**Minutes of the Finance & General Purpose Committee meeting held virtually on**

**Monday 7th September 2020 at 7:00pm via Zoom**

**Present**: Cllr Alan Biddle Cllr David Chenery Cllr Ivor French Cllr Emma Lawrence

Cllr Robin Cooke

**Officer in Attendance:** Jo Peters, Clerk to the Council.

There were no members of the public present.

1. **Election of Chairman**

Cllr Biddle asked for nominations for Chairman. Cllr Lawrence Proposed that Cllr Biddle should continue within this role, Seconded by Cllr French. **All in Favour.** There were no other nominations.

**RESOLVED**

Cllr Biddle duly **Elected** as Chairman.

1. **To receive Apologies for Absence**

There were none.

1. **To receive Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

1. **Open Public Forum**

There were no members of the public present.

1. **To approve the minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 2nd March 2020 and the Extraordinary Committee Meeting held on 23rd March 2020**

A copy of the draft minutes of these meetings had been circulated to all Committee members prior to the meeting**.**

**RESOLVED**

Minutes of the meetings held on 13th January and 23rd March 2020 were signed as a true record, when convenient.

The Chairman asked if the period during the COVID-19 emergency whereby decisions were delegated to the Clerk along with the Chairman and one Committee members had now come to an end.

**RESOLVED**

This emergency period had now come to an end and normal decision making should resume.

1. **Review of Grants Scheme**

The Chairman informed the Committee that a Code of Conduct Complaint had been submitted against him to ESC and as a result it had been noted that a review of the Parish Councils Grant Scheme should be undertaken.

**RESOLVED**

That a notice advertising the Parish Council’s Grant Scheme would be compiled and put on both the village noticeboard and the Parish Council’s website and a thorough review of the Grants Scheme would be carried out next year. **Action- Parish Clerk to compile notice.**

1. **To consider and adopt Policy and Procedure for Handling Freedom of Information Requests**

The Parish Clerk had circulated a copy of the draft policy to all Committee members. The Chairman stated it should be made clear that the Parish Council can charge for these requests.

**RESOLVED**

This policy should be recommended to Full Council for Approval.

1. **To consider and adopt a Dignity at Work Policy**

The Parish Clerk had circulated a copy of the draft policy to all Committee members and also provided information regarding the importance of this policy.

**RESOLVED**

This policy should be recommended to Full Council for Approval.

1. **Update on delegated decisions made since April 2020 including Capital and Revenue grants given**

The Parish Clerk confirmed the following delegated financial decisions had been undertaken since the last meeting:-

**£11.00** - Parish Clerk’s Mobile Phone Contract – Delegated Decision – Cllrs Chenery, Biddle and French.

**£100.00** - One off Donation to WM PCC for Boxes of Hope – Cllrs Chenery, Parish Clerk & Cllr French.

**£500.00** One off Donation to Wickham Market Bowls Club for ongoing maintenance and green costs due to Covid-19 – Cllr Chenery, Cllr French and Parish Clerk.

1. **To receive an update from the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer on the 2020/2021 accounts & 1st quarter budget**

The Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) had circulated a copy of the 2020/21 quarterly accounts to all Committee members prior to the meeting.

The RFO reported as follows:-

**Bank Balances as at 28th August 2020 (date of statement)**

Savings Account - £15,779.62

Current Account - £62,693.58

**Income received in 1st Quarter**

£10,000.00 – ESC – One off COVID-19 grant due to the predicted reduction in the Tax Base for 2021/22.

Cemetery to date £3,630.00 has been received. £4,000.00 was budgeted for as income for 2020/21 and therefore I predict this final figure to be higher at year end.

**Savings to date:-**

**Insurance** – Budget £1000, renewal premium - £798.72 – Saving of £201.28.

**Simons Cross water** – Budget £80.00 - I don’t expect these to be this high at year

end.

**Hanging Baskets/Lights/Xmas Trees** – Budget £1483.00 – Savings have been

made of around £1153.00 within this budget due to no hanging baskets were

purchased due to COVID-19 this year, predicated costs for Xmas Trees £330.20

(same as last year).

**Markets** – Budget £650.00 – Predicted Licence Costs - £500.00 – Saving £150.00.

**Overspends to date:-**

Legal Fees – Budget £2500.00, Blocks interim invoice is £3016.00 – This will leave an overspend of £516.00 but the Contingences budget is £8500.00 and I predict a further £3000.00 may possibly need to come out of this budget.

**Matters for consideration:-**

£3500.00 grant to Village Hall – The RFO suggested the Parish Council may possibly

only pay £1500.00 as £2000.00 is predominately for the play area and grass cutting

costs.

**Income reductions to date:-**

**Hanging Baskets** – Budget £600.00 – **Nil received due to COVID-19.**

**WM Youth FC Licence Fee** – Budget £550.00 – I suggest half year could be charged £275.00. Would leave a reduction in predicted income of £275.00.

**Markets** - Summer and Xmas 2020 Markets cancelled due to COVID-19. Budget for income was £2000.00. Weekly markets year end figure could be lower than the £1000.00 predicted depending on future COVID-19 outbreaks – possible reduction in income.

**RESOLVED**

**The 2020/21 Quarterly Accounts and Budget update be Approved.**

**RESOLVED**

The Committee noted and supported the delegated decision already made to pay the invoice for £3016.00 to Block Solicitors for the work to the VH CIO, Bowls & Football Clubs leases.

Concerns were raised regarding these costs and it was noted that going forward this work should be carried out with as little further expense as possible.

**RESOLVED**

The grant paid to Wickham Market Village Hall would be considered at the November 2020 Finance & General Committee meeting. ***Cllrs Biddle and French declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of this item.*** Cllr Biddletook no part in the discussion of this item and did not vote on the issue.

**RESOLVED**

£275.00 should be charged to WM Youth Football Club for their yearly licence fee (discounted amount due to COVID-19).

1. **To receive an update from the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer on the 2021/22 budget**

The RFO reported as follows:-

**2020/2021 – Precept £70,000**

A grant has been received in 2020/21 from ESC for £10,000 as due to COVID-19 it is anticipated there will be a reduction in the tax base for 2021/22. The Parish Council will need to take into consideration as to if this funding should be earmarked in order so that a rise in the Parish Precept for 2021/22 will not have too much of an impact on residents.

The Parish Council needs to consider future projects and also needs to take into consideration that within the terms of the new lease for the VH CIO the Parish Council could be taking some responsibilities back including grass cutting.

Room Hire budget is still questionable.

Legal fees – I feel it would be sensible to keep a budget the same as this year of £2500.00.

Markets – E & L Committee need to consider if the Saturday market should become a regular paying market and therefore a licence for this will need to be included.

Hanging Baskets – Not sure if SC Norse will provide watering service so E & L need to consider if they will provide fewer hanging baskets or purchase planters – this budget may vary.

**RESOLVED**

£10,000.00 COVID-19 grant received from ESC be place within Earmarked reserves for 2021/22 income.

The Chairman thanked the Parish Clerk/RFO for these reports.

1. **Matters of report and items for the next meeting**

2nd Quarter Budget. 2021/22 Budget forecast. Village Handyman hours budget update. Action – Parish Clerk to raise this matter also at the next E & L Committee meeting.

There being no further discussion the Chairman closed the meeting at 7:44pm

Signed………………………………………., Chairman Dated…………………..................