



Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council Finance and Staffing Committee held at 7.30pm on Monday 04/11/19 at the Community Centre, 87 Kensington Drive, Great Holm MK8 9AY.

**Councillors present:** Councillors Howe, Bailey, Todd (late) Altieri-Douglas (Chair, late) and Nolan (late).

**Staff present:** Bev Field (Parish Clerk)

**Members of the public present:** 1

The Parish Clerk advised Councillors Howe and Bailey at 7.32pm that with only 2 members present the meeting was inquorate and should close. Following confirmation that other Councillors were due to arrive late, it was agreed to delay the start of the meeting so that it could go ahead.

The meeting started at 7.58pm

**FSC25/19 Apologies:** Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors Feeney and Nayee. Councillor Sargent apologised for being unable to attend as a non-committee member.

**FSC26/19 Minutes of previous meetings:** The minutes of the meeting held on 09/09/19 were approved and signed as an accurate record with the following addition to FSC20/19: to add the words "said he" to line one, and "Councillors noted that" to the start of paragraph 2.

**FSC27/19 Matters arising:** None

**FSC28/19 Declarations of interest:** None

**FSC29/19 Current Expenditure:** A report on current expenditure for 2019/20 was reviewed. Councillor Bailey said he forecasts by the end of the budget year the cash would stand at around £74,000. Monitoring needs to improve and there was a dearth of discussion on the issue previously, so this meeting is a positive step.

Councillor Todd said that expenditure has been regularly discussed in the past. The reserves have halved over the last 12 months, which was planned as they were too high and are now at an acceptable level for an annual turnover of £120,000. There has been additional landscaping work agreed during the year, although some items were not pursued.

Councillors were concerned that the two properties had more spent on them than anticipated. Expenditure has increased because the Clerk was efficient in getting things done. Reserves should be built up again and the Council wants to be in the position to benefit from match funding if projects arise.

The Clerk confirmed there is winter work outstanding that will use the earmarked reserve for landscaping.

Councillor Nolan left the meeting at 8.00pm and returned at 8.03pm

Councillor Altieri-Douglas thanked Councillor Bailey for putting in the hard work on the income and expenditure and welcomed others to contribute.

**FSC30/19 Proposed items for expenditure in 2020/21:** requested items for inclusion in the budget plan for 2020/21 were considered as follows:

**Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG):**

Item	Estimate £
Insurance	252.00
MKPA session for the "Picnic on the Green" event	330.00
Leaflet printing	100.00
Children's litter kits (Litter picks, hi-viz vests, gloves) 16 x £9.00	144.00
Bulbs/plants & sprays	400.00
Stationery/paper, inks, laminating sheets	30.00
Shed/storage for NAG items (one-off item)	120.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,376.00</b>

**Agreed:** a) to include these requests and top-up to £1,500.00 in recognition of the positive contribution NAG makes to the Parish.

**MK50 Sculpture in Lodge Lake:** request by Councillor Sargent to raise the height of the sculpture by designing, manufacturing and installing a mounting frame to the existing base to gain a further 2 metres in height at an estimated cost of £3,500.

The Parish Clerk is in contact with the artist for a specific, costed proposal and read out a statement from the artist. She has reviewed the sculpture and site with a colleague and recommends that raising it will not be effective; it should be re-sited which will increase the costs.

**Agreed:** b) Not to include this in the budget.

**Interpretation board:** request by Councillor Todd. To investigate an interpretation board for the conservation area in Loughton. The Clerk noted that the board on the Green, Loughton was on the Business Plan but is being replaced by the Parks Trust, so a budget is not required for that board.

**Agreed:** c) to discuss this further at the next meeting.

**Landscaping:** residents would choose to spend more on landscaping than the dog bins. Councillor Todd said that historically it has been hard to spend money on the landscaping because of the difficulties experienced in getting permission. Using Serco has helped with permissions and they give advice on the annual landscape review. It is possible to engage a private contractor, but the Parish Council decided not to opt-out from the Milton Keynes Council landscaping contract.

**Agreed:** d) to consider at least £10,000 and possibly increasing this in the December meeting. The Parish Clerk will request a quote for weedkilling the Parish 3 times a year from Serco to inform this item.

**Events:** All Saints Church and friends run an annual event of a fete alternating with a scarecrow trail. The NAG has a budget agreed for the Picnic on the Green event, and the Scouts are planning a fete to mark 75 years since VE day on 08/05/19. These organisations are providing excellent events for the Parish and should be supported, although what happens to the profits should be followed up.

