

Minutes of the meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council Finance Committee held on 19th November 2012 in the Barton Room, Fairfield Village Hall

Present: Councillors J Kitson, J Bradley, K Green, C Hine, T Jones, S MacDonald, D Roberts, and C Scurrall.

In attendance : Katie Limm (Clerk). Mr K MacMaster also attended.

330/12 Apologies : Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Shotton.

331/12 Declarations of interest

Cllr Kitson declared an Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the item relating to the Council's investments through Prosperity; the Council had granted a dispensation to enable him to take part in the discussions concerning these investments.

332/12 Minutes of the meeting on 15th October 2012

The Minutes were approved.

333/12 Bank reconciliations

The bank reconciliations for the Council's two accounts were noted.

334/12 Accounts for Payment

Payments for November set out in a schedule tabled by the Clerk were approved.

335/12 Council Budget for 2013/14

The Committee discussed the recommendations of the budget working group. It endorsed the recommendation that a sum of £1,000 should be provided for one off grants for parish bodies for items that do not fit the current criteria for capital grants was approved. The Committee also endorsed the recommendation that the maintenance grant to Belbroughton Rec. for 2013 should be £1,000 (£600 for internal and £400 for external maintenance) – the same amount as in 2012/13. The Council's policy was to phase out the Rec.'s external maintenance grant, but the Committee agreed that a grant of £400 would recognise the additional insurance costs being incurred on the new skate park.

The Committee discussed whether provision of £1,000 (a 100% increase) for footpath maintenance would be enough since this had been suggested as a Council priority. It was agreed that any additional spending on footpaths approved by the Council could be funded from the Contingency budget.

The Committee endorsed the draft budget and the recommendation that the precept should be held at £55,000 for a further year.

336/12 Investments

i. The Chairman outlined the options available for a further £25,000 investment in a one bond or similar product. The best rate identified was a Bank of Cyprus one year bond paying 2.65%. The Bank had indicated that it was regulated by the Financial Services Authority and that its UK operations were ring fenced from the parent bank. The Committee asked Cllr Kitson to check the FSA website for the bank's registration but, subject to this, approved the investment. Cllrs Kitson and Green were authorised to set up the deposit.

ii. The Committee discussed the Council's investment with the Henderson Multi-Manager Fund. The aim of the original investment was to obtain a better return than a cash investment whilst having low risk and low volatility. So far the Henderson Fund was not maintaining the value of the capital in relation to inflation. One of its disadvantages was the relatively high level of charges associated with the fund. The Council's financial adviser,

Mark Pritchard of Prosperity, had advised that the fund continued to be appropriate for the Council given its attitude to risk and that the investment should be held for a minimum of 5 years. However, he had indicated that the Council's investment could be moved to any other Skandia products without charge.

Some general advice had been given by the finance firm Brewin Dolphin following an approach from Mr MacMaster, but this was not based on an understanding of the Council's investment strategy and attitude to risk. The Committee confirmed that it did not consider that the Council should change its approach to risk and the priority it gave to the security of its capital. The Committee discussed the options available, which included continuing with the Council's investment with the Henderson fund, reinvesting the money in another product linked to the stock market, or investing the funds in the best available cash investment (a 3 year plus bond). It was agreed that Cllr Kitson would seek further advice from Brewin Dolphin and that the Clerk would explore the bonds currently available. This investment would be discussed again at the December Finance meeting.

337/12 Grit bins

The Committee agreed to recommend the purchase of 7 additional grit bins at a total cost of £1,050 including a first supply of salt. The locations were:

Yew Tree Lane
Nash Lane
Sylvesters Corner
Galtons Lane (2)
Gorse Green Lane (2)

It was also agreed that a location for the storage of additional salt should be identified if possible since the County Council would not deliver additional supplies during the year.

338/12 Maintenance work

- It was agreed that the Clerk should organise the repair of the damaged bench at Sylvesters Corner.
- The bank next to the footway was slipping on Holy Cross Lane, the County Council should be approached about stabilising it.
- The Clerk was asked to request an estimate from the lengthsman of how many hours it would take him to clear the footways along Heath End Road and the A491.
- Tidying of the centre of Belbroughton was deferred since the District Council had recently cleared the leaves.
- The catch on the gate at Fairfield Rec. was missing again - Cllr Jones offered to check this.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Signed.....Chairman