

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD IN BANSONS ON
THURSDAY 14TH JANUARY 2016 AT 8.00pm**

Present: J Bicknell* P Bolden J. Browning J Devonald
C Feetham (Chair) N Fletcher* B Freeman* S Jackman
A Kaye J Reynolds D. Roberts J Rushton
A Wingfield*

*Non committee members

Officers: A Middlehurst (Town Clerk)

Also present: J. Farr (Deputy Clerk), A. Laws (Assistant)

Other: One member of the press

Action

48/15 Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

49/15 Declarations of personal and or prejudicial interest

Cllr B. Freeman declared an interest in Item 59/15 Tennis Court and Croquet Lawn Lease

50/15 Public participation session with respect to items on the agenda

None received.

51/15 To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

52/15 Clerk's Report

Legal Documents

It was reported that the Clerk and Chairman had signed the "Form of Notice that Sections 24 to 28 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 were not to apply to a Business Tenancy" for both Castle Street Allotments and Greensted Road Play Area. These were witnessed by an independent Solicitor.

It was reported that the solicitor donated the fee to the Salvation Army.

Low Claims Rebate – Insurance

A rebate for 2014-15 had been received from the Town Council's Insurance Brokers of £107.91.

CCLA Property Fund

A dividend of £620.15 had been received for the period 1st July – 30th September.

53/15 Finance Reporting

- To note the bank reconciliations for October, November and December
- To note the payments over £100 for October, November and December

Councillors noted the bank reconciliations and payments over £100.

54/15 Reserves

- To note the Ear Marked Reserves as at 31st March 2015
- To note the Ear Marked Reserves as at 31st Dec 2015

Councillors noted the ear marked reserves.

55/15 Mini Bus

- To receive the budget as at 31st December 2015

Councillors commented on the costs involved and the frequency of use.

AGREED

- To add this item to the next Finance committee agenda.

56/15 Chapel

- To receive an update on the quotations for priority works requested by the Committee on 29th October
- To note the 2015/16 budget and agree any necessary works

Cllr J Reynolds reported that he had not looked at the quotes provided in any detail and asked for this item to be deferred until the next Finance committee meeting.

Councillors discussed possible uses for the building. The Clerk recommended that the Council obtain professional advice on any necessary repairs as it was likely to cost more than Cllr Reynolds' original estimate.

It was suggested that the Council hold a public consultation to try to find a use for the building and if no use could be found to consider the demolition of the building. The Clerk was asked to write a press release for the Ongar News as well as local newspapers and to advertise on the Council's social media. Cllr S. Jackman offered to speak about this issue at the Annual Town Meeting in April.

Cllr D. Roberts proposed that a public consultation be held for 2 months and if no there was no interest in using the building then the Council should consider further options. This was seconded by Cllr A. Kaye.

Vote –
For - 9

AGREED

- The Council to hold a public consultation on possible uses for the Chapel building and if no uses can be found to consider further options.

57/15 Internal Audit – 6th January

- To receive a verbal report on the Audit

The Clerk provided a verbal report on the recent internal audit inspection. The auditors reviewed minutes, finances and Council procedures. There were no issues of major concern but the auditors have suggested minor changes. A further audit would be carried out on 1st February and a written report would be provided shortly afterwards.

58/15 Scout Hut Lease

- To note the advice from the Town Council's solicitor
- To make recommendation to Full Council

Correspondence from the Council's solicitor was reported to the committee.

Cllr Reynolds felt that the solicitor was unaware of the extent of the changes proposed for the Scout building and could see no reason why a lease longer than 25 years should not be granted. The Clerk reported that the solicitor had undertaken a site visit and strongly recommended that the Council abides by the solicitor's advice.

Councillors discussed the advantages and disadvantages both to the Scouts and to the Council of a lease of more than 25 years and the funding the Scouts would be likely to receive.

Cllr J. Browning proposed that the committee should defer any decision and to invite the Scouts to explain the reason for requesting a long lease. This was seconded by Cllr D. Roberts.

