

Minutes of the Fremington Parish Council Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on Monday 30th November 2020 at 10.30am via Zoom.

- Present: Cllrs, F Biederman (Chairman), I Capon and S Kingdom.
Mrs V Woodhouse, Executive Officer.
Mrs K Graddock, Deputy Executive Officer.
- 2011/40 **Apologies for Absence**
Cllrs I Crawford and L Goodger.
- 2011/41 **Declarations of Interest**
None.
- 2011/42 **Public Participation**
None.
- 2011/43 **To approve and sign the Minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting held on Thursday 5th November 2020 as a correct record**
Members had not had sight of the draft minutes and therefore it was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to defer the approval and signing of the minutes until the next meeting.
- 2011/44 **Staff Salaries - To approve staff salaries for the month of November 2020**
It was **resolved** to approve the staff salaries, expenses, PAYE/NI and pension payments for the month of November 2020.
- 2011/45 **Accounts Due for Payment and Receipts for the period from the 28th October to 23rd November 2020**
It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to approve the payments totalling £25,516.21 and receipts totalling £3,685.81, copies of which are attached to these minutes as Appendix One.
- 2011/46 **Purchase of Vehicle for Maintenance and Amenities Operative**
Members received a detailed report outlining options for lease hire of hybrid and electric vehicles for a period of up to 3 years, it was noted that at the time of research a petrol van was not available.
- Cllr Biederman felt it would be difficult to spend the amount of money required on a lease vehicle, he did not feel that this would be a priority to the community at the proposed prices. Cllr Biederman reported that he had spent the last 48 hours looking for a suitable vehicle and there was not a lot of choice on the market, he felt that a diesel van would be the only affordable option for the Parish Council.
- Cllr Kingdom agreed and felt the costs to lease a vehicle were horrific and suggested that the Committee re-consider the diesel vehicle that the office had found.

Cllr Capon expressed that as a member of the Climate Emergency Working Party he would not support a diesel vehicle. Cllr Capon accepted that the access to a charging point for an electric vehicle may be limited but suggested that a self-charging hybrid would be a compromise. Cllr Capon also informed members that Cllr Crawford, as lead member for the Climate Emergency Working Party, would not support a diesel vehicle.

Members discussed options and the budget that they would be willing to spend on a vehicle it was suggested that £10,000 should be allocated for staff to purchase the most appropriate van available for that price and to agree to vire £5,000 from the salaries budget to allow staff to purchase a van as soon as an appropriate van becomes available.

Cllr Capon requested that it be noted in the minutes that he is total against the purchase of a diesel vehicle.

Officers requested clarification on whether the £10,000 was inclusive of VAT, it was noted that this budget would be exclusive of VAT as the VAT could be reclaimed. Officers drew members attention to the lease of a hybrid Ford Transit Custom which, over the 3-year period, would be slightly more than the £10,000 budget but included a full maintenance package and could provide a compromise between price and a more environmentally friendly vehicle, it would also provide certainty for any maintenance issues. It was agreed to move onto the next item whilst the Deputy Executive Officer researched the van in more detail including CO2 emissions and revert to this item in due course.

2011/47

Purchase of Equipment for Maintenance and Amenities Operative

Members were asked to consider the purchase of a strimmer and hedge cutter for use by the Maintenance and Amenities Operative, battery operated equipment had been investigated, however, the advice was that it is not developed enough for commercial use at this time and only has a run time of 30 minutes. It was noted that there was not a budgetary provision for the purchase and therefore Committee approval was required.

Cllr Biederman was aware that the Maintenance and Amenities Operative will be carrying out works on the highways, footpaths and other County Council responsibilities within the parish and confirmed that he would be willing to fund the equipment from his DCC locality budget. The Committee thanked Cllr Biederman for his support.

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to purchase a Stihl petrol strimmer and a Stihl petrol trimmer.

2011/48

Budgets

Members considered the draft budgets for 2021/2022 and accompanying briefing note. Members were informed that

North Devon Council has given a deadline of 18th December 2020 for return of the initial precept application (this is an initial application to show the likely precept). Although the North Devon Council cannot yet provide the figure for the tax base it has indicated that consideration should be given to the impact the pandemic has had on the increase in those receiving assistance towards their Council Tax which in turn will reduce the tax base. It was recommended that an initial figure for the precept is submitted in line with the proposed budgets which is reviewed at the January 2021 Full Council meeting once confirmation of the tax base has been received. The final precept can then be considered and submitted ahead of the deadline of the 29th January 2021.

Members were presented with a summary of the changes that have been incorporated within the draft 2021/2022 budget which included an increase in running costs in several areas, a budget for Climate Emergency and Parish Enhancements as requested at Committee Meetings a budget to support the Lets Talk Fremington group run by Clarity as agreed at Full Council and funds to review staffing provision.

