**FINANCE WORKING PARTY MEETING**

Venue: Parish Meeting Room

16th June 2022

**Minutes**

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| **1.** | **Election of Chair of the Finance Working Party**  Cllr. Coughtrey was elected to the Chair of the Finance Working Party. |
| **2.** | **Resolution to accept FWP Terms of Reference**  The Finance Working Party resolved to accept the FWP Terms of Reference. |
| **3.** | **Resolution to approve apologies for absence**  To receive any apologies for absence for the meeting.  Present were:   * Cllr. Mark Allen * Cllr. Kristian Burgess * Cllr. Edward Coughtrey (Chair) * Cllr. Alan Youel   Apologies were received from Cllrs. Hoose and Truman and from Peter Gliwitzky.  The FWP resolved to approve the apologies for absence. |
| **4.** | **Members’ declaration of interest in items on the agenda**  Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.  Cllr. Burgess asked the FWP to note his Chairmanship of the PFA when discussing item 7 – Grant allocation protocol, with regard to the grant application from the Tennis Club. |
| **5.** | **Annual Governance & Accountability Return 2021/22**  The FWP heard a report from Councillor Youel on the progress of the internal audit and the requirements for the annual return, public notice and external audit.  In order to meet the deadlines for submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) to the external auditors, and for commencement of the public rights period, the Parish Council must:   1. Receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report. 2. Approve section 1 of the AGAR, Annual Governance Statement. 3. Approve the explanation of any statement in section 1 to which the response is ‘no’. 4. Ensure that the approval of the annual governance statement has been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman at the approval meeting. 5. Consider, approve and sign the accounts. 6. Approve section 2 of the AGAR, Accounting Statements, including any explanations of significant variances. 7. Ensure that the approval of the accounting statements has been confirmed by the signature of the Chairman at the approval meeting. 8. Decide the dates to be set for the period of the exercise of public rights.   no later than the meeting of 20th June 2022.  The FWP considered the Annual Governance Statement and agreed suggested responses to each statement, including explanation of any statement to which the response is ‘no’.  The FWP considered the Accounting Statements and investigated any significant variances between the 2020/21 and 2021/22 figures.  *FWP recommendation to Council*   1. That the Parish Council approve the FWP responses to section 1 of the AGAR, Annual Governance Statement. 2. That the Parish Council approve the FWP explanations of any statement in section 1 to which the response is ‘no’. 3. That the Parish Council approve and sign the accounts. 4. That the Parish Council approve the FWP response to section 2 of the AGAR, Accounting Statements, including any explanations of significant variances. 5. That the Parish Council agree that the period of the exercise of public rights should commence on 4th July 2022. |
| **6.** | **Village Grass Cutting**  The Parish Council was without a grass cutting contractor at the time of the meeting, and the grass had not been cut for several weeks. The untidiness that resulted within the village had been noted by local residents, and the state of the grass in the cemetery was of particular concern.  The FWP heard that the contract for grass cutting with the previous contractor had expired, and that neither the contractor, nor either of the sub-contractors used for the mowing this year, were prepared to carry out the work.  The Parish Council had received a quote from a contractor for the remaining cuts this season, but the work could not begin for four weeks.  One contractor, Dodedge, was able to offer an immediate start on a single cut.  *FWP decision*   1. The FWP agreed unanimously to authorise Dodedge to carry out an immediate cut of the grass, and to ask Dodedge to use this cut to form as estimate of the work required for future cuts.   *FWP recommendation to Council*   1. That the Parish Council should confirm the FWP decision to instruct Dodedge. 2. That the Parish Council should determine criteria for appointing a contractor for the remainder of the 2022 mowing season. 3. That the Parish Council should initiate a process to put out to tender the contract for mowing for the 2023 mowing season. |
| **7.** | **Grant allocation protocol**  The Parish Council has received a grant request from Middleton Cheney Tennis Club for funding towards replacement fencing around the tennis courts.  The Parish Council noted that the funds allocated to grants within its budget would not cover the sum requested. Concerns were raised about making a grant of this size on a first-come, first served basis, instead of considering all such applications as might be received.  The Parish Council agreed to ask the Finance Working Party to consider whether the Parish Council’s grant-making policy properly considered the possibility of multiple large grant requests withing a single financial year, and to bring recommendations about the policy to the Parish Council. Once these recommendations (if any) had been received and considered by the Parish Council the Parish Council would then consider the grant request from the Tennis Club.  *FWP recommendation to Council*   1. That the Parish Council should establish a grant fund of £10,000 per annum for the support of requests that are compatible with the Council’s policy for voluntary groups applying for grant funding. 2. That the Parish Council should establish a yearly timetable for the receipt of grant applications, the consideration of any applications received, and the award of grants. 3. That, given the time required to put such a grant system in place and the current request from the Tennis Club, the Parish Council should make a grant of £500 towards the costs of the Tennis Club replacement fencing project. 4. That the Parish Council should encourage the Tennis Club to make a further grant application within the new grant system if the replacement fencing project has not been completed when applications first open. |
| **8.** | **Urgent Business**  Dog waste collection  The Parish Council has received a quote from an alternative contractor for the collection of dog waste. The quoted price is substantially lower than that being paid to the current contractor, and there is reason to believe that the current contract may not be renewable.  *FWP recommendation to Council*   1. That the Parish Council should, subject to confirmation of terms and prices, go forward with a new contractor for the collection of dog waste. |