

Worth Parish Council

Minutes of the General Purposes & Finance Committee Meeting held on January 10th 2022 commencing at 7.30pm

Present: Cllr Phillips (Chairman)
Cllr Casella
Cllr Dorey
Cllr Hitchcock
Mrs J. Nagy Clerk
Mrs E Smith (RFO)

Cllr Coote
Cllr Mayor
Cllr Webb

2 members of the public

69 Public Question Time

The Chairman welcomed all the meeting. No member of the public present did not wish to speak.

70 Apologies

Apologies were noted and accepted from Cllrs Cruickshank, Gibson, Pointer and Scott.

71 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary or other interests.

72 Minutes

It was AGREED by all present that the Minutes of the General Purposes & Finance Committee meeting held on 15th November 2021 were a true and correct record.

73 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements.

74 Correspondence List

The Correspondence List was NOTED.

75 Accounts and Financial Matters

The Chairman referred to details of income and expenditure, bank balances and reserves, as circulated.

Total receipts for November 2021 of £8,857.52 excl. VAT
Total payments for November 2021 of £15,866.82 excl. VAT
Bank Balances as at 30th November 2021 of £476,182.65 of which
Earmarked reserves of £160,127.32.

Total receipts for December 2021 of £911.04 excl. VAT
Total payments for December 2021 of £43,462.33 excl. VAT
Bank Balances as at 31st December 2021 of £460,928.10 of which
Earmarked reserves of £141,552.36.

The current financial situation of the Council was NOTED

Replacement trees at Crawley Down Scout Hut

The Council had to fell trees on its land at the Scout Hut, and it was agreed that two or three replacement trees would be planted

There has been a delay as trees were out of stock for some months. Even now, larger specimens are not available. Based on a list supplied by Cllr Gibson, and availability of stock, the Clerk has come up with three options

Tree	Size	Price	Support package
Cob nut	90-120cm in height*	£33.99	£4.25
Mountain Ash - Sorbus aucuparia	175-200cm in height*	£49.58	£5.75
Hawthorn - Crataegus laev.	12-14cm diameter trunk	£318.50	£18.00

*No larger specimens available

A "support package" includes stake, rabbit guard and tree tie, with a watering pipe for the larger Hawthorn.

An additional planting package of compost and root grow compound for all planting would be £18.75. There are no additional delivery costs. All prices ex VAT

It was AGREED that one cob nut and one mountain ash would be purchased at a total cost of £93.57 + VAT

76 Draft Budget

The Budget Working Party met on 8th January, and the draft budget was agreed. It is included in the pack.

The proposed precept is £300,000, which is a 2.67% increase on a Band D property, equating to an increase of 3 pence per week.

The Chairman advised that the tax base had increased, with around 100 additional dwellings.

There were no queries or changes; it was AGREED by all present that a recommendation be made to Full Council that a precept be requested of £300,000.

77 Internal Audit

The Internal Audit took place on 16th December with the Clerk, RFO and Cllr Scott in attendance.

The report has been circulated.

Recommendations to be actioned are:

- a) To consider amending Financial Regulations to increase the threshold at which 3 quotes are required, currently £3000 to make awarding of contracts less onerous (page 5 of the report)
- b) To review the fidelity guarantee level of £500,000. (Page 5) Although the Internal Auditor said that this was sufficient, it is intended to cover the total of bank balances held at any one time. These are currently at £476,182 so near to that level. The ROF has ascertained that to increase to £1 million, (there is no intervening level) would cost £10 to implement straight away, or £30 to implement at the next renewal in May 2022.
- c) To review the contract of one employee, this now not being standard (page 8) The Clerk has sought advice from Work Nest HR Consultants as to how best to carry this out

It was AGREED by all present that Financial Regulations would be reviewed to increase the threshold for seeking three quotes from £3000 to £5000, and that the fidelity guarantee be increased from £500,000 to £1 million.

The action of the Clerk in relation to contracts was NOTED.

Receipt of the Internal Auditor's report was formally NOTED.

The Chairman thanked the RFO for all her hard work in ensuring that the Council was compliant with financial guidance.

78 Council Premises and Land

Licence to occupy Copthorne Green

Ian Davison from Surrey Hills Solicitors has drawn up a draft licence which has been agreed by the Clerk and the previous Licensors, the incumbent and church wardens of St Nicholas Church,

Worth. This draft is based on the previous licence, but with additional clauses to reflect current legal references.

Mr Davison will be circulated the final document for signature, in time for the expiry date of the current licence, this being 31st March 2022.

Councillors NOTED this information

79 Matters for Consideration submitted by the Infrastructure and Environment Working Parties

Electricity supply to Crawley Down Green

It was agreed at the last meeting on 15th November to defer this matter, which was suggested for both village greens.

Cllr Scott, not present at the meeting, has asked for the matter to be re-visited.

Under Standing Orders, a resolution cannot be reversed within 6 months unless written notice is given by at least 6 councillors, or a Committee or Sub Committee recommends a different resolution to Full Council.

The second of these options would apply.

It was proposed by Cllr Dorey, seconded by Cllr Coote and AGREED by all present that a recommendation be made to Full Council to rescind the decision to defer consideration of electricity supply to both village greens, and to progress this.

Cllr Hitchcock advised that there is possibility of installing electric vehicle charging points as part of the Bowers Place parking proposals. This would assist in creating the necessary cabling.

The Clerk asked if the Committee would like to consider provision of electric vehicle charging points in Council car parks. It was agreed that this would be on future agenda for discussion.

80 Consideration of items for discussion by the Environment & Infrastructure Working Parties

There were no matters to put forward to the Working Parties.

81 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be on 7th February 2022, at a venue to be confirmed

Meeting closed at 7.48 pm.

Chairman: _____

Date: _____