

**ALBRIGHTON PARISH COUNCIL  
MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 2.00 pm in the Red House**

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 2.00 pm in the Red House.

**Present:** Cllrs. S Pledger (Chair), D Beechey, P Harrison, C Hassall.

In attendance; M Ward, Clerk to Albrighton Parish Council.

**1. Apologies:**

Cllr. K Pledger (work commitments).

Cllr. K Pledger tendered her resignation from the committee due to her work commitments.

Cllr. K Pledger's apologies were accepted by the committee.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

- **Minutes of the meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015:**

Cllr Beechey proposed that the minutes were a true and accurate record which was seconded by Cllr. Hassall and agreed by the committee.

**3. Matters arising:**

Members agreed that a ruling on any unspent funds from the Chair's allowance had still not been considered by the full council and this matter was to be placed on the agenda of the council meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

The Clerk informed members that he had not been able to install the risk assessment software on the computer because it was not compatible with Windows 10 and he had not had any time to work on these procedures despite a request that this should be done in the last internal auditor's report. Members agreed that a new CD should be purchased for a Windows 10 operating system as a first step towards resolving this problem.

The council had received a £22,000 grant for the updating of the CCTV system which had been completed and paid for.

**4. To receive and consider the accounts for the second quarter of the 2015/16 financial year:**

The Clerk went through the accounts for the end of the second quarter to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 which showed a total bank and cash balance of £141,048.90. Members discussed the details of each of the three accounts and reviewed the spending in each budget head. It was noted that the approbation budget was seriously overspent as was the budget for groundsman's supplies. The Clerk promised to provide details of the spending for budget 4502 for each member of the committee.

Cllr. Beechey proposed that the committee should accept the accounts to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 which was seconded by Cllr. Harrison and unanimously agreed by the committee.

The Clerk was asked to contact Donington with Boscobel Parish Council and ask for a contribution to the repair of the Millennium Clock outside the Red House on the agreed division of spending for joint projects.

**5. Arrangements for the 2016/17 draft budget and agreement on the precept.**

Councillors agreed on a schedule for the production of a draft budget with associated precept for full council as follows:

- The Clerk to produce a first draft taking due note of priorities established by the Finance Committee and in other council meetings to be presented to the Finance Committee at its meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30 pm in the Red House.
- The Clerk to revise the draft to take account of amendments agreed by the Finance Committee and present the budget as a non-planning item at the council planning meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016.
- The Clerk to further revise the draft budget to take account of decisions made in full Council and present the budget for approval at the council business meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2016.
- The Clerk to submit the precept demand to Shropshire Council by the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016.

**6. Report by the working group looking into funding for the 2016/17 budget and costs for the swimming pool and the council takeover of the library.**

A report produced by the working group which met on 9<sup>th</sup> November was considered by the Finance Committee and explained by Cllr. Hassall who had attended the meeting. A number of key items were highlighted which included:

- A finance officer from Shropshire Council should be invited to make a presentation to full council to further explain the key elements of the report "Overview of Shropshire Council's Draft Financial Strategy" and answer questions.

- Extra funding for expenses concerned with the swimming pool and Albrighton library should not be taken from council reserves but raised from an increased precept.
- Potential funds from solar panel planning applications were too uncertain at present to be relied on for budgetary purposes.
- Donington with Boscobel Parish Council should be asked to contribute further to joint projects.
- An investigation should be initiated to provide a means of comparing the precept claimed by Albrighton Parish Council to other councils of a similar size.

The Finance Committee felt that it was important that if there was to be an increase in the precept for 2016/17 steps should be taken to explain the reasons why to members of the public.

**7. To discuss the allocation of funds to the swimming pool for 2016 either from reserves or from an increase in the precept.**

The Clerk provided details of a small group meeting consisting of himself with two Shropshire Council officers and the Headteacher and Finance Officer of Albrighton Primary School on 11<sup>th</sup> November regarding the future funding of the swimming pool. No more detail had been made available with regard to the funding of the facility which had cost a total of £15,264.79 for the 2015 swimming season which included the costs of maintenance, heating, management, the provision of lifeguards, staffing and training. The Headteacher had proposed that the day-to-day management of the pool should be retained by the school and with new measures added to the school's budgetary procedures the school was in a better position to monitor and control spending. Given that the swimming club was not in a position to take on more direct control without more committee members and the Parish Council was relatively remote from the daily management of the facility she felt that this was the best provision for the immediate future while more long term measures for the management of the pool were considered.

Cllr. Pledger felt that this was a mistake and that council funding should not be provided to a statutory body which should be funded at county and national level. It would also mitigate against possible grant funding provision which could not be provided for a school. Her view was shared by Cllr. Harrison who was concerned that he may have inadvertently misled full council when he chaired the discussion on providing funding to keep the pool open in 2016.

The Clerk stated that the Headteacher would be writing to each local parish council later in the month formally requesting funding to help overcome the shortfall which was likely to be in the region of £8,200 in total and members agreed to defer further discussion until the letter was received which would be discussed at the Finance Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December and later at a full council meeting.

**8. To consider a recommendation to cancel the Red House debt currently being paid back through free hire of rooms for council meetings.**

Cllr. Pledger outlined the circumstances leading to a loan from the Parish Council being given to the Red House to help with the installing of a lift. Because of unforeseen difficulties the loan could not be paid back by the Red House and it had been agreed that the council could have free use of the facility for its council meetings each month until the loan was paid off. Cllr. Pledger said that because the council was considering an office move to the library it was likely that future council meetings would be held there which would make the arrangements for the payback of the loan redundant. She also pointed out that given the rental cost of each council meeting and the size of the loan it would be decades before the loan was fully paid off. Given these considerations she proposed that the loan should be written off by the council. Cllr. Hassall said that this was not permissible and should not happen. The loan must be repaid in full and it should be part of the council's accounts and recorded as an asset. Members agreed that all of the necessary papers should be available before any recommendation to full council could be made and the Clerk was asked to write to the chair and treasurer of the Red House committee to ask for copies of the relevant paperwork. The committee were aware that an insistence that the loan be repaid if the parish business was diverted to the library would create major problems for the Red House Management Committee and members were not sure if the committee owned the building or whether it was leased, from whom and how many years might remain on the lease.

**9. Any other business.**

There was no other business.

**10. Date of next meeting.**

The next meeting of the Finance Committee would take place on 9<sup>th</sup> December at 2.30 pm in the Red House.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.57 pm.

Signed.....Date.....

Chair