

Minutes of the meeting of Belbroughton Parish Council Finance Committee held on 17th September 2012 in Belbroughton Recreation Centre

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

In attendance : Katie Limm (Clerk).

263/12 Apologies : Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Bradley and from Cllr Scurrall for his late arrival at the meeting.

264/12 Declarations of interest: None.

265/12 Minutes of the meeting on 20th August 2012

The Minutes were approved.

266/12 Bank reconciliations

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

267/12 Income and spending

The Committee reviewed income and expenditure for the first six months of 2012/13. Both were in line with expectations. Spending of £16,968 on grants to parish bodies included Jubilee grants of £10,000 to Belbroughton Recreation Centre and £6,338 to Fairfield Village Hall. This spending was from reserves and not from the capital grant budget for 2012/13.

268/12 Open Spaces Society

The Committee agreed to renew the Council's annual membership.

269/12 Council insurance

The Council had signed a three year agreement with Came and Company for its insurance policy. The premium for the next year had increased by £110 (8.5%). This was accounted for by index linking of the value of Council property, an increase in cover, and loss of the Council's no claims discount following the claim for the Top Road bus shelter. However, the annual cost was only £15 more than the Council paid to its previous insurer in 2010/11. The Committee therefore agreed to renew the policy with Came and Company.

The Clerk referred to recent comments from CALC about the level of Fidelity insurance – the cover against fraud by employees. The Council's current cover for this was £100,000 but this fell short of the suggestion that cover should represent half the precept plus the value of the Council's reserves. The key requirement was that the Council should assess the risk, including looking at their high point of liquidity, and decide on the level of cover required. The Committee asked the Clerk to contact its insurers to find out the costs of increasing the Fidelity insurance element of its policy and also to seek their comments on the adequacy of the Council's cover. The Clerk should explain the Council's tight arrangements for handling its financial assets and the limited scope for the Clerk to arrange transactions.

270/12 Accounts for Payment

Payments for September set out in a schedule tabled the Clerk were approved

271/12 Belbroughton United Charities grant application

The Charity had asked the Council to reconsider its decision not to offer a grant for the strimming of the Jubilee Orchard. The Charity suggested that it could not use its funds to cut the orchard because the objectives of the Charity were the help of the elderly and relief of the poor. The Clerk had made enquiries of the Charity Commission which indicated that a charity can perfectly properly maintain its own assets, including land or a building. Whilst technically correct that a charity's funds must be spent for the objectives of the charity, this cannot be given too narrow an interpretation since a charity must run itself and manage any assets it has.

The Council's decision not to provide a grant this year was based on the observation that for the last few years the Belbroughton United Charities' income has exceeded expenditure by at least the amount of the Council's grant and that the grant is simply contributing to an increase in the Charities' reserves.

The Committee confirmed the Council's conclusion that a grant this year would not be a reasonable use of public funds. The Clerk was asked to write to explain this to the Charity and also to request that they now arrange to cut the Jubilee Orchard which was very untidy.

272/12 Fairfield Villa Rent

The Clerk said that the football club's annual rent was due to increase from the end of September in line with the terms of the lease. The increase would be the percentage increase in the RPI from August 2011 to August 2012.

273/12 Council Tax changes

The Committee agreed that the Clerk should write to support proposals for amendments to the Government's new Council Tax arrangements, particularly the calculation of the Council Tax Base. The proposals would ensure that the new arrangements would not have an adverse effect on the calculation of the Parish Council element of the precept.

274/12 Maintenance work

The Clerk reported that the Bromsgrove DC tree officer had visited Fairfield Recreation Ground and had advised that the tree adjacent to the Club House had been severely damaged and would need to be taken down. The Committee agreed that the Clerk should arrange the tree's removal. Cllr Green undertook to take some photographs before this was done. The Clerk was asked to obtain written confirmation from the tree officer that the building work at the Club House had damaged the tree. The full Council would need to consider at its next meeting what response to make to the Football Club.

Other maintenance work required:

- Purchase of bulbs at a cost of up to £50 for Hartle Lane and Sylvesters Corner, Belbroughton and Fairfield Recreation Ground was agreed

- Fairfield Recreation Ground- litter currently a problem, especially behind the football stands; some tidying also needed at the spinney- it was agreed to wait until the nettles had died back to assess what needed to be done
- Belbroughton parish room hedge- a second cut agreed
- Litter/tidying in Belbroughton- the Clerk was asked to write to the Club in the High Street about cigarette ends outside the entrance; Council to consider one-off litter picks as necessary; gardeners' roles for 2013/14 to be reviewed to consider inclusion of some tidying of green spaces.
- Lengthsman to be asked about clearing foliage from signs in Hartle Lane and clearance of path in Bradford Lane
- the Clerk was asked to contact the District Council about ownership of the bus shelter at the corner of Wood Lane, Fairfield- possible project for the Parish Council to refurbish this shelter
- a resident had reported that the bus shelter adjacent to the church in Fairfield had been damaged – one support and corner of the roof were cracked. Fairfield Councillors agreed to take a look.

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.

Signed.....Chairman