**Agreed:** e) to finalise sums for these events at the December meeting, separate to the Parish Council grant scheme.

**Underpass artwork:** request by Councillor Altieri-Douglas to rejuvenate the underpasses using a professional graffiti artist to work with local schools at a cost of £70.00-£80.00 per hour. This could improve safety for people using underpasses.

**Agreed:** f) Councillor Altieri-Douglas to investigate further details and costs for the next meeting.

**CCTV Cameras at Lodge Lake:** request by Councillor Altieri-Douglas to improve safety around the lake for joggers, young people and pedestrians. The Parks Trust should be asked if they would agree to this, as it may affect the nocturnal wildlife and environmental balance.

**Agreed:** g) Councillor Altieri-Douglas to investigate further details and costs for the next meeting.

h) **Other items for consideration:** were explored using a budget proposal from Councillor Todd which built in some inflation, including:

- 1) A maintenance budget for the Pavilion, car park and sports ground of approx. £5,000
- 2) The proposed cricket square renovation.
- 3) Allotments are subsidised, and should be reconsidered so they break even.
- 4) Great Holm Pre School has financial difficulty and may need the rent reviewing.

- 5) The sports changing rooms are disgusting and could be renovated. However, Councillor Howe gave feedback that they are typical of changing rooms across the city and would not be used while they are shared showers. The Clerk said that the football teams had not raised any concerns about the rooms. They are single-gender facilities.
- 6) Concern about the Grumpy Cook as a new business and the impact on the lease and income if he does not succeed.
- 7) Wi-Fi is still to be discussed with the Pre-School and is not a priority.
- 8) Dog bin emptying is expensive. The Clerk said there is a winter and summer programme for collections. Since the summer increase was commissioned the complaints of over-full bins have mostly stopped.
- 9) Play activities are well received, accessible to all and are free to users.
- 10) Millennium meadow: improvements have been haphazard, but the meadow was weeded and re-sown this year and looked lovely in the summer. Continue to invest in improving this agreed at approx. £2,000
- 11) Play spaces: EMR was unused this year because a play equipment project is coming forward from MK Council.

Councillor Altieri-Douglas thanked Councillor Todd for the fabulous spreadsheet.

**i) Agreed:** The Clerk will ask the football team managers to comment on the condition of the changing rooms for the next meeting.

Differing approaches to the discussion were considered (but not agreed), including whether to decide on the key items for the Business Plan first, and that a substantial precept increase will not be welcomed but the draft spreadsheet and the requests would result in a £13,000 deficit budget. Improving the monitoring and management of expenditure in more granular detail is needed for greater financial discipline.

The alternative views were to continue to work on the detail as has been done in previous years and build a budget up from there, and that it is vital that the reserves should be viewed as building in flexibility to respond to issues and opportunities as they arise for the Parish because the budget is a forecast effective until March 2021.

**Neighbourhood Plan project manager:** this was not put forward as a budget request because the council resolved on 16/09/19 not to fund a project manager due to the high cost (decision FC83/19). Councillor Todd considered this surprising given previous resolutions to pursue investigating developing a Neighbourhood Plan and that it lets residents down. Councillor Todd proposed using standing order 7(a) to propose a motion to recommend that full Council reviews that decision. Councillor Howe stated that the motion should be on the published agenda and was not proper.

The Parish Clerk advised that the preferred action is to write a letter requesting a special motion signed by three Councillors.

The motion was allowed by the Chair (see standing order 26d)

Proposed by Councillor Todd: that the Finance committee recommends that decision FC83/19 is reviewed at the next meeting of full Council. Seconded by Councillor Nolan. Councillor Howe requested a recorded vote.

In favour: 3 Councillors Todd, Nolan and Altieri-Douglas

Abstained: 2 Councillors Howe and Bailey on the grounds the vote is improper and should not take place.

**j) Resolved:** to recommend that council resolution FC83/19 is reviewed at the next meeting of full Council.

**FSC31/19 Draft Business Plan and Budget for 2020/21:** The Business Plan and proposals for inclusion in the budget for 2020/21 will be subject to further consideration at the next Finance and Staffing Committee meeting on 09/12/19, in order to make a recommendation to the full Council on 16/12/19

**Date and time of Next Meeting:** 7.30pm on Monday 09/12/19 at the Community Centre, 87 Kensington Drive, Great Holm MK8 9AY.

Signed:

Date: