

## **BRENCHLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JULY 2017 IN MATFIELD PAVILION AT 7.30pm**

#### **Present**

Councillors C. Woodley (Chairman) presided, A. de Guingand, D. Batty, Ms. C. Brooks (Clerk).

#### **1. To accept apologies for absence**

Cllr. Wickham sent his apologies.

#### **2. To record declaration of Interests on any item on the Agenda**

None declared.

#### **3. Grants and Donations**

##### **3.1 Consideration of the Council's policy**

Cllr. Woodley detailed the statutory mechanism for the Council's funding of grants and donations, which is derived from S.137 of the Local Government Act 1972. The mechanism provides the means for the Council to incur expenditure for matters for which it does not otherwise have a legal responsibility, and is known as "The Free Resource". It is to be used for the benefit of the local community, regardless of whether the recipient of the grant or donation is based in the parish.

The level of the Free Resource is based on a figure-per-electors, which is set, annually, by central government; for 2017/18, the figure is £7.00. The regulations stipulate that where grants are given for more than one year, the Council must seek an annual report from recipients of the grants, outlining how the money had been used. A draft Grant Award Policy had been circulated by the Clerk; this will be further discussed, at the next meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council the adoption of a policy for grants and donations that takes account of the requirements of the relevant legislation.**

##### **3.2 PWCAC**

The Council currently funds PWCAC through a grant of £2k each year; they provide an annual report that details the work that the grant helps to support. To enable them to recruit a paid manager, the PWCAC have requested a longer-term funding agreement, so that a proportion of the cost may be secured and they have built up some reserves to demonstrate their commitment to this proposal. If the Council is minded to offer such an agreement, it would be on the basis that the award of the grant be publicized in a suitable manner, and that the annual reports would give, in general terms, an indication of the numbers of Parish residents assisted by the Centre.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council that a funding agreement of £2k per annum, over a period of three years, be offered to the PWCAC, from the next financial year.**

#### **4. Financial Healthcheck: Implementation of Recommendations**

##### **4.1 Website**

###### **4.1.1 Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest**

One declaration remains outstanding; the Clerk is pursuing this. The declarations will be accessible to the general public, through TBWC's website, via a link from the parish website.

###### **4.1.2 Annual Returns – statutory requirements regarding publication**

The Clerk confirmed that the previous year's audited accounts are now on the website, and the current year has been added, with the external audit report to be added when received.

##### **4.2 Accounts Management**

###### **4.2.1 Rialtas Alpha Suite**

The Clerk confirmed that the software has been ordered and is being loaded onto the Council's laptop; training will follow next week. Cllr. Woodley raised the issue of cost-centre headings, providing some examples for consideration. It was agreed that the Clerk will review these before finalizing with RBS for setting up the spreadsheets.

#### **4.3 Financial Regulations and reporting**

Cllr. De Guingand will provide a draft of the revised Financial Regulations, to the next meeting.

#### **4.4 Banking**

##### **4.4.1 Consolidation of Accounts**

The Clerk outlined that the Council currently has 4 bank accounts: Unity Trust current account, NatWest Deposit account, NatWest Current account and a NatWest Matfield Pavilion Account, together with 2 accounts for Brenchley Charities.

**Resolved: to advise the Full Council that the Clerk will transfer the amounts held in the NatWest Deposit and Current accounts into the main Unity Trust account.**

The NatWest Matfield Pavilion account was historically used to manage costs of insurance and utilities, with main users The Guides, Cricketers and Connections contributing sums towards these costs. The Clerk does not have access to these funds and is not a signatory on the account (the Treasurer being Mrs. Christine Klempau). If the Council approves the transfer of the funds to the main Unity Trust account, Cllr. Woodley would contact Mrs. Klempau to explain that decision, and request the transfer of account information for the payment of booking fees and utility bills.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council that the funds currently held in the NatWest Matfield Pavilion account be transferred to the Council's main Unity Trust Account.**

##### **4.4.2 Bank compensation limits**

The Clerk outlined the risk of bank compensation levels with reserves over £85k. She had taken a straw poll of other parishes, most of whom were also above the threshold; each Council is considering how to manage the risks associated with this issue. The Committee considered the Council's own position, and it was decided that, given the operational profile of Unity Trust Bank, the authority's account was not exposed to a significant risk. However, to assist in mitigating the risk, Cllr. De Guingand suggested requesting that the precept is paid quarterly.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council that all its reserves be consolidated to the main Unity Trust Account; and that the Clerk be requested to investigate whether TWBC could transfer the precept on a quarterly basis.**

##### **4.4.3 Unity Bank signatories, addresses and named contacts**

The Clerk confirmed that the address and named contact form had been completed. She is awaiting one remaining extra signatory form before submitting the information to the bank. When that has been done, all Councillors will be signatories on the main Unity Trust Bank Account.

##### **4.4.4 Unity Trust Bank Charges**

The Clerk explained that with a total transaction level of over £100k per annum there is now a levy of 15p per transaction. The current charges are £6 per month for the Current Account. This was duly noted by the Committee.

##### **4.4.5 Unity Trust Bank Multi-Pay corporate debit card**

The Clerk described the uses for this pre-paid card, which will run alongside the current account. Charges for ad hoc purchased items that cannot be invoiced will be paid for on this card, for which there is a charge of £3 per month.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council that the Clerk be authorised to apply for a corporate debit card, with a limit per transaction and per month of £500.**

#### **4.4.6 Payment of Clerk's Salary**

The Healthcheck recommendation for a regular basic sum to be paid to the Clerk on the last working day of the month was accepted as good practice.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council that approval be given for a monthly Standing Order for the Clerk's salary of £1,000 be paid on the last day of each month, with the remainder to be included within "accounts payable", as submitted to the Full Meeting of the Council.**

#### **4.5 Asset Register**

The asset register was reviewed and it was found to be missing an entry for the Jack Verrall Memorial Gardens. The values of Assets would be reviewed at the next meeting.

**Resolved: to recommend to the Full Council that the Clerk be authorised to add a value of £1 for the JVMG, to the asset register.**

#### **4.6 Risk Register**

Cllr. Woodley circulated the Risk Management Action Plan, which had been adopted by the Council in 2015. Although some of the actions had already been implemented, others remained to be addressed. It was therefore agreed that this item would be discussed at the next meeting.

#### **4.7 Deposit for Pavilion bookings**

The Clerk outlined that the Conditions of Use currently state "Specific conditions will apply to particular lettings, including a requirement for a deposit to cover the cost of equipment damaged or removed without consent, and for any cleaning that may be required. It will be at the absolute discretion of the Council whether a deposit is required. Hirers will be liable for all damage to the fabric of the building and its fittings, including the flagpole."

There was discussion concerning the pros and cons of methods for retaining deposits against damage, from casual hirers of the Pavilion. It was agreed that the Clerk and Cllr. Woodley would consider the options and draft a paper for the next meeting.

#### **4.8 Pension**

Following the recommendation in the Healthcheck, the Clerk confirmed that the employer contribution for the Clerk is 3%.

### **5. Date of next meeting – quarterly, tbc**