

DUE TO THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS IN PLACE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY, HORSPATH PARISH COUNCIL CANCELLED THE OCTOBER MEETING AND HELD THE PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING REMOTELY.

HORSPATH PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee Meeting held on 25th October 2021 at 7.30pm.

Present: Mr P Dobson, Mr J Dobson, Mr R Burgess, Mrs J Dobson, Mrs H Kogel

Apologies
Absent:

08/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. – There were no apologies to be made.

09/21 REVIEW OF SUB-COMMITTEE BUDGETS.

Mrs Kogel circulated a recent copy of the income and expenditure for the current financial year. Mr James Dobson adapted the information to incorporate expected expenditure for the village sub-committees. Mr Horsley, Manager of the Burial Ground has stated that any expenditure will be up to Horspath Parish Council to determine. Mr James Dobson suggested that a contractor is asked to look at the condition of the walls within the burial ground. Mr Burgess stated that the walls are in good condition but the hedges both sides of the burial ground need maintenance. Mr Burgess suggested that the cost of cutting the hedges for 2022/23 should be increased to £1500.00 as Mr Walker will not be carrying out hedge cutting this year. Mr Harris, Manager of the Wildlife Conservation Area has requested a budget of £9,000 to maintain this area for 2022/23. Mr Peter Dobson stated that the cost of the projects listed by Mr Harris could be covered by a grant from HSPC, and the cost of emergency works only covered by HPC. Mrs Kogel stated that the cost could be covered by two grants from HSPC in both 2021 and 2022. Mr James Dobson stated that this is a budget not the Precept and a further meeting will be held in December to finalise the budget. Mr Peter Dobson, Chairman of HVHMC has requested £4,000 to carry out essential work on the flooring and decoration of the Village Hall.

Mr Burgess, Chairman of the Beautification Sub-Committee has requested £2,000 to continue with maintenance work in the village.

Mr James Dobson stated that there is no cost in the budget for traffic calming, should we include a sum of money for the designing of the traffic calming. Mr Burgess suggested that we allocate £5,000. Mr James Dobson asked if HPC is likely to spend £5,000 on the design in the first year or will it take longer. Mr Peter Dobson stated that the cost of the traffic calming can be covered by a grant from HSPC.

10/21. REVIEW & AGREEMENT OF FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE BUDGET.

Mr James Dobson recommended that HPC purchase Microsoft Office 365 Business Standard and move to Teams rather than Zoom, which would see everything contained in one place and reduces any risk. The estimated cost would be £1,400 p/y for 11 Councillors, Mrs Gillespie, Mr Bearder and Mr Lowe, although it is possible that Mr Bearder and Mrs Gillespie will already have this.

Mr James Dobson also recommended that £1,750 is allocated for finance training and £1,500 for professional support costs for contract frameworks. Mr Peter Dobson agreed with these costs and suggested that they are put forward to HPC for consideration. Mr Burgess and Mrs Dobson suggested that these costs be included in the budget and then we can prioritise on the costs when we have a total. Mr James Dobson stated that there could be a potential saving if we chose a lower subscription.

Mr Burgess stated that there is an over spend in the Clerks salary costs this year. Mrs Kogel stated that this is due to the Clerks hours being increased and also for the employers contribution and pension costs that are now paid.

Mrs Kogel stated that with all of the additional costs from the village sub-committees, if these costs are agreed it would increase the Precept by £25,000, which is a massive increase. Mr Peter Dobson stated that some of the costs for the projects could be covered by grants from HSPC. Mr James Dobson stated that the costs of the Wildlife Conservation Area and Traffic Calming projects could come under the HSPC Infrastructure Fund. Mr Burgess stated that HPC is a small village with a small income. Mr James Dobson stated that a decision needs to be made on the amount for the contingency fund. Mr James Dobson stated that the contingency fund was very useful when there was an error with the Precept, and suggested that it should be 10% of our income. Mr James Dobson stated that further discussions should be held at the next Finance Meeting to look at how we value our contingency fund and look to have a contingency policy.

Mr James Dobson stated that we need to agree the sub-committee budgets ready to put forward to HPC for the Precept. Mr Burgess stated that it is a big increase in the Precept. Mr James Dobson stated that it equates to approximately £28 per household. Mrs Kogel suggested that a budget of £2,000 for the Village Hall, and £1,000 for the Wildlife Conservation Area be agreed, with all other project costs being covered by a grant from HSPC. Mr Peter Dobson stated that a decision needs to be made on who is responsible for costs in the Village Hall, either HVHMC or HPC. HPC is responsible for the fabric of the building. Mr James Dobson stated that the Village Hall is the biggest single risk that HPC has and is an example for the contingency fund. Mr Peter Dobson stated that the budget for the Village Hall can be reduced to £2,000. Mrs Kogel stated that by covering the cost of projects from HSPC, the increase to the Precept is likely to be around £6,000, this is a more realistic increase.

Mr James Dobson stated that the next step is the draft Precept. A meeting will be scheduled ahead of the December HPC meeting to look at the draft Precept. Mr James Dobson will share the updated spreadsheet with all members of the sub-committee. Mr James Dobson created a financial calendar for all members. Mrs Kogel will check the date for the renewal of the mower insurance.

