 12(2) of the revised Code of Conduct.

(6) Members noted the availability of the Zurich Municipal Guide to Risk Management.

### **08 64 Budget Preparations**

(1) Initial proposals for budget provision 2009-10 - Members considered the Clerk's report relating to various budget headings for Council and Finance and Management expenditure. This highlighted previous decisions which had legal and contractual implications for the budget and sought views on headings where the Committee could make changes, if it so wished. Figures for two budget headings were agreed; that the current budget provision for grants should remain unchanged at £3,500, but that this should be increased if finances permit, and that an amount of £1,000 be retained in next year's budget for costs related to Awarded Quarries until progress is made under the Charitable Scheme.

RESOLVED: That the figures for budget headings as discussed and agreed be included in the budget provision for 2009-10 and that the Clerk be asked to proceed with formulating a provisional budget report for Committee and Council consideration.

(2) Approach from Kirklees Council re "Special Expenses": Members considered email correspondence from Kirklees Council offering an annual grant to parishes which have funded expenditure under section 35 of the Local Government Act 1992; such expenditure is known as "Special Expenses" and results in a reduction in Council Tax for residents in such a parish council area. The proposed grant is based on the level of expenditure on public seats on highways, war memorials and public clocks.

Some Members considered this grant to be divisive and would wish residents of the Holme Valley area to continue to benefit from a reduction in their Council Tax bill, however small.

It was proposed and seconded that the Council should accept such a grant and implicit change to the system. A second motion to refuse such a grant and alteration to the system was also proposed and seconded. On being put to the vote, the first motion was defeated, and it was then

RESOLVED: That the Clerk be asked to write to Kirklees Council to refuse the grant, on the basis that residents of the Holme Valley should have the benefit of a reduction in Council Tax under "Special Expenses" provisions for services provided in their area by the Parish Council, but provided in other areas by Kirklees Council.

### **08 65 Response to Consultation Document**

(1) Revised Code of Conduct for Councillors and Proposals for an Employee Code: Members considered the Clerk's report on this consultation and agreed with the recommendations that the Code of Conduct should limit itself to criminal offences only (not cautions). A separate Code of Conduct was recommended for Local Council employees, full or part time, and the question raised as to why whistle-blowing had been included in the proposed Code of Conduct for Employees, when this had been excluded from the Code for Members.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk should respond to The Department for Communities and Local Government by the deadline of 24 December 2008 with the above points.

(2) Lowering of Voting Age: Members considered details of the consultation led by the Youth Citizenship Commission. The Clerk reported that this was the topic for the Parish Council's online poll.

RESOLVED: That the item be included on the next Council Agenda, to enable consideration of the Parish Council's online poll statistics, and to seek approval to send the polling figures to the Youth Citizenship Commission.

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**08 66 Awarded Quarries**

(1) Cliffe Quarry: As discussed earlier in this meeting, it was

RESOLVED: That the request from the BMC should be considered in due course by the Charity Committee.

(2) Cliffe Quarry: Members considered correspondence from a resident drawing the Parish Council's attention to wall topping stones which were blocking footpaths etc.

RESOLVED: (1) That the Clerk be approved to ask the Parish Council's contractor to remove any topping stones which are blocking footpaths etc.

(2) That the Clerk should provide copies of outgoing correspondence to the resident concerned, to allow Members to consider the full position.

(3) Business rates - Chapelgate, Scholes (Minute No. 08 53(2) refers): Members noted that the Chairman of the Committee had yet to discuss the matter with the Valuation Office on the Parish Council's behalf.

**08 67 Freedom of Information Act 2000 - to agree what information will be made available to the public**

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, after approval of the minutes by the full Council.

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**Chairman**