

BLEADON PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of a Meeting of Bleadon Parish Council's Finance & Personnel Committee that was held in the **Coronation Hall Coronation Road Bleadon** on **Monday 11th January 2016** that commenced at **6.30 pm** when the following business was transacted.

PRESENT Councillors Rev. S Hartree (Chairman), Mr I Gibson (ex-officio), Mrs I D Clarke and Mrs C Gutsell together with the Parish Clerk Miss H Brinton.

There was one member of the public present, Mrs C Findlay who updated the meeting on the arrangements for the Village Ranger duties and change thereto in May 2015. She informed the meeting that the old contract for the upkeep of the toilets had been cancelled and that the ranger was asked to undertake the duties instead. An additional payment of £180 per month was agreed and the ranger's pay went up by this amount in May 2015 which was a saving on the old contract with the external supplier. Bruce Poole, the previous clerk, combined the two amounts into one payment together with any expenses incurred in the furtherance of the his job. There was no contract for the extra work and the £180 per calendar month covers the toilets.

The Chair thanked Mrs Findlay for the information.

F&P 43.1 To receive any apologies for non attendance

None

F&P 43.2 To receive any declarations of interest

None

F&P 43.3 To receive and approve the Minutes of the Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting held on Monday 4th January 2016.

Cllr Clarke asked for "due to playpark" be removed after "historical" under item 42.11. So moved.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting held on Monday 4th January 2016 that had been duly circulated be taken as read and approved as being correct and signed as such by the Chairman with the amendment as noted above.

Proposed by Cllr Clarke, seconded by Cllr Gibson.

F&P 43.4 Matters Arising from those Minutes

None

To consider the budget for 2016/17

Cllr Hartree thanked the clerk for circulating the minutes of the meeting held on 4th January so quickly and asked for proposed amendments to the budget discussed at this last meeting.

The discussion commenced with the administration budget. Cllr Gutsell suggested office expenses be reduced to £250 in line with the actual spend from the previous year. She further proposed £150 for equipment; £300 for stationery. All three amendments were carried unanimously. Cllr Gutsell queried the amount for postage as being high. Cllr Hartree felt it should remain as he was of the opinion that any emails to official bodies should be backed up with a letter sent by "snail mail" so that there were copies on the file as important contributions from the council had not been received in the past. Cllr Gutsell suggested a compromise of £200 which was carried.

Cllr Gutsell questioned whether the amount for insurance should be reduced. Cllr Hartree added that the premiums had gone up due to flooding and that they had increased substantially. Cllr Gibson suggested a 4% increase to £2900 which was carried unanimously.

Cllr Gibson suggested that the audit fees be reduced but Cllr Hartree suggested that as the council had a new clerk who may have more queries that the amount be kept at £300. Cllr Clarke suggested £250 which was carried.

Cllr Clarke asked what were included in the subscriptions line as this seemed high. Cllr Hartree and the clerk informed the meeting. Cllr Gibson suggested the amount be reduced to £650; Cllr Hartree felt he could not agree to this amount but the proposal was carried.

Cllr Gutsell asked Cllr Gibson what the cost of the proposed training for councillors was – he replied £300 for a one off session. Cllr Clarke suggested that if new laws came in that affected parish councils then NSC would provide training. Cllr Hartree countered that it would be a mistake to cut administration budgets to the bone. In his experience, £9k for administration expenses is nothing.

Cllr Gutsell queried the amount for newsletter printing – she will consult with Cllr Findlay about using students at Weston College to produce it going forwards which should result in a saving. Cllr Gibson suggested that the council try harder to get sponsorship for the newsletter.

18.50 meeting suspended to allow contribution from Mrs Findlay as member of the public.

18.51 Meeting reconvened

In light of the information given, Cllr Hartree proposed that the costs for newsletter printing be left at £1k – carried.

Cllr Gutsell suggested the hall rent be £250 in line with this year as not expecting an increase and the next three items be reduced to £50 per line. Cllr Hartree suggested that the poppy wreath alone is £50 leaving the Chair with no room for other expenses. Cllr Gibson suggested this was fine with him.

Cllr Hartree calculated that £800 had been reduced from the administration budget.

