

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 23rd January, 2014** commencing at 7.30pm.

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

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

1 Apologies for absence. There were none

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 (*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As well as repealing the legislation relating to the former Code of Conduct, the Localism Act of 2011 had also repealed the general dispensation permitting Councillors, with a residence in the Parish, taking part in meetings relating to the setting of their Council's precept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 declaration would be formally noted in the minutes of the meeting.

3 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th October, 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24th October, 2013, 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 he and Cllr Wagstaff had met with the Director of BWB Consulting Ltd - Stuart Nelmes – to discuss the problems that had arisen with the quotations, which had been obtained by BWB, for the proposed drainage scheme for the Assarts Road playing field.

Mr Nelmes had agreed to undertake further work on the evaluation of the tenders which had so far been received; following which he would make a recommendation to the Council regarding the selection of a suitable contractor for the scheme. Further updates would be presented to the Council as appropriate.

- 5 The Bank Reconciliation statement to 31st December 2013:** The Clerk presented the figures contained in the previously circulated bank reconciliation which showed that the Council's total cash funds at 31st December, 2013 comprised:

National Westminster PLC

	£
Current Account	100.00
Business Reserve Account	33,638.26
1 month fixed treasury deposit	90,000.00

HSBC PLC

Current Account	97.57
6 month fixed deposit at 0.45% (Maturity – 30th April, 2014)	30,000.00

Total Cash held at 31st December **£153,835.83**

The level of funds within each of the Council's banks would be maintained below a level of £85K so as to spread risk and to maximise the protection afforded by Bank of England's deposit guarantee scheme. A further transfer of £50K would be made, from the National Westminster Business Reserve account, to a three month fixed deposit with HSBC PLC following the approval of Council on 29th January, 2014.

- 6 The Quarterly financial Report:** The Clerk presented the previously circulated quarterly report showing actual income and expenditure for the period ending 31st December, 2013.

Members noted that the individual budget headings for each of the Council's services were broadly on track with the originally approved 2013/14 estimates.

Cllr Johnson took Members through the Council's proposed budget headings for the 2014/15 financial year.

Following discussion it was **unanimously resolved to recommend to Council** that the Parish precept **for 2014/15** should be set as **£76,640** which would be an increase of 1.98% over the previous year.

Due to an increase in the Council's Tax base the impact of the increase for Council Tax payers would be limited to only 0.58%

In accordance with previously agreed Council policy transfers from the Council's general reserve to earmarked reserves would be undertaken, during the closure of the 2013/14 accounts, to provide for future years commitments in respect of:-

	£k
	Balance at
	31st March
	2014
St Wulstans Green - maintenance	15
Future Cemetery land purchase	21
Future Cemetery Equipment purchase	1
Assarts road drainage scheme	10
Assarts road play equipment	10
All Saints Ward play equipment	15
Future Election costs	1
St peters closed churchyard	6.5
Neighbour Hood plan consultancy	5
Staff Pension Gratuity (1996 LGA regulations)	1
Total Earmarked Reserves at 31st March, 2014	<u><u>85</u></u>

The estimated general reserve at 31st March, 2014 was now estimated to be some £33.5k. This would mean that the Parish Council's cash holdings would have risen to approximately £118.5K by the end of the 2013/14 financial year.

7 Financial implications of ongoing Community Projects

(a) Fruitlands Green and jubilee fountain - Christmas illuminations – a budget of 2k was being allocated for these projects and quotations for two suitable trees and the new electrical connections were awaited.

(b Assarts Road Playing Field Drainage - a further report would be presented to council on 29th January on the financial implications of this project

(c) Assarts Road Play Area fencing -this project had recently been completed and expenditure had been 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 29th January.

8 Section 106 funding application

An application had been sent to the District Council to secure the release of Section 106 funding to support:-

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

The District Council had requested that quotations for these works should be sent to them to support the Council's funding application. The matter would be listed for consideration at the next meeting of Play & Open Spaces working group.

9 (a) Review of Cemetery Charges

The Clerk presented the report of the Cemetery working group detailing their review of the Parish Cemetery fees and charges for 2014/15.

The group had recommended that the existing fees should be increased by 5% across the board, rounded to the nearest £5.

The charges for the purchase of Cemetery memorial plaques for the Remembrance garden would be increased by 10% due to the increase in their costs of production.

The Clerk circulated a schedule of the proposed new fees together with the details of charges levied by Malvern Town Council for comparison purposes.

Following discussion It was **unanimously resolved** that the revised schedule of fees for 2014/15 should be **recommended to Council for approval**.

9 (b) Review of Cemetery maintenance work plans

The Clerk advised members that the following schedule of work and maintenance was required in the Cemetery:-

(i) the purchase of a new lawnmower, strimmer and wheelbarrow, at an estimated cost of £1.2k, to be funded from the approved 2013/14 budget. The Clerk to oversee the valuation and disposal of the current equipment which had reached the end of its useful life

(ii) the laying of a new gravel path to serve the new area of the Cemetery. Three competitive quotations to be sought – costs estimated at £1.7K to be funded from within the 2014/15 cemetery budget

(iii) the extension of the water supply from the Cemetery chapel to the new graves area. Three competitive quotations to be sought – costs estimated at £1.5K to be funded from within the 2014/15 cemetery budget

(iv) specialist inspection and servicing of the Chapel Harmonium – costs to be identified and funded by the Cemetery maintenance earmarked reserve

(v) Painting of the Oaklands Road Cemetery Fence – Three competitive quotations to be sought – costs estimated at £1.5K to be funded from within the 2014/15 cemetery budget

Following discussion It was **unanimously resolved** that the schedule of planned cemetery works as set out should be **recommended to Council for approval**.

10. Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2014/15

The clerk presented details of the Parish Council's Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2014/15. This was being established in accordance with best practice as set out in *DCLG Guidance on Local Government CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in Public Services, and the Local Government Act 2003*.

The strategy document was intended to underline the Council's commitment to ensuring that:

- It maintains the security of its cash balances whilst retaining sufficient liquidity to meet its revenue spending plans
- Any Capital expenditure plans are affordable
- Any external borrowing and other long term liabilities are within prudent and sustainable levels
- Its Treasury Management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice

The strategy would form part of the Council's financial regulations and be the subject of an annual review in January each year.

During 2014/15 any cash investments made would be limited to less than one year in duration, and deposited with UK High Street Banks and Building Societies which were backed by the Financial Services Compensation scheme. The Council would continue to maintain cash deposits with the National Westminster Bank PLC and HSBC PLC.

It was noted that the Parish Council has a current borrowing approval of up to £82,200 to finance the possible purchase of land for an extension of the Parish cemetery. The Loan approval expires on 20th June, 2014.

The Parish Council does not currently have any external borrowing and does not anticipate requiring additional loan sanction or external borrowing for any capital projects in the immediate future.

Following discussion it was **unanimously resolved** that Treasury management Policy & Strategy for 2014/15 should be **recommended to Council for approval**.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.45 pm

Chairman-----

N Johnson

Dated 24th April, 2014