



# Appleton Parish Council

## Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 at 9.30am

### Present

Councillor P Walker, Councillor S Bengier, Councillor B Axcell and Councillor R Johnson from item 8 onwards.

Mrs J Monks (Clerk) and Mrs I Derbyshire (Assistant Clerk).

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Councillor P Walker welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councillor J Wheeler sent her apologies for the meeting.

### 2. Members Code of Conduct

None declared.

### 3. Matters Arising

The clerk reported that the Christmas lights at Appleton Parish Hall have been pulled down and as such the electrical box has bare wires showing. As such the Christmas lights have not been switched on. The clerk sent an email dated 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to all the Parish Councillors. The clerk will require written authorisation from two Parish Councillors before she can go ahead and contact the contractors regarding repairs. The cost of the repairs was unknown. Councillor P Walker and Councillor B Axcell confirmed that they will send written authorisation to the clerk by email so these could be repaired. The clerk was asked to contact the PCSOs and make them aware of the vandalism.

The clerk confirmed that grants had now become available from Warrington Borough Council due to lockdown and the clerk had applied for these following the Parish Council meeting on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The total amount of grant is £1334.00 which is for the period of National Lockdown (5<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 plus any retrospective payment for losses incurred in October as a result of the Covid restrictions that were introduced in Warrington.

The clerk confirmed that she had contacted LiveWire again regarding a refund due to the football pitches being closed as the Parish Council had paid for the hire from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

### 4. Village Life 'What's On' Column subscription

As Councillor J Wheeler was not present at the meeting this item was deferred.

## **5. Parish Hall and Covid-19**

The clerk was awaiting guidance to be issued from ACRE regarding the Tier 2 restrictions for Warrington and the impact of this on the hire of the Parish Hall.

The assistant clerk had been researching Legionnaires disease as it was a legal requirement to have this, especially following the closure of the Hall.

Three quotes have been obtained and it was felt that the clerk, assistant clerk and Booking Secretary/Cleaner would benefit from training on this matter.

**RESOLVED** that;

Green Contract Services carry out a report on the Legionnaires for the Parish Hall at the cost of £395.00 plus VAT.

Training will be put as an agenda item for the Parish Council meeting in December.

## **6. Cybersecurity Policy**

Both the clerk and assistant clerk had undertaken the cybersecurity training from the Society of Local Council Clerks.

The clerk had contacted the insurance company regarding cyber insurance however this is not currently offered by Zurich at this present time.

**Recommended** that;

The Parish Council adopt a cybersecurity policy.

## **7 PCSO Funding arrangements**

The cost of funding a PCSO is currently £33,280, which the Parish Council funds 50% of currently with Stockton Heath Parish Council. The amount Appleton Parish Council pays per year is £16,640 however this cost has remained the same for some time. It was;

**Recommended** that;

The Parish Council continues to fund 50% of a PCSO for the financial year 2021/2022 and up to the amount of £18,000.

## **8. Budget and Precept 2021/2022**

The clerk had received a letter dated 12th November 2020 from Warrington Borough Council with regards to the arrangements for the parish precepts for 2021/2022.

Warrington Borough Council has confirmed that the number of Band D equivalent properties for 2021/2021 is 4745. This figure for 2020/2021 was 4743. This compares to 4866 for 2019/2020.

The figures were discussed at length for both the budget and precept.

**Recommended that;**

The precept for 2021/2022 is £166,500 and this would result in a 10.2% increase and mean that the Band D payable would be £35.09.

The reasons for the increase are the following;

- 1) Increased costs, including salary increases for staff.
- 2) Local Plan Expenditure
- 3) Loss of income due to Covid-19 and Parish Hall closure.

The Precept in similar parishes for example Lymm Parish Council, Stockton Heath and Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council are all higher charges per Band D property.

**Recommended that;**

The budget for 2021/2022 was set accordingly and the breakdown of Parish expenditure would be sent to Warrington Borough Council as requested as the precept is over £140,000.

## **9. Three year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments**

The internal auditor has requested a three-year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments and this has been produced by the clerk. It was;

**Recommended that;**

The Parish Council accepts the three-year forecast of revenue and capital receipts and payments.

## **10. Financial Regulations**

The current financial regulations were reviewed. It was;

**Recommended that;**

The amended Financial Regulations were adopted by the Parish Council.

## **11. Investment Strategy, Authorised Persons for Banking and Bank Transfer for future payments**

The clerk reported that the Parish Council has four bank accounts. The main current account is with the NatWest and this is operated via internet banking and then they are three savings accounts.

The balances as at 23<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (after the November banking run) and interest rates are below;

<b>Account</b>	<b>Bank Balance</b> <b>22.11.20</b>	<b>Interest Rate</b>	<b>Interest paid on;</b>
NatWest	£42,461	None – charges apply	
Nationwide	£85,000	0.05%	31.03.21
Mansfield	£85,000	0.70%	31.12.21
Hanley Building Society	£50,000	0.55%	31.08.21

The clerk noted that all interest rates were low due to the impact of Covid-19.

**RESOLVED** that;

When the interest has been added to the Mansfield Building Society on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, the interest is withdrawn and put into the current NatWest account to ensure the balance is under the £85,000 limit. The clerk noted that there was a 30-day notice period on this account as such this will be withdrawn after this notice period has expired.

**RESOLVED** that;

The amount of £30,000 was transferred from Nationwide to the NatWest current account in over to cover outgoing payments.

**RESOLVED** that;

The amount of £35,000 was transferred from the Nationwide to the Hanley Building Society in order to obtain a better interest rate.

The clerk informed the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the amount of £35,000 would have to be transferred from the Nationwide into the NatWest and then transferred from the NatWest into the Hanley Building Society.

The assistant clerk had confirmed the following where authorised signatures for the bank accounts.

NatWest account

Mrs J Monks, Clerk  
Mrs I Derbyshire, Assistant Clerk  
Councillor J Wheeler, Chairman  
Councillor P Walker, Deputy Chairman  
Councillor B Axcell  
Councillor S Bengner

Mr D Pearce, Parish Ranger has debit card only.

Nationwide account

Mrs J Monks, Clerk  
Mrs I Derbyshire, Assistant Clerk  
Councillor B Axcell  
Councillor S Bengner

Mansfield account

Mrs J Monks, Clerk  
Mrs I Derbyshire, Assistant Clerk  
Councillor P Walker, Deputy Chairman  
Councillor B Axcell  
Councillor S Bengner

Hanley account

Mrs J Monks, Clerk  
Mrs I Derbyshire, Assistant Clerk  
Councillor J Wheeler, Chairman  
Councillor P Walker, Deputy Chairman  
Councillor B Axcell  
Councillor S Bengner

The clerk reported that it would be of benefit to have an additional Parish Councillor who could authorise internet banking for the current account. The clerk was asked to contact Councillor G Skentlebery and Councillor M Browne to see if they would be interested in becoming authorised for internet banking.

## **12. Risk Assessments**

**Recommended that:**

The clerk circulates the general risk assessment and proposed Covid-19 Risk Assessment for all staff for comments and feedback.

The Parish Council adopts the proposed Covid-19 Risk Assessment at this present time however this will need revision and to be verified by a suitably qualified person before re-opening the Parish Hall.

## **13. Book Swap at Wrights Green/Lumb Brook Road Bus Shelter**

**RESOLVED** that;

The clerk would purchase suitable storage for the book swap for the Wrights Green/Lumb Brook Road Bus shelter as the cost not exceeding £70 plus VAT.