

## Minutes of Finance Committee held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

In attendance: Councillors M. Harriman, M.J. Edwards, J. Holmes, K. Hobbley, J. Hobbley, J. Jones

Chair: Councillor M.J. Edwards

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: S Baxter

Apologies: Councillors M. Wilde, A Merry

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1. This meeting took place remotely, using GoTo Meetings software, under The Local Authorities (Coronavirus)(Meetings)(Wales) Regulations 2020. which make provision for meetings to take place remotely.
  2. **Apologies:** Apologies were given and accepted.
  3. There were no members of the press and public present for the meeting.
  4. **Declarations of Interest: Councillors** were reminded of the need to declare any interests. Councillor Jones wished to declare an interest for the item concerning Gresford library, and Councillor Holmes wished to declare an interest concerning the item on Allington Park.
  5. **Quarterly Financial Report to end of September 2020.** The report was considered, and a few amendments and clarifications were suggested. A discussion took place about the role of the Community Agent and the associated costs. The report was accepted pending the Clerk making the amendments. **Action: Clerk to amend report.**
  6. **Update on changes to Banking arrangements:** The Clerk advised on progress with the Nationwide Saver account. Once this is in place then the Clerk will arrange for the set up of the Unity Bank accounts. The Clerk raised the matter of approvals being granted to carry out technical process as one-offs to arrange the transfers of the money. It was **AGREED** that approval had already been given by allocating the task to the Clerk and was therefore considered approved. The Clerk raised the matter of authorised signatories to this account. It was **AGREED** that as this is an account which won't be used very often for transaction purposes, four Councillors as authorised signatories would be an appropriate number, plus the Clerk as the main account user. It was proposed and **AGREED** that the Authorised signatories for the Nationwide Saver account would be Councillors Dutton, Edwards, Merry and Bailey.
  7. **Lease of Allington Park:** Councillor Holmes declared an interest and left the meeting for this item. A letter had been received some time ago from Gresford Trust advising that the lease of Allington Park would cease in 2023. This had been reported to Full Council which had passed it to Finance Committee to take forward. After discussion, it was **AGREED** that the Clerk will obtain a copy of the existing lease and circulate it. To write to Gresford Trust to enquire if they anticipated making any changes to any of the existing terms of the lease, and whether they anticipated any changes being made to any charges for the lease of the land. To request a remote meeting with members of the Trust to have a discussion prior to the Finance Committee meeting in November, when the outcomes of these discussions can be considered. **Actions: Clerk.** Councillor Holmes re-joined the meeting.
  8. **Future Grant payments to Gresford and District Library:** Councillor Jones declared an interest and left the meeting. The Clerk advised of the notes she had previously circulated from the previous meeting held with representatives of the Library Committee. The Chair recapped and reiterated that there is support to continue funding the library, the question being whether this should be via a grant or by another mechanism. This was discussed. The Clerk advised that the Council has powers to look at this another way. It was suggested legal advice might need to be sought. After discussion, it was **AGREED** to check this with One Voice Wales, prior to the Council meeting next week. If the Council can agree on a separate mechanism by which it can be funded, this can form

part of the consideration of the budget for the following year. The Chair advised that following this it might be possible to invite the Library Committee to have a member of the Community Council on their board for transparency. **Action: The Clerk to look into this and check with One Voice Wales.** Councillor Jones re-joined the meeting.

9. **Items for consideration prior to precept meeting in November:** A discussion took place. The Chair will mention to Full Council in advance of the precept that although Committees are encouraged to consider their forward budgets for next year and after, it is agreed that in the current climate Committee do not wish to see an increase in the precept as far as possible.
10. **Any Grant requests received:** Consideration was given to the outstanding request for a grant for new windows submitted by Marford Community Group. A copy of the lease had now been received as requested and this confirmed that the Community Group are responsible for matters such as windows and the fabric of the building. A few anomalies were identified. Councillor Harriman proposed support for the grant, but Councillor Edwards highlighted a mismatch of the application and the quotes received. The proposal was withdrawn, although support for the grant was stated and it was **AGREED** that Councillor Jones shall contact the Community Group to offer her support with clarification on a few points before the Committee can agree to award any grant money, in line with the criteria set and in order to treat all applicants fairly and consistently. **Action: Councillor Jones.**
11. **Sickness Absence Policy :** The Clerk had prepared a draft policy. This was considered. After discussion it was resolved to **RECOMMEND** the policy to Council for adoption, with the suggestion of additional Green Book information on sickness absence pay appropriate to length of absence being added, and clarification on the position of temporary staff, suggested by Councillor Holmes as an amendment. **Action: Clerk to make amendments.**
12. **Members urgent matters for consideration.** There were no matters raised.
13. **Date of next meeting.** The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be **24<sup>th</sup> November 2020** at 6pm , which will be to discuss the Precept for 2021-22 and the meeting is likely to be held remotely.