



Delivering Quality Services to
Coxhoe & Quarrington Hill

Coxhoe Parish Council

Meeting Finance Committee
Date Tuesday 9th November 2010
Time 7.00pm
Venue Landsdowne House, Coxhoe

Minutes of the proceedings of the Finance Committee of Coxhoe Parish Council held at 7.00pm in Landsdowne House, Lansdowne Road, Coxhoe, on Tuesday 9th November 2010.

Present: Councillors P. Dodsworth, S. Dunn, R. Mayo and K. Pounder.

Clerk: Mrs. M. Forster

Also Present: Mr. I. Forster (Voluntary Assistant Parish Clerk)

10.F1 Election of Chair

Resolved That Councillor S. Dunn be elected as Chair of the Finance Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor S. Dunn (in the Chair)

10.F2 Election of Vice-Chair

Resolved That Councillor K. Pounder be elected as Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

10.F3 Apologies: Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Thirlaway.

10.F4 Members' Declarations of Interest: Mrs. M. Forster and Mr. I. Forster declared interests in the item entitled "Salary, Terms and Conditions of Clerk" (and withdrew from the meeting during its consideration). Councillor Pounder, as a Member of the Committee, declared an interest in the proposal for an amount to be set aside in the budget for Quarrington Hill Community Centre.

10.F5 Minutes of Last Meeting held 16th November 2009 had been circulated.

Resolved That the minutes of the last meeting held 16th November 2009 be approved and signed as a true record.

10.F6 Matters of Information: The Clerk updated that the appointment of the Voluntary Assistant Parish Clerk had superseded the recommendations on the requirement for a Community Development Officer and a hard drive had been donated to the Council free of charge negating the need for one to be purchased. It had been agreed that Finance Committee be the future avenue for an annual review of risk assessment. The requirement for an allotments review had delayed any potential increase in allotment rents and these would be undertaken as part of the budget setting exercise. Members asked that the review of the Internal Audit Service take place during the year 2011/12.

Recommended That the information be noted and a review of the Internal Audit Service be undertaken commencing around June 2011.

10.F7 Risk Assessment: The Council's Financial Regulations provided for risk management arrangements to be reviewed on a regular basis. A review of the risks currently facing the Council had been carried out by Officers, A copy of the suggested revised and updated Risk Assessment Register had been circulated. The frontispiece had been updated to reflect changes in practices and the document now identified the likelihood and impact of risks occurring. The Clerk highlighted the changes throughout the document. Members reviewed the risks facing the Council and agreed the suggested changes, with additions mentioned at the meeting.

Recommended (i) That the Risk Assessment Register be approved, subject to the words "and/or the Assistant Parish Clerk" being added to risks 1.1 "Incapacity of Clerk including impact of pandemic" and 1.2 "Resignation of the Clerk";

(ii) That the ongoing review of the Council's Financial Regulations includes looking at a reasonable level of expenditure that would not require three quotes.

10.F8 Exempt Information – Resolution to Exclude the Press and Public:

Resolved That in view of the confidential nature of the following items, the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act, 1960.

10.F9 Exempt Information – Salary, Terms and Conditions of Clerk:

NOTE: Mrs. M. A. Forster and Mr. Forster declared interests and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item. Councillor P. Dodsworth recorded the discussion and decisions made in their absence.

Standing Order 15 provided that in every year, and not later than the meeting at which the estimates for the next year were settled, the Council should review the pay and conditions of service of existing employees. The Clerk's contract stipulated that the Clerk's salary be raised by one increment on 1st April 2011 subject to satisfactory performance during the year. It had previously been agreed that hours worked and unpaid by both Officers be recorded for review at the budget setting meeting. These were currently 300 for the Clerk (including 111 for holidays that had been taken but not yet paid) and 394 for the Assistant Clerk; although he had advised that he would work in a voluntary capacity to try to reduce the Clerk's workload. It could be seen from the additional hours that the Clerk had not been paid for to date that both workloads were excessive.

Recommended (i) That as the Clerk's performance was deemed to be satisfactory during the year, her salary be increased by one increment on 1st April 2011 in accordance with the conditions of her contract; (ii) That the Clerk be set a target of the Council achieving Quality Status by the next scheduled Parish Council elections in May 2013; (iii) That the Council recognise that the Clerk is paid to work up to 100 hours per month only and that it needs to prioritise within that capacity; (iv) That the accumulated hours unpaid to date be the subject of discussion at the next Council meeting.

Mrs. Forster and Mr. Forster re-entered the meeting.

10.F10 Exempt Information – Estimates 2011/2012:

Information was circulated detailing the budgets for the year 2010/2011, together with the six month expenditure and variances against the various budget headings. Suggested amounts for each of the budget headings listed were discussed for 2011/2012, taking into account the expenditure on the items in the financial year 2010/2011; possible and likely increases and decreases for each of the budget headings; and known expenditure commitments for the year 2011/2012. The Clerk advised that assumptions had been made that there would be £20,000 reserves at the end of the current financial year. This was based on the six monthly budget variances outlined and known committed expenditure for the year. Members discussed the required budget for the year in detail and formulated two budgets and two precept requirements; one for what the Council would like to introduce to meet the aspirations of the community for the year, and one as a contingency with reductions in expenditure and decreased services should a veto result. In discussing their recommendations to the Parish Council, the Members of the Finance Committee advised that they were mindful that the current economic climate needed to be balanced with the need for the Parish Council to meet the aspirations of the community and that in view of the small overall precept of the Council, any percentage change represented a very small increase in actual terms.

Recommended (i) That the two proposed budgets and proposed precept suggestions be circulated to all Council Members for discussion at the next Council meeting with a view to a decision on the estimates for 2011/12 and the precept;

(ii) That the Village Hall Association be advised that the Parish Council is unable to continue to pay the maintenance contract for the copier at the Village Hall from 1st April 2011 due to the availability of the copier at Landsdowne House;

(iii) That a second hand computer be purchased in the financial year 2010/11 for the Assistant Parish Clerk to use for Council business and that a contingency be retained in the office equipment budget

- for 2011/12 in case this does not prove to be sufficient for the purposes required, of maintaining the Parish Council's website and the necessary Parish Plan work;
- (iv) That in view of the change in venue for Council meetings, an amount be set aside within the budget for the licence fee for the Village Hall for the year 2011/2012 but that this be reviewed in September 2010 once there was more certainty with regard to the continued use of Landsdowne House for office and meeting accommodation;
- (v) That the Clerk investigates the possibility and costs of procuring insurance services more cost effectively from a provider other than Zurich for the year 2011/12;
- (vi) That an article be prepared for the village newsletters stating the aspirations of the community from the Parish Plan and that the budget is required to enable the Parish Council to meet these aspirations;
- (vii) That the Clerk ascertain the period of notice required for an increase in rents to the Allotments at Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill and be authorised to serve any appropriate notices to enable increases as set out in the proposed budget of allotments at Coxhoe from £200 to £206; and each plot at Quarrington Hill from £16.20 per year to £18 per year;
- (viii) That no amount be put in the budget for the sale of Sanderson Street until the sale was realised;
- (ix) That the Finance Committee recommend a precept of £42,350 to the Council but that Members be advised that discussion had also taken place on whether to have a precept of £44,275.

The meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. [unclear]', written in a cursive style.