



Minutes of the meeting of Loughton & Great Holm Parish Council Finance and Staffing Committee held at 7.30pm on Monday 10th June 2019 at the Community Centre, 87 Kensington Drive, Great Holm MK8 9AY.

Present: Councillors Bailey (Chair), Nolan, Howe, Todd and Nayee.

Absent: (no apology): Councillor Feeney

Staff present: Bev Field (Parish Clerk/RFO)

Public present: None

FSC01/19 Election of a Chair for 2019-20:

Councillor Altieri-Douglas was nominated by Councillor Todd and seconded by Councillor Nayee.

Councillor Bailey was nominated by Councillor Howe, no seconder.

Councillor Todd confirmed in her absence that Councillor Altieri-Douglas was willing to accept the nomination.

Resolved: Councillor Altieri-Douglas was elected as Chair of the Finance and Staffing Committee for 2019/20, subject to confirmation of her acceptance.

The Clerk explained that the Chair should not be a signatory on the bank account but can have online viewing. According to Financial Regulations 2.2, the Chair should check and sign the bank statements and reconciliations once a quarter and the accounts will be brought to the Committee each quarter for this purpose from now on.

FSC02/19 Apologies: apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Altieri-Douglas.

FSC03/19 Minutes of previous meetings: The minutes of the meeting held on 11/03/19 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

There are two set of minutes produced; the full set is for internal circulation for members only, and a second set are produced for publication that do not include the staffing issues for the confidentiality of the staff.

FSC04/19 Matters arising: None

FSC05/19 Declarations of interest: None

Finance

FSC06/19 Finance report: the finance report with income and expenditure to the end of May 19 compared to the annual budget was noted (required by Financial Regulation 4.9).

FSC07/19 Styles of reporting: Three styles of income and expenditure reporting are available using the Rialtas accounting software, which were presented using the May income and expenditure figures; reports can be organised by either cost centre, nominal code or budget headings.

The RFO advised the meeting that she has worked on presenting the annual budget and monthly reports for the CiLCA qualification, been on an RFO training day and discussed the reporting with RBS (accounting software support), the SLCC trainer and the auditor.

The advice received is that the RFO has a responsibility to provide the monthly finance report, not the Chair (as was previously done). The Financial Regulations (4.9) state that the RFO must "provide a receipts and payment statement with actual spending compared to the budget". The Rialtas software has a report that is designed specifically to help small Parish Councils with a combined Parish Clerk/RFO to safely meet this requirement. If further analysis and other financial work is desirable, that Parish Councils could consider expanding the team with a specialist RFO or using the expertise of members.

The committee were asked to give time to adjust to the different report style.

Some members considered the report is not fit for purpose, can't be understood, needs a date, is too minimal, and preferred Councillor Boland's spreadsheet which is simple, easy to write and will take little/no time and would like further analysis of the information. Councillor Todd submitted his own version of a management account but did not wish to continue writing this each month and commented that if a part-time specialist RFO was considered, partial redundancy would be considered for the Parish Clerk.

The Clerk objected that she has not refused work but acted on advice which had been given to the committee. However, with increased workload should come an increased team; she has worked unpaid overtime most weeks since August 2018 due to a high workload, and threatening redundancy if extra work was not undertaken was unfair. Councillor Howe offered his own apology for earlier comments, acknowledged the high workload and said that Council should consider doing what it can to reduce mundane tasks where possible and he would help the Chair with analysing the figures.

The Chair (Councillor Bailey) stated that the report meets the statutory requirements and the accounts work is in good order. With the extra information in the monthly bank reconciliations, further work can be done on analysing and forecasting by the committee members.

Resolved:

- a) That the account code report is preferred with the period added.
- b) To consider the long-term plan for Ear Marked Reserves at the next meeting.
- c) That the RFO will provide information and work with the Chair and committee members for further analysis of the accounts.

FSC08/19 External audit: the RFO reported that the end of year work has been completed with support from RBS. The internal audit report was done by Auditing Solutions, and the report was received by Council in May. The annual governance statement and the statement of accounts have been produced and approved by Council. These and the explanation of variances, and reconciliations and been submitted to PKF Littlejohn who are the external auditors. The notice for the exercise of the public right to inspect the accounts and question the auditor has been published, and the inspection period is 03/06/19 to 12/07/19, which is the earliest date legally possible.

The "Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England (2018)" practitioner guide was circulated. The RFO is currently at "assertion 4" on page 43 for 2018/19.

Noted

FSC09/19 Banking arrangements: The RFO confirmed that the bank mandate was signed and sent to Lloyds to remove/add new signatories. In May the first payments were made electronically after many months of difficulties with Lloyds bank. Payments must be authorised at full Council meetings and the schedule signed by 2 Councillors. The payments can then be made electronically with 2 authorisers. In addition, damage deposits from hall hires can be reimbursed on an ad hoc basis (Financial Regulation 6.23).

Payroll is facilitated through an external provider, Connolly Accountants in Wolverton, to provide some independence and control. They provide payslips for the RFO to action and manage a direct debit to HMRC for national insurance and tax.

The need for 4 bank accounts was considered. This had been set up as a requirement during the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) for the sports ground and Pavilion. However, the RFO has contacted the team in MK Council and they have confirmed that a separate accounting cashbook is all that is required. Since the various accounts had insufficient funds to cover expenditure at times, payments have come from the main account for all the premises, so there is little value to the duplicate recording that the bank accounts were set up to provide.

The £85,000 guarantee that banks offer is for personal customers not business.

The options of moving bank, closing or changing accounts and investment options were considered.

Resolved: In the short-term to consolidate the 4 bank accounts into one and leave 3 accounts dormant. To consider later in the year investment options for long term Ear Marked Reserves, as part of the business planning process.

FSC10/19 Budget Planning: The Financial Regulations were circulated and sections 3 and 4 highlighted for the budget cycle. The business plan has previously been considered at the same meeting as the budget proposals, to set out the Council's objectives and a recommendation is then made to the full Council. The resulting precept claim is submitted to Milton Keynes Council by the third week of January. The business plan could be considered in the September meeting to prepare for the budget recommendations in December.

Resolved: for the Chair of the Finance Committee and other committee members to work with information provided by the RFO to provide insights for the business plan to be explored at the next meeting.

Staffing

FSC11/18 Exclusion of the public - in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, the public were temporarily excluded, and instructed to withdraw (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960).

FSC12/19 Staff updates

FSC13/19 Other staffing issues

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

The meeting closed at 9.07pm

Signed:



Date:

09/09/19