11/21. NEXT STEP IN AGREEING RECEIVED SUB-CONTRACT APPOINTMENT PROCESS.

Mr James Dobson stated that at the last meeting we agreed to create a framework for sub-contractors and to review and refresh them. Mr James Dobson stated that our systems are dated, the financial regulations have not been reviewed recently and we haven't reviewed current contractors for over five years. Mr James Dobson stated that we need a breakdown on what we need to do to get where we want to be, and look at the steps involved, and who can drive the stages of work. We can then let HPC know how long it will until we can start looking at contracts. Mr Burgess stated that we don't want to make things too complicated for smaller contractors.

Mr James Dobson stated that he has looked at having lanes for how we procure activity. The village framework is the main category with an initial 2 year contract with the option to extend for an additional 2 years. HPC will come up with a specification of works and then put out for tender and review. Mr James Dobson stated that there should be two businesses in each tender, and then have a Parish Councillor to produce a specification of work and manage the project. (Mrs Dobson left the meeting at 9pm). Contractors can be assessed on an hourly rate, and they will supply a cost and a number of hours to carry out the works. Mr Peter Dobson stated that this will speed up how quickly we can get a contractor to carry out the works as we will have alternative options. Mr James Dobson stated that it will give empowerment of decision making to HPC. Mr James Dobson stated that we need to look at what contracts we have, and the new approach will see four areas, frameworks, chair spending rules, special projects and other projects and the focus will be on setting up frameworks for where HPC is spending money. Mr James Dobson stated that a pre-qualification questionnaire will be sent out to all suppliers and then we will evaluate the information provided. When the questionnaires are returned to us, further questions will be asked and the tender packs will be assessed and scored. Mr Burgess stated that there seems to be a lot of paperwork involved and asked who will be preparing and sending out all of the documents? Mr James Dobson stated that this can be

advertised on the website and then a response sent to whoever replies. Mr James Dobson stated that we need to decide on who will be writing the specification for works. Mr Peter Dobson stated that there is concern with Parish Councillors with regards to existing suppliers, so this process will take away any concerns. Mr James Dobson stated that at the moment we have nothing to support the reason as to why we have chosen a contractor, or if they are good value and confirmation that they are qualified to carry out the works.

Mr James Dobson stated that HPC formed a Finance Sub-Committee to support Mrs Kogel, we need to look at members who have time to assist with this new process or bring in a contractor to do it for us. Mr Burgess stated that the Finance Sub-Committee needs additional members who have time to do this. Mr James Dobson agreed to carry out the pre-qualification process. Mr Peter Dobson stated that he is happy to assist with this. Mr Peter Dobson stated that as an example, we have no details at all from Bob Surman with regards to his hourly rate for maintenance work around the village. Mr Peter Dobson stated that there may be some resistance from the Cricket Club. Mr Peter Dobson also agreed to contact Mr Rob Gray.

Mr James Dobson stated that it would be helpful to have details of what has historically been spent and where, and then we can pass this information onto the contractors to let them know the value of the work. Mr Peter Dobson stated that initially we will start with looking at four or five contracts, but this process has to be a part of HPC and not just himself and Mr James Dobson. Mr James Dobson stated that this process will demonstrate best value and also all health & safety information, PL insurance, and risk assessments will be received. Mr James Dobson stated that we need to identify these tasks and how long they will take. Mr Burgess used Mr Rob Gray as an example, how does he demonstrate health & Safety. Mr James Dobson stated that he is mindful that HPC has not done anything to embrace this.

Mr James Dobson stated that we need to look at where we are spending money, and then look at contracting that work out. When a contractor has been approved, they will then be asked how they will deliver the service to us. Mr Burgess stated that he is struggling to see how we can impose this on the village. Mr Gray comes to the village and uses HPC's tractor to cut the grass, and HPC pay for all of the maintenance of the tractor and the cost of the fuel. Mr Peter Dobson stated that Mr Gray carries out all of the safety checks on the mower before use and forwards the details of any problems on to HPC. Mr Burgess stated that it would be difficult to prove that he is not an employee. Mr James Dobson stated that this is the reason that he is keen to set up this process to show that they are sub-contractors. Mr James Dobson stated that we need to look at the specification of the work to see if it would include the use of HPC's tractor, or should this equipment be provided by the sub-contractor. Should HPC even own a tractor? Mrs Kogel suggested that we should look at simplifying this process.

Mr James Dobson stated that we need to look at the expenditure over the years and create a structure to evaluate each cost. The costs will involve mainly labour and materials. Mr James Dobson stated that the time route for this is important with regards to how long it will take. Mr Peter Dobson stated that Mr Rob Gray will not be available to work in Horspath forever, and for a certain reason is no longer carrying out the strimming in the village. We need to have a process to support why contractors have been appointed. Mr James Dobson stated that the criteria needs to be selected by a framework to show that we have selected competent businesses at good value for the village.

12/21. NEXT MEETING – TO AGREE DRAFT PRECEPT PRIOR TO DECEMBER HPC MEETING.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30th November 2021 at 7.30pm.

13/216/21 AOB. – None.

Signed..... Date.....