

MALVERN WELLS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** duly convened and held in The Committee Room of Malvern Wells Village Hall **on Thursday 24th October, 2013** commencing at 7.00pm.

Attendance: Councillor N Johnson (Chairman)
B Knibb, A Hull, K Hurst, Mrs H Burrage and M Victory

In Attendance: Mr D M Taverner (Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer)

1 Apologies for absence Councillors K Wagstaff, and Mrs A Bradshaw

2 Declarations of Interest

a) Register of Interests: No changes were necessary to Members interests which had already been lodged with the District Council.

b) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda and their nature: There were none

c) To Consider Written Requests from Councillors for the Council to Grant a Dispensation (S33 of the Localism Act 2011)

A dispensation had been previously been granted by the monitoring officer at Malvern Hills District Council to allow Members to participate in the debate relating to the consideration of the Parish Council's Annual precept levy (*agenda item 7*).

As well as repealing the legislation relating to the former Code of Conduct, the Localism Act of 2011 had also repealed the general dispensation permitting Councillors, with a residence in the Parish, taking part in meetings relating to the setting of their Council's precept

The advice which had been received from Worcestershire CALC was that it would be prudent for all Parish Councillors, who were resident within the Parish, to formally declare a pecuniary interest in any debate relating to the setting of the Parish Precept.

The Clerk advised that the appropriate declarations would be formally noted in the minutes of the meeting.

3 Approval of minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25th July, 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25th July, having been previously circulated, were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record of that meeting.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Item 7 - 16th April Drainage alleviation works - Assarts Road playing field

The Clerk reported that Cllrs Burrage, Wagstaff and Atwell had attended a site meeting with the director of BWB Consulting Ltd- Stuart Nelmes – to discuss the proposed drainage scheme for the Assarts Road playing field.

Whilst Mr Nelmes was confident that the scheme which had been designed would cure the drainage problems at the lower end of the field, and indeed would have the potential to improve the drainage of the rest of the site, he could not give an unequivocal assurance to that effect.

BWB would be preparing a further options report on this topic for consideration by the Council on 6th November. This report would include the estimated costs of a "herringbone" type drainage system covering the entirety of the field. Members would need to give careful consideration to the costs and benefits of such a scheme.

5 The Bank Reconciliation statement to 30th, September 2013: The Clerk presented the figures contained in the previously circulated bank reconciliation which showed that the Council's total cash funds at 30th September, 2013 comprised:

<u>National Westminster PLC</u>	
	£
Current Account	100.00
Business Reserve Account	78,848.09
1 month fixed treasury deposit (Maturity – 26 th July, 2013)	30,000.00
<i>(less) unrepresented cheques</i>	<i>(50.00)</i>
 <u>HSBC PLC</u>	
Current Account	97.57
6 month fixed deposit at 0.45% Maturity – 30th April, 2014)	30,000.00
 Total Cash held at 30th September	 £138,995.66

6 The Quarterly financial Report: The Clerk presented the previously circulated quarterly report showing actual income and expenditure for the period ending 30th September, 2013, together with the Council's medium term money plan projections for the period up to and including the 2018/19 financial year.

Net expenditure to 30th September was broadly in line with the 2013/14 approved budget and there were no areas of significant concern.

Members gave detailed consideration to the suggested draft estimates for 2014/15 and agreed **to ask Council to approve** the total gross expenditure budget for 2014/15 of £108.4K and **to approve** a gross income budget of £118.4K

The Committee also agreed to request **the Council to approve** an increase of 1.99% to the parish precept which would give rise to a precept figure of £78.7K being levied in 2014/15

The true impact of the precept increase on local Council tax payers would not be known until the Council tax base for the year had been calculated by MHDC. The tax base announcement would not be known until late December as there were still uncertainties about the method to be used in the 2014/15 tax base calculation.

