



Extraordinary Finance and Staffing Committee

Meeting held 7:30pm

Thursday 13th October 2016

Catshill Village Hall, Golden Cross Lane, Catshill

- Members present** Cllrs – P Baker (Chairman), T Gillespie (Vice Chair) J Bate, P Callaway, B McEldowney, M Shephard, O Sweeting
- In attendance** Clerk - Rebekah Powell
1. **Apologies for Absence** None received, all present
2. **Declarations of Interest** None
3. **To consider Members written requests for Dispensation** None received
4. **Public Questions** No questions were received
5. **Re-opening the meeting** The meeting re-opened to consider the points below
6. **Minutes of previous meeting** The minutes of the meeting held 15/08/16 were approved as an accurate record and signed. There were no matters arising.
7. **Clerks Report to include:**
- 7.1 Progress with Assistant Clerk Appointment**
The Clerk informed Members that shortlisting had taken place and interviews were to be held on the evening of 27th October 2016, with a panel comprised of Cllr Knight (Chair of Planning), Cllr Bate (Member of Finance and Staffing) and the Clerk.
Members queried an update in relation to the employment of a Village Hall Supervisor as discussed at previous meetings. It was confirmed that Claire Wing had been appointed to the role and was to run in tandem with Loraine, the current Hall Manager, until February to allow time for training but also for administration of the role. It was clarified, as previously agreed, that any work undertaken by the Clerk for this matter would be paid by the Parish Council who would then invoice the Village Hall for reimbursement.
- 7.2 Feedback from Grant Thornton in relation to the Annual Return for year ended 31st March 2016**
The Clerk reported that the Annual Return had been authorised by Grant Thornton with a note to be mindful of dates of notice as the paperwork was displayed for one day too long. Members wished it to be recorded that the Clerk was congratulated and thanked for the work undertaken during the audit period.
- 7.3 Feedback from the recent training session, 'Clerk's gathering'.**

The Clerk wished to inform Members that following this meeting it was clear that almost all elements of the 'Check list' that was progressed through in the discussion, were present within the Council, highlighting how professional and well run the Council is. Although the Clerk used a retention document to ensure all paperwork was kept for the relevant period of time, a policy elaborating certain points could be beneficial and this was the only exception. **It was agreed** that the Clerk should investigate the introduction of a Retention Policy by researching model documents with CALC and other Council's and that Members would then consider adopting it.

7.4 Review of current Insurance Cover in relation to the Bonfire and Fireworks display (as per minute 16/06-13)

The Clerk reported that in order for Zurich to cover the event there was a questionnaire to complete which confirmed adherence to certain guidelines and a £50 additional premium to be paid. Cllr McEldowney was assisting with completion of the questionnaire. Members discussed a current issue obtaining First Aid Cover for the event and made some suggestions for the Clerk to investigate.

It was agreed to pay the £50.00 additional premium to cover the Bonfire and Fireworks event.

Members noted items carried forward which included:

Research regarding Corporate Strategy: Community Engagement document; Research regarding Council Terms of Reference Policy; Addition of Item to Media Policy (Communications Policy) in relation to procedure following possible unsatisfactory contact from Parishioners; Amendments to Internet and Email Acceptable Use Policy as per 16/02-8.5 (Cllr P Baker and Clerk)

8. **To gain feedback regarding clarification of the term 'Business Use' in relation to Insurance Cover for Councillors when using their cars for Parish Council Business (as per minute 16/06-9.3)**

Cllr O Sweeting reported that as Councillors were not paid and would be conducting voluntary work by travelling to Parish Council business, then this would not be classed as 'Business use' and there would be no issue with the Insurance. However, it was advisable for each individual Councillor to talk to their Insurance Company and inform them of their 'voluntary work' which would allow a clause to be entered into their Insurance Policy making them aware of the individual's position and ensuring protection should they be involved in an accident carrying out Parish Council activities.

It was noted that claiming mileage did not have an effect on this.

It was agreed that the Clerk should ensure that all Councillors were aware of this by way of the Full Parish Council meeting.

9. **To review the following policies:**

9.1 Data Protection Policy

Members discussed the element of the policy relating to the fee for administrative costs in section 3.1.

It was agreed that the Clerk should carry out investigations as to whether it was a legal requirement for this to be included and if so, what the current maximum charge was for administration of this kind.

9.2 Freedom of Information Policy

Members discussed point 2 of the Introduction in relation to how information was requested.

