



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Finance & General Purposes Meeting

Meeting held on Monday 3 November 2014 in The Parish Council Office, 27 Victoria Road, Mortimer at 7:30pm

Present:

Councillors: M Dennett, (Chairman), D Ives, P Wingfield, N Kiley and P Blagden, J Earl and T Audsley.

Clerk: Mrs J Kirk

Public/Press: One

01. **To receive any apologies:** None.
02. **To receive any Declarations of Interest and to consider any Applications for the Grant of a Dispensation from Committee Members and whether the Finance & General Purposes (F & GP) Committee grants itself a Dispensation in accordance with the Localism Act 2011:** The Clerk advised that all members present had applied for a Grant of Dispensation. Cllr Kiley proposed that the Committee grant itself a Dispensation. This was seconded by Cllr Earl and carried unanimously.
03. **To receive half yearly Internal Audit Report October 2014:** The RFO advised that the Internal Auditor had completed the first six monthly review of the systems of accounting and control on the 22 and 23 October 2014. The Auditor advised:
'During my visits on 22nd and 23rd October 2014 I reviewed the accounts for the first six months of the year to 31st March 2015. The internal controls appear to be working satisfactorily. I would however like to make the following observations.
Payroll
The Employment Allowance, which gives relief on the first £2,000 of Employer National Insurance contributions, was claimed in month 5 of the current financial year. Unfortunately public bodies (including parish and town councils) are not eligible for this allowance. During my visit, the settings in the payroll software were adjusted to notify HMRC that the Council is not eligible for the allowance. The reports run for the October payroll should be checked to ensure that the software is once again including the Employer National Insurance contributions in its calculations.
I note that Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council have adopted a triple authority procedure for the online payment of payroll via Unity Bank. This fulfils the requirement to "maintain robust controls on payments as an integrated part of [the] overall financial control system".
Financial Regulations, Risk Management and Standing Orders
I understand that these documents are being updated with reference to the NALC model documents and I should be grateful to receive copies once these have been finalised and agreed by Council.'
The RFO advised the Committee that a refund payment had been made to HMRC for the amount owed.
04. **To receive update from RFO on the review/renewal of SMPC Policies: Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Risk Management Policy and the Code of Conduct:** The Clerk advised that the review and update of the Council's Policies was progressing well and it is hoped to be able to bring the Draft documents to the next F & GP Committee Meeting for consideration by the Committee.

05. **To receive a financial update from the RFO on the current position for 2014/2015 and to consider any future expenditure on budgeted and non budgeted items:** The RFO gave an update on the financial position as at the end of September which showed income and expenditure against budget. The current year's budget is reasonably on target but there may be a need for some virements. The Committee considered future expenditure and on non budgeted items and these included:
- Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group will require more funding as the Steering Group need to get planning advice and engage a Planning Consultant to enable the NDP to give an informed response for a public consultation. The Steering Group will present an updated budget request to the full Council. It was noted that £2,000 of the 2014/2015 NDP budget is actually set aside for the Community Plan (formerly Parish Plan) Refresh 2.
 - Cllr Wingfield stated that as the reserves are currently quite high that SMPC perhaps considers giving a sum of money for capital expenditure to the Alfred Palmer Memorial Field Trust under the General Power of Competence. The Clerk was asked to write to the Trustees regarding this idea. Once a response and more information has been received it will be put to the full Council.
 - Cllr Dennett advised that the Parish Council's laptop computer is nearly five year's old and that recently there had been a major problem with it and it had to go away to be fixed. Cllr Dennett therefore proposed that as this was a big risk to the Council that he and the Clerk look into purchasing a new laptop along with a maintenance contract. This was seconded by Cllr Ives and unanimously agreed.
06. **To receive update from the Clerk on the current position and next steps to finalise the provisions of the Planning Consent and the Lease for the Cemetery Extension:** The Clerk advised that Cllr Wingfield (Cemetery Chairman) and herself met with a representative from The Englefield Estate (Landlord) and the tenant farmer. This was a successful meeting and the boundaries of the Cemetery Extension were marked out and the works needed to be carried out, i.e. fencing, hedging and access from existing Cemetery in order to comply with both the planning consent and the Lease were discussed with the farmer.
07. **To review SMPC Annual Subscriptions for 2015/2016:**
The Clerk gave an update on the annual subscriptions and amounts currently budgeted and agreed for 2014/2015 as follows:
- Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management (ICCM) £90.00
 - Berkshire Association of Local Councils (including a copy of the Local Council Review Magazine delivered to each Councillor's home address) (BALC) £843.00
 - Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) £36.00
 - The Open Spaces Society £45.00
 - The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) £270.00
- These were discussed and Cllr Kiley proposed that SMPC did not renew its subscription to CPRE or The Open Spaces Society for 2015/2016 budget and this was agreed. It was agreed to discuss whether or not to renew the annual

subscription for 2015/2016 to the SLCC as a part II item as it is an employment matter.

08. **To consider and review the renewal of the SMPC Fairground Premises Licence for 2015/2016:** As the Parish Council do not directly make use of its Premises Licence and as it is legally responsible for any organisation that does it was agreed to consider not renewing this for 2015. The Premises Licence was first obtained in 2012 for the Parish Council's Jubilee Celebrations event. Up until this point organisations using the Fairground did not use a Premises Licence for their events. The Parish Council Premises Licence does not include an alcohol licence. The Clerk is to get advice from the Licencing Department at WBC as to the licensing requirements for other organisations to use the Fairground and to report back to the next F & GP Meeting.
09. **To review the Fairground Hire Charges for 2015:** This item was held over.
10. **To review the Cemetery Fees for 2015:** This item was held over.
11. **To receive a budget report from the RFO with a draft budget for 2015/2016:** The Committee considered Agenda Items No 11 and 12 together and discussed the entries for each line. It was agreed to ask at the Full Parish Council Meeting in November whether any member had a request for a budget item for consideration by the F & GP Committee. All requests to be submitted to the RFO by 23 November 2014.
The next F & GP Committee Meeting was fixed for the 2 December 2014 although Cllr Ives advised that Police Inspector McKeown is to meet with all Councillors to discuss the renewal of the part funded PCSO contract prior to the November Parish Council Meeting. Cllr Wingfield asked whether the F & GP Committee could convene a quick meeting between the presentation with the Police and the Full Council Meeting in order to for the Committee to agree to make a recommendation to the full Council Meeting that evening as to whether or not to renew the PCSO contract for the forthcoming year.
12. **To consider and further develop the 2015/2016 draft budget:** As above.

Meeting Closed at 09:59 pm