

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of Comberbach Parish Council's Finance Committee held on Wednesday 8th July 2020

Present

Mr S Hornby (Chairman in the Chair)
Mr J Bradley

Ms J Johnston
Mr J Ryder

Ms DJ French (Clerk)
Mr S Penwill (RFO)

The Meeting started at 4.30pm.

1. Apologies for absence

All present

2. To receive Members' Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20th April 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4. Internal Audit Report

The RFO presented the report and Action Plan following the Internal Audit. The Audit conclusion was that the Council's system of internal controls was in place, adequate for the purpose intended and effective, subject to 2 recommendations and a guidance note. The audit confirmed that the recommended action from 2018/19 had been implemented.

The Audit recommended 2 actions, one related to publishing the Notice of Public Rights on the council website. The auditor had been unable to locate the notice on the website but noted a minute reference stating this action had been done. The RFO explained that the notice had been on the website for the statutory timescale but removed once the time period had expired. This practice would be amended for future years.

The second recommendation related to authority to spend and establishing a Purchase Order system. The RFO advised that an Order Book had been set up and was being used on the Council's financial system, Scribe, which he felt was appropriate for larger items of expenditure but smaller sums he felt were covered by the current system of approvals and recording in the minutes.

The guidance note related to categorisation of travelling expenses which should no longer be included as staff costs in the Annual Governance and Audit Return form and this practice would therefore be amended as from this financial year.

RESOLVED: That

- (a) The Internal Audit report be received;
- (b) The Notice of Public Rights be retained on the website to confirm this action has been taken;
- (c) All orders for works over £500 will be included in the Order Book through the Scribe system, items under £500 will be included in the current payment approval system; and
- (d) Staff expenses be reclassified in budget reporting and the AGAR form in accordance with the Internal Audit recommendation.

5. Quarter 1 Budget Report

The Committee considered the Q1 budget report.

The RFO highlighted:

- Advertising income was below budget due to the Council's decision not to charge current advertisers in light of business impact due to the pandemic; however, income of £50 had been received from one new advertiser;
- Staff costs relating to Tax were higher due to payment of two invoices this quarter;
- Training costs were higher due to payment for the Clerk to register for the Certificate in Local Council's Administration;
- IT costs were lower as the invoice for the May newsletter had not yet been paid;
- Projects of the Village Gateway signage and Picnic Tables had been expected to be paid in 19/20 but were actually paid this year.
- Covid-19 costs were additional purchase of hand sanitiser gel.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 1 budget statement be approved.

6. Risk Assessment

The Committee considered the Risk Assessments relating to the general business of the Parish Council and a specific one relating to the re-opening of the Recreation Area.

Members noted some amendments to the general Risk Assessment and commented about including reference to the role of volunteers such as those who check the Recreation Area equipment and use the Speed Indicator Device plus general volunteers who delivered the Newsletter and undertook litter picking.

The Risk Assessment for the Recreation Area had been considered during the site visit to the Recreation Area on 2nd July. There were a number of advisory signs at the Recreation Area along with a general guidance note on the noticeboards, website and on social media. It was proposed that a stock of signage from a sign company would be helpful as signs would be robust and weather resistant. Members discussed cleaning the Recreation Area but frequency would be an issue

as the equipment would only remain sanitised up to the point of next usage and it was noted that most users were bringing their own sanitiser before use.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council be recommended to approve the two Risk Assessments subject to

(a) The general Risk Assessment be amended as follows:

1.1 To refer to bi-weekly checks of the Recreation Area;

5.3 To refer to use of Dropbox to save documents rather than a hard drive;

8.1 To refer to health and safety requirements/risk assessments;

11.1 To include reference to Finance Committee;

12.1 To refer to weekly Bank Reconciliations.

(b) The cleaning of equipment in the Recreation Area is not done at this point and signs will indicate this and the Risk Assessment relating to the reopening of the Recreation Area be approved.

7. Website

The RFO presented a report on the creation of a Compliant Website. By September 2020 it would be mandatory for the Council website to be compliant with the Accessibility Regulations introduced in 2018.

The current website was part of the village website, Comberbach.com. A review suggested the comberbach.com website was broadly compliant but work was required to identify those areas that were non-compliant along with action to rework where necessary.

The RFO and Clerk proposed an alternative solution which was to segregate the Parish Council content to a separate compliant website. The RFO had contacted a number of suppliers with a specification of requirements and a summary of costs was presented. The suppliers would provide email addresses which meant Councillors would have a dedicated Council email address; this was best practice. The Council was also recommended to register its own domain name which would avoid being locked into a single supplier.

The costs for a new website were not anticipated in the budget. It would therefore be necessary to vire the funding from another budget. Members discussed this and suggested it could be vired from the Noticeboards budget which currently contained £2,000 and there was only one noticeboard to replace.

RESOLVED: That

- (a) the Committee supports the purchase of a Parish Council website which will be compliant with the Accessibility Regulations and supports the provision of council email addresses for Councillors;
- (b) supports the budget for the website being vired from the Noticeboard budget; and
- (c) recommends the Council to approve a supplier at the meeting on 14th July.

The Meeting closed at 5.25pm

Cllr Steven Hornby (Chairman)