



# Appleton Parish Council

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Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee at Appleton Parish Hall on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at 9.30am.

## **Present**

Councillor P Walker, (for items 5,7,8 &9) Councillor S Benger, Councillor J Wheeler and Councillor B Axcell.

Mrs I Derbyshire (Assistant Clerk).

## **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Councillor B Axcell welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councillor P Walker sent his apology that he was going to be late.

## **2. Members Code of Conduct**

None Declared

## **3. Matters Arising**

The Assistant Clerk advised that the laurel hedge had been pruned and a letter of thanks had been received.

Appleton Parish Council had deferred indefinitely becoming a Fair Trade Council.

The Safeguarding Policy will be an agenda item on the full parish council meeting in December.

## **4. Parish Hall**

An up to date spreadsheet was presented to the committee which shows an ongoing loss of £4902 this financial year against income, but this does include the automated door and dropped kerb costs. The hall provides free usage for all parish council meetings and office space.

It was recommended that the Parish Hall figures are now reviewed quarterly.

## **5. Budget and Precept for 2020/21**

Councillor P Walker produced a proposed budget based on figures produced by the assistant clerk and these were discussed in detail. Councillor J Walker had produced a proposed budget on environment spending. In total budget for 2020/21 totals £181450.00 less £19000 proposed income which equates to a net figure of £162450.

Reserves were also discussed, and it was recommended that £5,000 be moved from the Community Scheme/Consultant Costs to Elections.

From the estimated under spend from this year's budget, it was recommended that £11455 is used to reduce the amount of precept suggested by the budget. It was;

**Recommended** that a precept of £150,995 for 2020/21 which is a 3% increase on band D properties be approved.

It was recommended to amend budget headings, as follows:-

Mileage to be removed from Chairman's Allowance and added to staff costs.

The website is still to be a separate heading from media but to incorporate interactive media.

Parish Hall Improvements heading be amended to Parish Hall Improvements and Maintenance.

Youth to be amended to Youth Work.

It was also recommended that the clerk/assistant clerk keep a separate spreadsheet showing the costs of the Ranger Van, although any expenditure relating to this will come from Ranger Costs on the budget.

There was a general discussion on projects/items to be purchased in the next financial year.

- Adding an additional room to the Parish Hall
- Purchasing a foyer TV to advertise groups who use the hall or general Parish Council events.

## **6. Interim Audit Report**

The Interim Audit Report by JDH Business Solutions was produced. The following issues were highlighted.

1. The financial regulations include an authority to spend for the clerk of up to £500 but the same regulations also authorise the clerk to spend up to £1,000 on a debit card.  
Recommended that the financial regulations are updated to read the Clerk and Assistant Clerk can spend up to £1,000. The Ranger is authorised to spend up to £500 on a debit card.
2. The Financial Regulations require that 'a programme of regular checks of standing data with suppliers will be followed'. In order to carry out this check the details of supplier bank account numbers paid should be available. We note that this information is available in the form of a payments status report but these were not on file for all payments made.

We could not identify evidence that a programme of regular checks of standing data had been carried out by councillors for example bank account data with invoices paid.

It was;

**Recommended** that councillors on the Finance & General Purposes Committee to make random checks of say 4 invoices per month and identify that they have been paid according to the bank data. The councillor will sign each one as evidence. It was;

**Recommended** that the Financial Regulations are amended accordingly.

## **8. Terms of Reference for Finance and General Purposes Committee and approval of expenditure by the Finance and General Purposes Committee**

Recommended that the Terms of Reference for the Finance and General Purposes Committee are amended to

“Finance and General Purposes Committee members can approve

Revenue Items (any amount)

Capital Items (up to the value of £5,000).”

All expenditure authorised by the Finance & General Purposes Committee will be advised to the full parish council meeting each month.

## **9. Local Plan Expenditure.**

The Assistant Clerk showed a letter she had been sent by the South Warrington Parish Councils Local Plan Working Group who had met on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

### **Re: South Warrington Parish Councils Local Plan Working Group**

Dear Clerks

At the meeting of the above working group on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, it was agreed that it would be beneficial for a further financial provision to be made by this working group, for any costs relating to the Local Plan moving forward into 2020. This financial provision would be the same as the original proposal (detailed in my letter to you of 29/3/18). The provision would be for up to £25,000 split as per the original proposal, as follows:

	<b>% Split</b>	<b>£25,000 apportioned</b>
Appleton Parish Council	28.37%	£7,092.50
Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council	30.32%	£7,580.00
Hatton Parish Council	0.51%	£127.50
Lymm Parish Council	37.42%	£9,335.00
Stretton Parish Council	1.79%	£447.50
Walton Parish Council	1.58%	£397.50

I have previously emailed details of ‘expenditure to date’, but to summarise and to bring up to date;

All the parishes agreed to an original £25,000 expenditure for the group. However, the group authorised further expenditure which rose to £28,349.50 (which was paid for by G&T Parish Council and then re-charged). This additional expenditure (over and above the £25,000) included John Groves fees due to the delay the Local Plan, John Groves fees for representing the group in associated planning applications and additional costs for the leaflets.

With fighting the Stobart appeal in mid-October (which each parish agreed to expend monies for John Groves and a Barrister) the expenditure further rose to £34,124.50.

£5775 of this additional overspend has not yet been re-charged.

The current proposal (above) to agree to a further 'up to £25,000' includes the overspend plus an additional £15,875 to spend during 2020, if the need arises.

**Please can you put this funding proposal for resolution at your next Parish Council meeting.**

Since then Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council has confirmed that "Appleton need to pay a share of the £5775 that has not been re-charged yet (this is mainly for the Stobart Appeal costs). Apart from this - everything else re-charge wise is up to date. Appleton has already paid a share of £28,349.50. From Mondays meeting, we agreed a further up to £25k' expenditure (which includes the overspend that has already been re-charged and paid). We are doing it this way to keep this fully above board. During 2020, the maximum that Appleton will be re-charged is 28.37% of £15,875 (which is £25k less the agreed and already re-charged overspend)."

Recommended that £1638.37 is paid (28.37% of £5775) when the invoice is received.

Recommended that the Parish Council approve a maximum spend of £15,875 for 2020/2021.

Meeting finished 12.20pm