

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council's Finance Committee held on Tuesday 12th January 2021

Present

Mrs J Johnston (in the Chair)

Mr J Bradley

Mr J Ryder

Ms DJ French (Clerk)

Mr S Penwill (RFO)

The Meeting started at 5.00pm.

1. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED: that Councillor J Johnston be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received and approved from the Chairman, Councillor S Hornby, due to illness.

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held on 13th October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4. Land at the Recreation Area

Councillor Ryder updated on research into the use of the land at the Recreation Area. The Parish Council had agreed on 8th December to undertake a feasibility study into developing the land as a Pump Track. There were general guidelines available from Rospa and suppliers advised that a 'fall zone' was needed. Information had been sought from suppliers who had suggested a cost of around £17k.

The Clerk referred to the CWAC Members Budget for which the closing date was 31st January with projects needing to be complete by 31st March 2021. Members agreed this funding should not be applied for at this moment as the project was not likely to be completed in time but other funding sources could be explored at the appropriate time.

RESOLVED: That the Parish Council be recommended to progress the project to provide a Pump Track on the land and seek three quotes in accordance with the Financial Regulations.

5. Review of Quarter 3 Budget Report and forecast for the full year

The Parish Council reviewed the Quarter 3 budget report and forecast to the end of the financial year. The RFO highlighted the following:

- Advertising income had reduced;
- There had been an overspend on some projects compared to the budget due to the Council paying for 2 projects during this financial year – picnic tables and Gateway signage – that had been approved as part of the 2019-20 budget;
- There had been an underspend on other projects – Defibs and the Fete;
- Monies had been transferred from the Noticeboard budget towards the costs of the new website;
- An additional budget had been added for Covid projects.

RESOLVED: that the Quarter 3 budget and forecast for the remainder of the year be received.

6. Consideration of projects for current and future years

The Committee gave consideration to projects for the remainder of the financial year and future years up to 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal for a new laptop for the RFO be recommended to the next Parish Council meeting to be funded as a project in the current year and future projects include the Pump Track; purchase of a Speed Indicator Device; footpath resurface at the Recreation Area; and noticeboards and the budget be amended accordingly.

7. Review and recommendation of draft 2021/22 budget

The RFO presented the draft budget for 2021/22. The draft budget would be updated based on the list of new projects discussed under the previous item. Members discussed increasing the insurance budget to take account of the new project for a Pump Track. Members also discussed reducing the income from advertising due to the ongoing pandemic and whether to continue not to charge advertisers for adverts in the Newsletter for a further 6 months.

RESOLVED: That the draft budget be approved for recommendation to the Parish Council subject to updating the projects approved at item 6 and increasing the Insurance budget to £1200 and reducing the income from Advertising to £400.

7. Review of Reserves

The RFO presented the current Reserves list. Members agreed to amend the Reserves to include sums for the footpath resurface and 2 x replacement noticeboards.

RESOLVED: That the Reserves list be amended to include sums in the years 2021/22 – 2024/25 for resurfacing the footpath and replacement noticeboards.

8. Review and recommendations of precept option for 2021/22

The RFO presented a report on precept options.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council be recommended to approve a precept amount of £22,655 which represents a Band D equivalent charge of £50.91 which means no change from the current year.

9. Payroll Supplier

The Committee considered a report from the RFO regarding options for payroll. The current supplier had given notice that they were withdrawing their service from the end of the current financial year. The report discussed options for other providers or doing the payroll in-house.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council be recommended to approve that the payroll service be provided by Shires at an initial first year cost of £215, and then £180 per year plus VAT, plus the additional payment per cheque payment of £1.50.

10. Banking supplier

The Committee considered the verbal report of the RFO regarding changing bank supplier. The RFO advised that there were limited options for bank providers who would operate a system of dual authorisation. However, Unity Trust Bank did operate such a system and were used by other local councils. Informal discussions had been held with the Bank who confirmed they would offer a cheque book facility.

RESOLVED: that the Committee supports the transfer to Unity Trust Bank subject to seeking the views of Cheshire Association of Local Councils.

The Meeting closed at 6.14pm

Cllr Jill Johnston (in the Chair)