Vote –
For – 9

AGREED

- The Council to invite the Scouts to explain the reason for requesting a long lease.

59/15 Tennis Court and Croquet Lawn Lease

- To consider and agree the recommended terms of the leases

Confirmation of legal costs were awaited from the Town Council's solicitor to produce the lease and act on behalf of the Council. The cost had verbally been agreed to be met by the Tennis and Croquet Clubs but written confirmation would be required prior to the solicitor being instructed.

Cllr D. Roberts proposed that the recommendations to –

- grant a lease of 21 years to the Tennis Club
- grant a lease of 21 years to the Croquet Club
- to inform Fields in Trust of the Heads of Terms of the lease
- agree the land was for single use only
- agree that any contractors were approved by the Council
- agree that a copy of the Clubs constitutions were received by the Council

were accepted and this was seconded by Cllr A. Kaye.

Vote –
For – 9

AGREED

- The Council to accept the recommendations

60/15 Business Plan

- To review the committee's Business Plan and make a recommendation to Full Council

Cllr S. Jackman proposed that the committee recommends to Full Council to adopt the Finance committee's Business Plan and this was seconded by Cllr. A. Kaye.

Vote –
For – 9

AGREED

- To recommend to Full Council to adopt the Finance committee's Business Plan

61/15 Local Council Tax Support Grant

- To note the implications of the reduction in the grant for 2016/17 and future years

The Clerk reported that the Council had received confirmation from EFDC that the LCTS grant for 2016/17 would be reduced by 16.6%. The settlement also contained provisional reductions for future years and these were 16.5% for 2017/18, 10.6% for 2018/19 and 3.2% for 2019/20.

Councillors noted this information.

62/14 The committee RESOLVED to exclude the press and public for this meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 as the following items contain confidential information relating to staffing matters.

64/14 The Council RESOLVED to permit the press and public to return to the meeting under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

65/15 The Council RESOLVED to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to extend beyond 10 pm

66/15 Budget 2016/17

- To consider the draft budget for 2016/17 and make recommendation to Full Council
- To consider the precept figure for 2016/17 and make recommendation to Full Council

Councillors considered the draft budget for 2016/17 and made some alterations to the draft.

Cllr J. Reynolds proposed that –

- the Finance committee recommend to Full Council that there be no increase in the precept for the financial year 2016/17
- that Jubilee Park was restructured as a stand-alone entity
- that all aspects of Council expenses were reviewed

Cllr P. Bolden seconded the proposal.

The Clerk reminded Councillors that the Jubilee Park working group was still considering options and that no decision should be taken until this had been completed.

Vote –
For – 3
Against – 4
Abstentions – 2

Cllr A. Kaye proposed that the Finance committee recommend to Full Council the draft budget with the changes discussed. This was seconded by Cllr D. Roberts

Vote –
For 7
Against – 2

AGREED

- the Finance committee recommend to Full Council the draft budget with the changes discussed.

The meeting closed at 10.30 pm

OPEN FORUM

No items were raised.

Signed

Chair

Date

PINK

63/15 Recommendation from the Staffing Sub Committee

- To consider the recommendation

Cllr J. Reynolds raised concerns over how long the term 'initially' had been intended for and the Jubilee Park Committee budget not being able to support the manager's salary and on costs and proposed that his salary be paid from the Jubilee Park account. It was confirmed that the Council intended his salary to be taken from reserves for the first year. The Clerk pointed out that there were not always sufficient funds in the Jubilee Park account to cover the salary. As the manager had full employment rights his salary would need to be paid on a monthly basis in line with all full time staff.

Cllr J. Reynolds proposed that the manager's salary be paid from the Jubilee Park account and if there was a problem then he should be paid from another source. This was seconded by Cllr P. Bolden.

The Clerk asked for clarification to be minuted on what the Committee would agree would be the alternative source. Cllr J. Reynolds suggested the Council's reserves. The Clerk reported that the salary was currently paid from reserves.

Councillors discussed whether it made any difference as to where the salary was paid from as it was all Town Council funds.

Vote –

For – 2

Against – 5

Abstentions – 2