



SPEEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ONLINE ON THURSDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2022 STARTING at 7PM

Present	Parish Councillors	Cllr Amirtharaj (Chair), Cllr Dudman (Vice Chair), Cllr Newell-Hart, Cllr Gourley. Cllr Clifford
	WBDC Councillor/Employee	None Expected
	Members of the Public	None
	Clerk & RFO	Jean Lindsell

Meeting started at 7.03pm

Resolution	Item	Action
Resolved	<p>1. Apologies: None</p> <p>2. Declaration of Interests – none declared</p> <p>3. Open Session – no Members of the Public present</p> <p>4. Minutes – to approve the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 08-12-21 (draft)</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Dudman All In Favour</p>	
Resolved	<p>5. Policies and Procedures</p> <p>5.1 Proposal: To review the following policies and procedures and recommend to Full Council for approval</p> <p>Standing Orders</p> <p>The Clerk advised the only changes made related to making the document gender neutral. The Clerk added that no changes had been made regarding the references to EU regulations within standing orders as there was currently no guidance regarding this.</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Newell-Hart All In Favour</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart asked if these policies and procedures were the key governance documents.</p> <p>The Clerk advised whilst these were keys documents requiring annual review there were others still requiring updates and review.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart asked if the Clerk could present a plan showing which documents required review together with timescales.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman suggested the plan could be to review 4 documents every other month over the next year.</p> <p>The Clerk advised there were very few other documents requiring review initially by the Finance Committee all others would have to go to Full Council.</p> <p>Financial Regulations</p> <p>Cllr Dudman felt the way in which Financial Regulations were written made them</p>	

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<p>Resolved</p>	<p>very difficult to fully understand and an annex defining some of the terminology in lay man's terms would be helpful.</p> <p>The Clerk advised SPC had adopted the NALC model template which ensured the Council were following the legal and statutory regulations and requirements.</p> <p>Clerk to investigate with NALC/BALC regarding an annex explaining some of the complex terminology.</p> <p>Cllr Clifford advised the risks to try to deviate from the model were huge but agreed an annex would be beneficial.</p> <p>The Clerk advised the only changes made to the document were to make the document gender neutral.</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Newell-Hart All In Favour</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>Resolved</p>	<p>Code of Conduct</p> <p>The Clerk advised the only changes made were cosmetic being SPC logo and title from Code of Conduct for Members of Speen Parish Council to Speen Parish Council Councillors Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The Clerk further advised the LGA had published a new model Councillors Code of Conduct which SPC should look at adopting and would present a revised document in due course once the model had been formally approved.</p> <p>The Clerk acknowledged Cllr Dudman's email comments regarding paragraph 4.2 being very difficult to read but suggested holding off on changing it as it was likely the whole document would be revised based on the new model.</p>	
<p>Resolved</p>	<p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Gourley All In Favour</p> <p>Freedom of Information Policy and Procedure</p> <p>The Clerk advised significant changes had been made to reflect recommended updates and guidance from the ICO and to ensure the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act were correctly met together with making sure the procedure for a member of the public to make an FOI request was easy to follow.</p> <p>The Clerk further advised it was a requirement that the Council's Publication Scheme was a separate document and not part of the policy and procedure as it was currently.</p>	
<p>Resolved</p>	<p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Dudman All In Favour</p> <p>Publication Scheme</p> <p>The Clerk advised the document was based on the ICO model template which shows what information the Council holds, how this can be obtained and the fee structure should an FOI request incur costs.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart queried the fee structure as FOI requests could involve a significant amount of the Clerk's time.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised fees could not be charged unless they exceeded the £450 threshold as set by the ICO and it was SPC's responsibility to meet all costs up to that amount.</p> <p>The Clerk advised any FOI request was assessed at the outset regarding any cost implications and if it was thought fees might be applied the requestor would be advised of this at the start of the process. The Clerk further advised there was a wealth of guidance from the ICO on how to deal with repeated requests for the</p>	



