

**Finance Committee Meeting**

**Draft MINUTES** of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday, held on 15th March 2021, 7:15pm via the Zoom Online Meeting Platform.

**PRESENT:** Cllr C Beglan (CB), Cllr P Heeley (Chairman), Cllr A Lisher (AL) and Cllr G Lockerbie (GL)

**ALSO:** Zoe SavillClerk to the Council

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**: 0

**ABSENT:** 0

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7:15pm

1. **Receive apologies for absence**

None

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1. **Declaration of interest and Dispensations**.

None declared

1. **Approval of the Minutes of the last Finance Meeting.**

The minutes of the meeting on 16th November 2020 were approved as a correct record.

1. **Public Speaking**

No public speaking or reports

1. **To Review and Recommend any changes to the Council’s Financial Regulations on its payments**

**procedures.**

Members discussed the Council’s Financial Regulations on payment arrangements at its monthly meetings. It was noted that increasingly, contractors are now requiring payment within 5 to 14 days before they can be authorised. The Clerk/RFO has been able to settle these as urgent payments, under delegated powers in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. But this is a temporary measure to ensure effective continuation of business during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Members also discussed whether to introduce a list of annual regular payments for prior approval such as those which meet its statutory obligations and for annual subscriptions. The Clerk/RFO

advised that there is already provision in the Council’s Financial Regulations for it to authorise a list

of regular payments for the year and ratified at each Council meeting, provided it meets requirements 4.1 (Budgetary Controls) and is authorised by two signatories on each and every occasion to reduce the risk of duplication. The list would usually be presented to the Annual Parish Council Meeting for approval. Members noted that there are too few regular payments which would benefit a change in current practice.

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**RESOLVED** by 3 votes and one abstention to recommend amendment to the Council’s Financial Regulations so that contractors and service providers are advised of the Council’s payment arrangements upon seeking quotations and engagement of services. To be considered for approval at the next Full Council Meeting.

1. **To Consider outsourcing the Council’s payroll responsibilities**

Members discussed the outsourcing of the Council’s statutory payroll and pension responsibilities which have been contracted to the Clerk.

**RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend that the Council agrees to the principal of outsourcing the responsibility to remove the potential conflict of interest and associated risks, and the Clerk’s administration workload. Clerk to seek quotations from suppliers, including the area’s principal local authorities which offer the service to some neighbouring councils. To be considered with the recommendation at the next Full Council Meeting.

1. **To Consider funding arrangements towards the proposed forestry track in Georges Lane.**

Members discussed funding options for the Council’s recent offer of £12,000 towards the National Trust’s proposed forestry track. This is on condition that the track, which covers the southern end of Georges Lane to the Warren Hill car park, is completed by the winter. The remainder is to be funded through a Forestry Commission grant and other monies raised by the National Trust which manages the track. Members noted the thanks from NT’s South Downs area manager Jane Cecil for the Council’s generous offer. She will be meeting with her team and financial advisors on how to meet the Council’s conditions before confirming acceptance, hopefully by the time of the next Council meeting on 12th April. The Chairman reported that there is an unspent allocation of £11.000 in the Council’s current Capital Reserves plus a further £11,948 Community Infrastructure Levy monies allocated for the Link Pathway project for the Recreation Ground. A further c £22,000 CIL is anticipated from the Vineyards development. The Clerk/RFO advised that the £11,000 Capital Reserves was allocated as match funding for a later unsuccessful grant bid to the South Downs National Park Authority for the pathway. The project is expected to cost in the region of £30,000.

**RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend that £11,000 Capital Reserves is vired from the Link Pathway project to be earmarked for the proposed forestry track contribution in the 2021/22 Budget; The £1,000 balance to be funded from unspent earmarked reserves for Heath Common. This is pending the NT’s acceptance of the Council’s conditional offer. The £11,948 CIL monies to remain allocated to the Link Pathway project.

1. **To Agree date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed to arrange this as and when required.

 There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was closed at 7.49pm.

 **Signed……………………………………………………………….**

 **Dated…………………………………………………………………**