

Balderton Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held virtually on Wednesday October 28th 2020 at 6.30pm

PRESENT Councillors Ms White (Chairman), Allen (Vice Chairman), Mrs Brooks, Mrs Hurst, Mrs Lee, Lynch, Mallard, Mrs Newstead, Newstead, Roberts M.B.E. and Rouse with the Clerk.

APOLOGIES were received from Cllr Mayall B.E.M

7291 **Payments**

All payments were approved and authorised; a list of these is published with the minutes.

7292 **Declarations of Interest**

Cllrs Mrs Brooks, Mrs Hurst and Ms White, as serving members of Newark & Sherwood District Council declared a personal interest to any issue relating to the District Council.

7293 **Public Participation**

There were no members of public present.

7294 **Clerk/Chairman's Update**

A printed update of ongoing matters was circulated and noted. The update is published with the minutes. The following issues were discussed from the update:

1. **Re Minute 7219.3 Closed Churchyard** Cllr Ms White had raised the possibility of the Parish Council handing over responsibility for the closed churchyard to the District Council, but given the pandemic situation this issue is not one of their priorities. Members agreed that it will have to be deferred until District Council officers have more capacity to consider the issue fully.
2. **Re Unitary Authority** Cllr Roberts had attended a virtual meeting for Parish Councils about the possible implications of Nottinghamshire County Council's proposal to create a unitary authority, replacing the eight councils in the current two-tier system with just one level of local government to save money. The general consensus of opinion at the meeting was that this is not a welcome proposal. The Government has decided that Nottinghamshire is not to be reviewed for unitary status at this time so the issue is less pressing than originally considered

7295 **Annual Review of Internal Audit Effectiveness**

Members undertook a review of the effectiveness of the Council's Internal Audit procedures. The committee approved, subject to one item being removed in the payroll section, the list of checks and tests for the Internal Auditor to use as a basis for the process as laid out in Section 5.102 of the 'Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England'. The Council's Internal Auditor Mr Ken Goddard, who was appointed in 2018 continues to meet the necessary criteria, being independent of this Council and highly competent. The practice of an interim internal audit being carried out approximately six months into the financial year was considered beneficial and will continue.

7296 **Budget for 2021/22**

Members reviewed and approved the committee 'running cost' estimates for the next financial year, copies having been previously circulated. These budget costs will form part of the process to determine the Precept requirement for 2021/22, along with the budget estimates from the Amenities Committee. Members gave further consideration to building in a sum of money to commence a phased replacement of the Village Centre lights to L.E.D., but on balance they did not consider that the cost could be justified owing to the limited use of the Village Centre in the current climate.

Concern was expressed regarding the Council's continued use of reserves, a trend that has taken place for several years now. The total balance was reduced by a further £17,629 by the end of March 2020. There are several reasons for this including reduced hiring out of the Village Centre and increased staffing costs. Some measures have been implemented to try and address this issue; cricket and bowling fees are being increased over a period of three years to bring them in line to meet 50% of the provision cost (football fees currently cover this rate). County Council grass cutting costs have been reduced as the contractor is now paid the exact remuneration received by the Council for the work. Much of the reduced income this year is as a direct result of the pandemic which is beyond the Council's control; some Government funding may be available through the District Council and this possibility will be explored. Members considered that the Council's staffing structure cannot be reduced at this time so the only real alternative is to continue being prudent with all expenditure and increase the Precept. The situation will be given further discussion at the next Committee meeting and a long-term plan about the Council's financial future should be considered.

7297 **Highways Faults**

Members were invited to raise any issues or faults to pass onto relevant authorities:

1. There are a number of potholes on Meadow Road near to the junction with Hawton Lane.
2. The poor state in general of Staple Lane from the end of the new section to Jericho Road; there is subsidence in places and the road edges have eroded, causing a deep drop down to the soft verges.

7298 **Correspondence/Information**

The following items of correspondence and/or information have been received and were noted:

- a) A series of overnight roadworks from November 9th 2020 to late February 2021 on the A1 between Newark and Wansford from 8pm to 6am Monday to Fridays. Diversion routes and notices will be displayed for each section.
- b) Notice that Bullpit Road level crossing will be closed from Saturday 21st to Monday 23rd November, and Saturday November 28th to Monday November 30th for track renewal works.
- c) Barnby Road will have temporary two-way traffic signals from Monday 2nd to Wednesday November 4th 2020.
- d) Letters have been sent out to residents from Royal Mail consulting about the process of removing the word 'New' from Balderton addresses. If fewer than 20% of those people consulted object to the proposal, the change will take place.
- e) A digital version of a map has been received from the District Council showing the revised parish and ward boundaries from the May 2019 local elections. Copies will be circulated to all members.
- f) St. Giles Church is encouraging residents to decorate a stone or a rock to commemorate a loved one and place it within an installation in the Churchyard for the month of November.
- g) The County Council has notified that the remuneration paid to the Council to cut their grassed areas in the village was incorrect last year by £517.21 and will actually reduce this year by that amount. This news needs to be relayed to the contractor who cuts it; he may decide not to continue to do the work at the reduced rate
- h) County Cllr Wallace had advised that the reported standing water problems on Hawton Lane have been inspected and no issues had been found as the water does eventually drain away.

7299 **Future Agenda Items**

No agenda items were raised.

The meeting was closed at approximately 7:15pm.