

24 October 2022

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Chairman Cllr Pragnell; Councillors Abraham, Mrs Broadhurst and Scott.

In Attendance: Duncan Murray (Parish Clerk) and Hilary Blaker (Deputy Finance Officer [DFO]).

Public Participation:

There were two members of the public present, one who enquired about the Minilink finishing and the possibility of a replacement bus service. The Clerk commented that this wasn't on the Agenda as the Parish Office had no information forwarded to it about costings or proposals, but that the council was supportive of helping fund a replacement service depending on what the figures were. The Chairman commented that there were reasons to feel positive.

1. APOLOGIES

There were apologies from Cllrs, Bicknell, Child, Davies, Duguid, Evans and Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE 18 JULY 2022 COMMITTEE MEETING ALREADY AGREED AT FULL COUNCIL 25 JULY 2022.

These were ACCEPTED.

4. MATTERS FOR RESOLUTION

a. To review the terms of reference of committees.

The Chairman commented that they needed a radical overhaul and that there was too much concentration on asset transfers for the Asset Management Committee. He also mentioned that there were comments from one of the Members not present in a detailed email that made him consider that this needed to be worked on outside of the committee and it should be referred to a sub-committee. Another Member agreed with this.

The Clerk, adding a precautionary note, suggested that should the committee be considering wholesale changes it should refer the matter to Full Council for consent and so that any sub-committee/Working Group could be given some terms of reference/framework for its review. That would ensure it was working on a document that would be acceptable to Council.

Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands the referral to Full Council was AGREED.

b. To initiate a review of the accounting, invoicing and banking arrangements of the council.

At the request of the Chairman the DFO headed up this item referring Members to her report. The key factors were that there were distinct advantages in moving to sector specific accounting packages and that Scribe seemed to be the better system, from the limited work undertaken to date. It also had fully integrated add-on modules for bookings and allotments which could save money and resolve some other potential issues.

Regarding banking provisions, there were limited options, but the high street banks were not in contention for consideration as their own restrictions limited their ability to provide the service the council needed. Unity Trust was therefore emerging as the best option, in terms of levels of authorisation that could be put in, security, BACS payment security and actioning as well as offering alternatives to PDQ machines and deposit accounts.

The HSBC account was also recommended for closure.

Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands further investigation of Scribe and Unity Trust were AUTHORISED and the Clerk and DFO requested to also 'stress-test' these accounting and banking options.

c. Early considerations for the 2023-24 Precept.

The Clerk commented that currently there were a lot of unknowns for the current drafts to be accurate predictors, energy costs per KWh and the National Pay Settlement. However, the Final Tax-base for the 2023-2024 financial year was already to hand and had reduced, so this would remove some £4.7k from the Precept received if it was kept at the same level of £55.19 for a Band D property. Therefore, there wasn't much room for savings, however, tennis coaching charges had generated an additional £3k in earnings in the current year. The variations on a draft budget were NOTED.

d. Code of Conduct review.

This was deferred as a new Code of Conduct was due to be published and the Parish's Code needed to align with the Principal Authority's Code.

e. Dignity at Work Policy review.

This was noted as being NALC issued and ACAS compliant, no changes were required.

f. Reserves review.

The Council was complying with its recommendations and Internal Audit found the policy's limits/recommendations acceptable. No change was required.

g. Website review.

It was agreed that limited changes could be made to a newer format with costs covered in the annual maintenance charge and that the Hiltingbury Rec webpage was progressing slowly as there were many code changes required and that the original architecture of the site was less than adequate. It was also noted that the website was for information sharing, not product marketing. The ongoing website work was therefore NOTED.

h. External communications.

Members were not sure on this item and issues such as whether social media communications should be closed to comment or open, creating follow-up tasks and therefore using more resources were mentioned. In conclusion this was either to be deferred to a later meeting or referred to Full Council for clarification.

5. TO NOTE THE FINANCIAL REPORTS:

i. To receive the 2nd Quarter Figures:

Income: Allotment income started to come in early, due to the efficiency of using the Rialtus software. Fryern was up by £1k to budget, Hiltingbury up by £4.7k (mainly due to increased charges for tennis coaches) the -£600 was for cancelled invoices for Funtasia that were accounted for on Sage as Bank Receipts. (Other Income -£23.26 was a mis-posting)

Expenditure: Direct Costs were down on budget by £19k but also included the repainting of the MUGA at Fryern (£3.3k), Allotment Costs were up due to excess water usage May to end August (£951) and security cameras for Eagle Close (£450), Fryern was up £5.8k mainly due to the Boiler replacement £3.5k and the servicing of the ventilation system (1.5k for heat recovery).

Overheads: Grants were up due to the late invoicing for 2020-2021 Youth Services provision, Motor Expenses due to servicing and repairs, Computer charges due to the purchase of a new laptop with the arrival of the Allotment Officer, Subscriptions were down due to the earlier than normal invoicing by HALC. Election expenses were £17.2k, £16k of this was covered by the Election Reserve.

Year to Date: Exceptional items remained the £76k release of retention to Acheson (from Reserves), which was joined by the late invoicing of last year's Youth Provision, and the Election costs (again mainly from Reserves).

ii. to agree the payments made from the SAGE payment summary, to authorise payments due, to sign cheques.

Following proposal, seconding and on a show of hands these were AGREED. It was also noted that as a matter of gold standard transparency all purchases made were listed on the council's website.

6. TO MATTERS TO BE TAKEN TO THE COMMITTEE'S NEXT AGENDA.

An update on the website review and the future financial control software/banking provision.

7. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date was confirmed as Monday 21 November 2022, at Fryern Pavilion.

That being all the business the meeting closed at 8.28p.m.

Chairman.....