<p>Resolved</p>	<p>same information from the same requestor that could incur excessive costs.</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Clifford All In Favour</p> <p>Complaints Procedure</p> <p>Cllr Clifford felt the new document was an improvement as the procedure was now very easy to follow.</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Dudman All In Favour</p> <p>5.2 Online Banking and Internal Controls</p> <p>The Clerk advised currently this document was superseded by the temporary Scheme of Delegation however it required revision in preparation for when the Scheme of Delegation was rescinded.</p> <p>The Clerk advised prior to the Scheme of Delegation payments were presented to Council on a monthly basis for approval however since the Scheme had been in place invoice payments were made in accordance with the financial limits and a schedule presented to Council to retrospectively note. The Clerk added if it was felt that all payments should be pre-approved by Full Council as meetings were now only held every other month it would be necessary to meet with two Councillors who were bank signatories in the intervening months or Full Council meetings would need to revert to being held monthly.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman suggested a mix of the Scheme of Delegation plus Council approvals would be the way forward with appropriate limits set. He felt it unnecessary to pre approve payments that had already been approved in the budget or allocated to projects from reserves but added any payments outside of those already approved should be approved by Full Council prior to any works going ahead and/or any payment being made.</p> <p>Clerks to draft revised document and amendments to Financial Regulations to be presented at next Finance Committee meeting.</p> <p>6. Risk Assessments – to agree review and update to Risk Assessments as necessary to present to Full Council at Annual Council Meeting in May</p> <p>Cllr Dudman confirmed he would carry out the review and update as necessary.</p> <p>7. S137 Grant Application</p> <p>Proposal: To consider S137 Grant Application and recommend to Full Council for approval</p> <p>The Clerk advised the application was from Berkshire Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre for £255 for the purchase of oxygen masks and there were 4 parishioners who attended the centre.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart acknowledged the Centre provided benefit to parishioners but cautioned if SPC were to receive applications from national charities where there was no benefit to parishioners.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised SPC had previously approved applications from the centre but wondered why no other charities were applying for a grant.</p> <p>The Clerk advised previous grants had been made to Cherubs Playgroup and Stockfest and added the rules governing S137 grants stated that benefit to parishioners must be demonstrated.</p> <p>Cllr Gourley advised he would welcome more applications and felt SPC could do more to promote this through social media and community groups and added he</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Cllr Dudman</p>
<p>Resolved</p>	<p></p>	<p></p>



fully supported this application.

Cllr Dudman agreed that SPC should actively be looking to award grants from the monies already allocated to S137 and if there was a list of registered local charities SPC could advise them that if they could demonstrate benefit to parishioners the Council would consider applications from them.

The Clerk advised S137 information could be published on the website and also advised there was an S137 expenditure limit which was in the region of £8 per elector.

Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj
Secunder: Cllr Clifford
All In Favour

8. WBC Libraries – to consider request for contribution to WBC Libraries and agree proposal to Full Council

Cllr Clifford advised that for some years Town and Parish Councils had been invited to contribute to the libraries and to date SPC had declined. At the meeting in November Felicity Harrison the Libraries Manager had given the Committee an insight into the modern library being much more than just borrowing books. For example running clothing clubs for schools, stepping in when the health visitor service was suspended to get books to babies, mobile library services and book clubs.

Cllr Clifford acknowledged Councillors concerns that Town and Parish Councils were being asked to step in due to WBC not having the funds but Felicity Harrison had confirmed WBC were in fact offering above the statutory library provision. The additional funding being requested was to support the additional services being offered by the libraries to parishioners and any contribution SPC might wish to make could be specifically ring fenced to services such as the mobile library. The suggested level of contribution was £1 per head which would equate to £2500 or if the Council chose to support the mobile service that would be about £1250.

Cllr Clifford felt this was a way for the Council to support vulnerable people coming out of the pandemic.

Cllr Newell-Hart advised based on the statistics received from WBC the parish was the eighth highest user of the library services and it should be recognised that not all young people had the advantage of access to books and felt SPC should contribute.

Cllr Amirtharaj advised the meeting with Felicity Harrison had provided clarity and he now supported making a contribution however questioned the suggested level of contribution of £1 per head and felt that half that amount would be more appropriate to SPC.

Cllr Gourley felt the focus should be on young people and would prefer to see any contribution going to a non-statutory funded service rather than to a statutory funded service.

Cllr Dudman felt that although discussions were focussed on young people the statistics did not provide information based on age but it was known the mobile service benefitted older people as it went to such places as Marshalls Court.

Cllr Dudman had looked at who were the parishioners who benefitted the most from the library service which appeared to be the mobile service but was concerned the Council would need to make that commitment each year.

Cllr Clifford advised that it was not required for a parish council to make that commitment each year.