It was agreed to add to this point that requests via social media would not be accepted.

Members discussed point 2 of the Procedure and the fact that there was a three working day allocation for responses to requests for information, including the implications this had with the Clerk working part time.

It was agreed that the Clerk would request some assistance with putting an 'out of office' reply on emails.

Members also discussed point 5 of the Procedure and the implications of a request that would take 18hours of the Clerk's time, with the ability to refuse this.

It was agreed that the Clerk would investigate whether this figure was a legal requirement or if it could be altered due to the impact a request of this magnitude would have on the Council and the Clerk.

It was agreed that this policy should be brought back to review following these investigations.

9.3 Training Policy

It was agreed to replace references to the 'Clerk' within this document to 'staff' and that the Committee title should be altered throughout to reflect the current named Finance and Staffing Committee.

It was agreed to endorse this policy subject to this alteration.

It was noted that Members needed to inform the Clerk of any previous training they had attended in order for a log to be kept as evidence of the professionalism of the Council. Members took this opportunity to discuss a possible 'Skills Matrix' which would contain information regarding all Councillors specific skills gained from their careers and interests which could be kept and used to allocate certain tasks within the Council to the most relevant Member.

It was agreed that Cllr P Callaway would look into organising this.

10. **To gain feedback and discuss next steps following the review of the Balances and Reserves Policy and related Financial breakdown**

(as per 16/06-11, carried out with Cllr O Sweeting)

Cllr Sweeting and the Clerk discussed the policy with Members, including the meaning of the different headings and why they were labelled as such. It was established that the policy had been created in agreement with an Auditor. In addition, the amount of money allocated to each area within the policy at this current point in time was discussed, along with ideas for Capital Projects and the fact that these can be earmarked for the future and not necessarily the coming Financial Year. Suggestions for upcoming projects included a new Bus Shelter on A38 near Lydiate Ash Island, new Parish Notice boards in the village, possible fees related to the adoption of land in relation to Bee Hive Close and the War Memorial.

It was agreed that the policy was accepted in its current form.

11. **With reference to Agenda Item 10, to discuss the strategy for research and decision making in relation to the Council's Current Bank Account/Savings Accounts and**

It was noted that it was beneficial to look into options for savings accounts prior to the need to move the money in March next year. It was also noted that the current bank account was now charging a service charge each month for administration and that, following the withdrawal of the Alto Card, there was no longer a way for the Clerk to easily purchase goods for the Council without using personal money and claiming expenses. It was noted that any change of bank should also take into consideration the management/administration of the account relevant to Parish Councils. Unity Trust, as the current bank account, were good to work with in this respect.

It was agreed that Cllr Callaway would research both savings accounts and bank accounts prior to the next Finance and Staffing Committee.

possible future options

12. **2017/18 Budget Preparation** Members discussed the suggested budget prepared by the Clerk and Cllr Sweeting. Each item was analysed and some changes made following discussion. It was noted that calculations within the spreadsheet were causing some anomalies within the figures, but currently there appeared to be a £3,960 increase in the previous year's budget. Members considered the rise based on the current tax base, assuming no DCLG support grant would be received next year and the calculations reported a possible average Band D payment of £18.76 per year, compared to the previous year's payment of £16.16, reflecting a possible £2.60 increase per household. Members discussed the need to consider the figures further.
It was agreed that the Clerk would circulate the updated spreadsheet to allow Members to reconsider the budget suggestions
It was agreed that at the upcoming Full Parish Council, Members would be asked the maximum increase they would be prepared to support within the Council's budget
It was agreed that prior to the Full Parish Council, Cllr Baker would look at the formulas within the spreadsheet and analyse where the anomalies lay within the figures
13. **To discuss a response to 'The 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement, Technical Consultation Paper'; in particular in relation to paragraph 3.3 'Council Tax Referendum Principles for Parish and Town Councils'** Members engaged in a short discussion regarding the document.

This item was deferred until the Full Parish Council to allow further analysis to be carried out and suggested answers to the questions to be put forward.
It was agreed that Cllr Baker would consider the document and produce suggested responses prior to the Full Parish Council.
14. **To set a date for Internal Audit of Accounts** **It was agreed** that Cllr T Gillespie and Cllr P Callaway would attend the Parish Council Office on Monday 7th November at 11:30am to carry out the Internal Accounts Scrutiny.
15. **Date and Time of Next Meeting** 10th November at 7:30pm

This meeting ended at 22:03 hours

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Chairman, Finance Committee
Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council