Cllr Gutsell suggested that given the information regarding the ranger's increase in salary for the toilet upkeep that the increase needed to remain otherwise there would not be enough but asked that a separate line be included for this. Cllr Hartree asked for a figure to be proposed. Cllr Gutsell proposed £7k; seconded by Cllr Gibson and carried.

It was proposed to keep the travel budget as was as both the ranger and clerk claim travel expenses.

Cllr Gutsell suggested that the budget lines for grants be done away with altogether as the council is trying to save money. Cllr Hartree said that the council could take the money from reserves or increase the precept by £500 – if there is no grant line then it denies the council the ability to kick start small projects for the community. Cllr Gutsell suggested any grant applications could come out of reserves. Proposal for no budget for grants was carried.

Cllr Hartree asked the committee to consider the requests from the Open Spaces Committee. He recapped the requests and commented as follows:

In terms of special items – the playground work is to be cancelled resulting in £700 saved as it will come from this year's budget instead. The council is not sure of the timing of moving the dog bin etc and suggested this be cancelled saving £1500. The Celtic Way bus shelter could be cancelled as there had not been a shelter there for some time. There was a general discussion over the use of the insurance money received of £1200. Cllr Hartree commented that there had been no complaint regarding the lack of bus shelter to the council and they council was looking for ways to save money. He commented that the churchyard wall was a contractual liability and the new planters address a perceived problem. He proposed cancelling therefore the new play equipment, moving the shelter, noticeboard and dog bin and the new bus shelter saving £6200. **Agreed that these items be cancelled.**

Cllr Gutsell proposed keeping the general maintenance at £500. The planting budget was for new plants and proposed to be kept. Cllr Hartree said that the purchase of the soil and tubs was a separate item now. It was agreed to keep the playground maintenance the same. Cllr Gutsell proposed £2k for the toilet maintenance given that they were looked after every week; Cllr Hartree proposed £1k which was carried. The car park maintenance which is for the wall was agreed to be kept at £1250 as were the grass cutting, church clock and lighting budget lines. Cllr Gutsell proposed that the village improvements budget be reduced to £500 – agreed unanimously. It was agreed to keep the playground equipment budget at £700 for the extra sand etc.

There was further discussion regarding the amount for special items. Cllr Gutsell suggested some money should be in the budget for moving the bus shelter, noticeboard and dog bin - £500? There was discussion as to whether to take legal advice regarding keeping the items where they are. It was suggested that just the dog bin be moved as the village has other noticeboards available. Cllr Hartree proposed that the amount be reduced for this and Cllr Gibson said that the bus shelter in Celtic Way had not been a problem so proposed £300 for this item.

Cllr Gutsell proposed £400 for the four planters at £50 each plus soil. Proposal was carried. In terms of the churchyard wall, she further suggested that £5k could come out of reserves for this as a special project. Cllr Hartree advised that this was part of the churchyard maintenance which is the responsibility of the parish council legally. Cllr Gibson commented that this had been an on-going situation. Cllr Hartree said that £5k was not overly generous for this. Cllr Clarke said that reserves were for an emergency and that the council cannot justify a guarantee elsewhere as well. Cllr Hartree added that the churchyard wall is the council's responsibility and is a known project for this parish council – the net result is the same he suggested. Lowering reserves by £20k is enough to take out. Cllr Hartree proposed keeping £5k in the budget for the churchyard wall. Not carried. Cllr Gutsell proposed that the amount be taken out of reseves; Cllr Clarke seconded so motion carried.

Cllr Hartree commented that £9k had been cut out of the budget and therefore the required precept was £35,400.

Cllr Hartee asked whether it was the F&P Committee's wish to propose the budget agreed to full Council?

Cllr Clarke proposed the budget; Cllr Gutsell seconded. **Resolved that the agreed budget be proposed to full council for acceptance for 2016/17.**

F&P 43.6 To resolve the level of the precept for 2016/17 for recommendation to the Council

Cllr Hartree commented that whilst the precept requirement was suggested by the proposed budget to be £35,400, the precept itself did not have to be restricted to this level.

Cllr Gibson proposed leaving the precept at £38,000 for the budget year 2016/17. Cllr Clarke seconded this proposal.

Resolved that the precept of £38,000 be recommended to the full Council for approval for the year 2016/17

F&P 43.7 Other matters referred to the Clerk

None

F&P 43.8 Date of next meeting – to be confirmed when clerk has obtained necessary contract for village ranger