Cllr Gourley was uncomfortable about ring fencing any contribution for a service that should be available to all.

Cllr Clifford suggested a contribution could be made in recognition of what the



<p>Resolved</p>	<p>libraries had done during the pandemic but state this was a trial to be reviewed each year.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart suggested ring fencing a contribution specifically towards the purchase of books for schools which could be named or to a specific section of the library to support young people.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman felt as a member of the Council he had a duty to his parishioners as to how their money was spent for their benefit whereas WBC were responsible for levelling up and there was no evidence as to how many young people in the parish went to the library however it was known the mobile service benefitted parishioners.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman felt as the Committee had differing opinions and was unable to make a definitive recommendation suggested the following proposal be presented to Full Council:</p> <p>“The Finance Committee suggests Full Council considers making a contribution of up to £1293 funded from unallocated reserves ring fenced for the Speen parish mobile library service as a COVID recovery gesture but noting that further discussion will be required if SPC wish to continue to fund that service in the future”</p> <p>All Councillors agreed.</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Dudman Seconder: Cllr Newell-Hart Abstention: 1 In Favour: 4</p>	
<p>Resolved</p>	<p>9. Grass and Hedge Cutting Contract Specification of Works</p> <p>Proposal: To approve revised Specification of Works to be sent out to tender</p> <p>The Clerk advised the Specification of Works had been revised to be more specific regarding exactly when works were to be carried out together with more detail relating to the standards expected by SPC.</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Dudman All In Favour</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart asked if the Clerk was satisfied that the contractors being invited to tender would meet SPC’s criteria.</p> <p>The Clerk advised the invitation to tender was sent out to 9/10 contractors to ensure a minimum of 3 were received but not all contractors were known to SPC.</p> <p>The Clerk added the creation of an SPC Procurement Framework was discussed at the last meeting which Cllr Amirtharaj had agreed to lead.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman advised he would be working with Cllr Amirtharaj to produce the document and this would be a topic at the next focussed discussion group on 21st February.</p> <p>Clerk to request copy of WBC Procurement Framework from Cllr Doherty.</p> <p>10. Improvement Plan Working Party Defibrillators Project – to discuss and agree way forward regarding quotations in order to progress project</p> <p>Cllr Clifford advised the CEO of The Community Heartbeat Trust had attended a WP meeting and subsequently sent an outline proposal recommending the type of defibrillator and cabinet together with suggestions regarding training and awareness the total cost of the package being approximately £2000.</p> <p>Cllr Clifford asked the Clerk for clarification regarding the procurement rules for quotes for this type of project.</p> <p>The Clerk advised due to the potential cost in accordance with Financial Regulations SPC should obtain a minimum of 3 quotes particularly as there were several other organisations that provided for and supported the installation of</p>	<p>Clerk</p>



Resolved	<p>defibrillators but added she would check the clause regarding specialist services.</p> <p>Cllr Gourley felt it was important to request quotes from other providers based on the comprehensive package offered by CHT and if others did not offer the same package quotes should still be obtained to see the alternatives.</p> <p>Cllr Newell-Hart felt this might be a case for a single source provider for a specialist service but this would need to be further investigated regarding Financial Regulations.</p> <p>Cllr Dudman read out the relevant paragraph in Financial Regulations and confirmed a minimum of 3 quotes were required.</p> <p>Clerk to obtain information from other parish councils who have defibrillators and forward to Cllr Clifford.</p> <p>11. Correspondence: To receive & consider correspondence (all relevant correspondence is circulated electronically on receipt and where possible dealt with by the Clerk) None to report</p> <p>12. Matters for consideration and information arising after the preparation of this Agenda which the Chair agrees to take as urgent (all Councillors) None Raised</p> <p>13. Date of Next Meeting – Thursday 9th June 2022</p> <p>14. Exclusion of the Press and Public</p> <p>To Resolve: That in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted and in the public interest the Press and Public be excluded for Agenda Items 15 and 16 under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960</p> <p>Proposer: Cllr Amirtharaj Seconder: Cllr Gourley All In Favour</p> <p>The meeting closed at 9.19pm</p>	Clerk
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Signed:	Name (print):	Date:
	Position:	

Abbreviations Used:
 SPC = Speen Parish Council
 WBC = West Berkshire Council
 CHT = Community Heartbeat Trust

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