Summary of recommendations to Council

6.1 that the Council approve the 2014/15 gross expenditure budget in the sum of £108.4K

6.2 that the Council approve the 2014/15 income budget in the sum of £118.4K

6.3 that the 2104/15 Parish Precept be set as £76.7K representing an increase of 1.99% above the figure levied in 2013/14

6.4 that an additional earmarked reserve of £15k be established in 2014/15 to support new Community Development initiatives

In accordance with previously agreed Council policy it was agreed that the following additions would be made in 2014/15 to the Council's Earmarked reserves to provide for future years commitments in respect of:-

	£k
Future Cemetery Land purchase	4.0
Cemetery equipment purchases	1.0
Assarts Road - new play equipment & Mtce	2.5
All Saints Ward new play equipment & Mtce	2.5
Future Election costs	0.5
St Peters Closed Churchyard	0.5
Staff Pension Gratuity	0.2

7 Community Projects

(a) Fruitlands Green Tree and Christmas illuminations – a budget of 2k had been allocated for this project and quotations for the tree and a new electrical connection were awaited.

(b Assarts Road Playing Field Drainage - a further report would be presented to council on 6th November on the financial implications of this project

(c) Assarts Road Play Area fencing .this project was now ready to proceed and expenditure would be contained within the agreed budget provision of£9.2K

(d) Peachfield Road play area – an update report on this project would be presented to the next meeting of the Parish Council on 6th November

8 Section 106 funding application

An application had been sent to the District Council to secure the release of funding to support:-

The Assarts Road playing field Drainage scheme	£12k
Assarts Road play Area–new play equipment	£10K

A response to the application from the District Council was awaited.

9 Purchase of new Parish Grit Bins

Members unanimously resolved to **recommend to Council** that it should approve the purchase of new parish Grit Bins for locations on - Holywell Road (Southern end), the junction of Green lane and Grundy's Lane and the top of Assarts Road

The cost of the bins had been set as £150 each and it was also to agreed **recommend that the Council** should purchase two, one tonne bags of rock salt for use in the bins at a cost of £90 per bag

County Councillor Lucy Hodgson had agreed to subsidise these purchases by the release of funding from her divisional community budget.

10 Outdoor Contractors rates of remuneration

In accordance with their contract conditions, and following their satisfactory performance reviews, it was agreed to recommend to Council that the hourly contract rates for the Council's two outdoor contractors should be increased by the prevailing CPI rate of 2.8%,as at 1st April, 2013

11 Approval of Council payments and the use of pre-signed cheques

The Clerk reported that there had been some discrepancies with the cheque numbering shown on the payment schedule which had been agreed by the Council at its meeting on 25th September.

Particular problems had arisen as a result of the fact that two pre-signed cheques had been used out of sequence and two cheques had been drawn for different amounts than had been agreed by the Council. These were as follows:

	Payment agreed by Council 25 th September	Cheque drawn
	£	£
British Gas	613.86	612.86
Sight Designs Ltd	1,649.52	1,644.52

One payment to County Building Supplies Ltd in the sum of £92.39 had been paid in advance of the formal approval of the Council as emergency supplies of materials had been needed for work in the Parish Cemetery. This had been authorised by the Clerk under the powers afforded by the Councils Financial regulations (**3.3**) but in error it had not been included on the Council payment schedule

The Council had suffered no financial loss as a consequence of any of these issues.

A revised payment schedule, showing the formal alterations to the Council's minutes, would be presented to the Council for approval on 6th November

In order to regularise future procedure, and to avoid a future repetition of any such problems it was agreed **to recommend to Council** that

11.1 that the use of pre-signed cheques should not be used under any circumstances in the future

11.2 that each payment schedule should also note the reasons for any payments approved which are being held in abeyance and the reason for the temporary suspension of any such payment

11.3 that the Clerk's annual salary, as calculated by the Council's independent payroll administrator, should be paid in twelve equal instalments, payable on the 23rd day of each month; and a separate monthly payment should be authorised for any expenses incurred by the Clerk as set out in the Clerk's contract of employment

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15 pm

Chairman-----
Dated 23rd January, 2014

N Johnson