It was noted that the draft budgets would be altered accordingly following the decision to lease a vehicle.

Members were advised that there was currently £3,067 but the Parks and Playing Fields Committee had requested the release of £1,800 VAT to remove some dangerous equipment. Members were also informed that there was likely to be a saving in this year's salary budget and extra funds from the sale of 12 Higher Road which could be used to bridge the gap next year between the proposed income and expenditure, it was therefore suggested that the Committee consider a precept increase from £247,739.28 to £260,126.24. Based on a Band D property and based on last year's tax base (of 4291.21) this would be approximately £60.62 per year an increase of £2.89 per year or 0.055 a week as a starting point. Members were also advised that consideration should be given to placing any additional savings into the following Ear Marked Reserves (EMR)

- Defibrillators (there has been an agreement to place the unspent budget of £1,000 for defibrillators into an EMR but further funds should be considered to allow the lease of two defibrillators and heated cabinets).
- Election Reserve

- Bus Shelters
- Griggs Field Pathways – it was advised that the name of this be altered to allow for ditch and hedge works to be undertaken from this fund as well.

Members were informed that Periodic Electrical Testing was due in 2021 which had not been included within the proposals although it could be met from maintenance budgets for each site. Members were also informed that it was agreed at the February 2020 Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting for the Executive Officer to investigate options for Alternative Employment Law and Human Resources Advisors for possible implementation in the financial year 2021/22. Options have been investigated and if the Committee wishes to appoint an alternative firm an extra £1,300 - £1,500 should be included with the budget. It was agreed not to include this amount for a change of HR support within the budget proposals.

Members were further informed that a desire for Cllrs to have tablets provided by the Parish Council has been expressed. Costs have been previously circulated to the Finance and Personnel Committee, to confirm 15 x 10" Apple tablets with headphones, software, security and set-up would be £11,107.80 (the cost for five tablets would be £3,894.60 and would increase the overall cost by £576). It was agreed not to supply Cllrs with tablets, members felt that this would not be a priority for the community and the costs would be better spent on ensuring the safety and upgrade of the play areas and equipment.

After consideration and discussion, it was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to accept the recommendations and to present the draft budgets to Full Council, subject to the alteration following the decision to lease a vehicle, and to also propose to Full Council:

- That an initial precept request of £260,126.24 is submitted to NDC and reviewed at the Parish Council's January 2021 meeting and following confirmation of the tax base.
- That savings from this year's salaries budget and the sale of 12 Higher Road are used to bridge the gap in the income and expenditure for 2021/2022.
- That any further savings are placed into Ear Marked Reserves as suggested above including an EMR for the balloon payment at the end of the term for the possible purchase of the vehicle.

Members were informed that another Committee meeting was due to start, and it was agreed to adjourn the meeting at 11.30am and reconvene after the Tews Lane Committee meeting.

The meeting reconvened at 12.20pm.

Present: Cllrs F Biederman (Chairman), I Capon and S Kingdom.
Mrs V Woodhouse Executive Officer and Mrs K Graddock Deputy Executive Officer.

2011/49 **Purchase of Vehicle for Maintenance and Amenities Operative**
The Deputy Executive Officer informed members that the CO2 emissions would be between 130 and 150, she had spoken to the dealership and they had confirmed that the Council could pay a balloon payment at the end of the 3-year term to own the vehicle but the amount of this payment would not be known until nearer the end of the lease. It was suggested that the Council could accept the lease and start to place funds into an Ear Marked Reserve for the balloon payment at the end of the term, the Council could then decide whether it would like to purchase the vehicle or take a new lease.

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to agree to a 3-year lease of a Ford Transit Custom (hybrid) Van and to start to place funds into an Ear Marked Reserve towards the balloon payment at the end of the lease term.

2011/50 **Release of General Reserves**
The Parks and Playing Fields Committee had requested the release of £1,800 + VAT from General Reserves to fund the removal of the youth shelter on the Village Green and outdoor gym equipment from Beechfield – it was noted that the equipment was being dangerous and there was no other option than to remove. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to agree to the release of £1,800 + VAT from general reserves.

2011/51 It was **resolved** that under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items as they involve the likely disclosure of confidential information.

PART B

2011/52 **Staffing Matters**
a) To ratify appointment of Maintenance and Amenities Operative
It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to ratify

b) To note resignation of Deputy Executive Officer
It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to regretfully note the resignation. It was agreed to note the Committee's thanks for the exceptional service the Deputy Executive Officer has given to the Council. Cllr Capon asked if the Deputy Executive Officer would attend a meeting to inform the Committee of her responsibilities and duties. It was agreed that options for recruitment should be submitted to the Committee for consideration once the conflict management report had been received.

Meeting ended at 12.35pm

Signed: Dated.....