

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Belbroughton Parish Council Finance Committee held in the Meeting Room Belbroughton on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011**

**Present:** Cllrs K Green (Chair), J Bradley, J Kitson, and K Nind (from 097/11)  
In attendance: Mrs C Limm, Clerk. Three members of the public also attended.

### **090/11 Apologies**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Jones and Scurrall.

### **091/11 Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared on this occasion.

### **092/11 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting on 21st February were agreed and the Minute book signed by the Chairman.

### **093/11 Bank reconciliations**

The bank reconciliations for the Council's two accounts were noted by the Committee and signed by the Chairman.

### **094/11 Income and Expenditure**

The Clerk circulated a budget update showing anticipated income and spending for 2010/11. The Council's budget for 2010-11 had a predicted shortfall of income in relation to expenditure of about £4.5 k. The end year position was likely to be almost the reverse of this with a surplus of ordinary income over expenditure of around £800 and a surplus on other income and expenditure of about £2,500.

These estimates took account of spending commitments, for example on resurfacing work at Fairfield Recreation Ground car park. The projection for 'Ordinary' income and spending included money set aside in line with budgetary provision for street lighting improvements.

A commitment of £2,500 had also been assumed under 'Other' spending for half the cost of a multi-goal at Fairfield Rec. (the Council had agreed to fund this project over two years). The likely under spend on parish projects of £2,500 reflected the fact that the new bus shelter in Hartle Lane had been put on hold pending the outcome of the bus service review and that the new footpath along Hackman's Gate Lane had so far failed to gain the landowners' approval. Estimated cost for each of these was £2,000. If either or both of these projects reached a favourable conclusion in 2011/12 the Council would need to fund them.

### **095/11 Accounts for Payment**

Accounts for payment in March set out in a schedule that was tabled by the Clerk were approved by the Committee.

### **096/11 Grant applications for 2011/12**

The Committee agreed the same application process for capital and maintenance grants as in the previous year. Applications would be invited by the end of May. The Finance Committee would consider applications in June and make recommendations to the Council for consideration at its July meeting. The application form, covering letter, and letters to parish bodies inviting maintenance grant applications were also agreed.

The Clerk was asked to publicise the grant application process in the parish magazine, at the Annual Parish Meeting, and with a note on the notice boards.

### **097/11 Investment strategy**

The Council had received three letters from parishioners about its recent investment in the Gartmore multi-manager fund. The Chairman said that the Clerk would be responding to the letters, but invited Mr MacDonald, one of the correspondents who was present at the meeting, to outline his concerns. One of the key issues raised was how the Council would monitor the Gartmore investment's performance. Cllr Green said that the Council's approach to monitoring would be outlined in the investment strategy which had a section on review of the investments.

The Committee considered the last two sections of the draft revised strategy and agreed a number of additions and amendments. The Clerk was asked to make the amendments and circulate the redraft for final agreement so that the strategy could be considered by the Council at its April meeting.

### **098/11 Internal audit**

The Clerk reminded the Committee that the Council was required to undertake an annual review of its internal audit arrangements. A note had been circulated about the scope of the audit, the auditor's qualifications, and the terms of his appointment. The Committee confirmed that it was satisfied with the effectiveness of the Council's internal audit arrangements and agreed the terms of the auditor's letter of appointment.

### **099/11 Maintenance and Improvements**

Cllr Kitson reported briefly on the meeting held with the County lighting engineer to review the 9 street lights that had been identified for potential replacement in the Parish Council's maintenance programme. Replacement costs would vary but because overhead cables were no longer allowed, some lights would be very expensive to replace where the ground level cabling required would be extensive. There were potentially a number of lights which did not need to be replaced- although taking a light out of service would cost around £500 on average. It would be necessary to consult neighbouring residents when firm proposals had been agreed.

In view of the complexity of this issue it was agreed to recommend to the Council that a working group should be set up to consider the Council's lighting policy and to make recommendations relating to the maintenance programme.

Cllr Bradley mentioned that Cllr Cherry's investigation of the problem with the sluice gate at Little Bell Hall pool suggested that there was a design fault in the lifting mechanism. This would be pursued with the manufacturer. There could be some costs for the Council, but it was hoped that the manufacturer would be obliged to replace and refit the faulty mechanism.

The Committee noted that the Clerk would be ordering a new bench to replace the one opposite Belbroughton School which was burnt during the Scarecrow weekend.

### **100/11 Staff contracts and salaries**

*The Council resolved to exclude the public and the press for this item because of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed*

The Committee confirmed renewal of annual contracts for the lengthsman, village tidier, and booking room secretary for 2011/12. In relation to payment of a salary increase for the coming year, the Committee's view was that this should be in line with Local Government arrangements generally. Clerk was asked to make further enquiries. It was agreed that the Clerk and Chair of the Committee could agree a recommendation to the Council.

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Signed.....Chairman