

Minutes of Finance Committee held on the 28th April 2020

In attendance: Councillors M. Harriman M.J. Edwards, J. Holmes, Keith Hobbley, J. Hobbley, (Committee Members), Councillors J. Jones, A Merry

Chair: Councillor M.J. Edwards

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer: S Baxter

Apologies: Councillors M. Wilde, B. Blackmore

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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. The Chair addressed the meeting concerning the protocol for this remotely held meeting, explaining how Declarations of interest could be made, and how any voting could proceed, if required to do so.
 5. The **Minutes of the meeting** held on the 21st January 2020 were agreed as a true record.
 6. **Matters Arising:** Councillor Edwards requested that an appendix be placed with the Minutes of 21st January, detailing the declarations of interest that had been given. **Action: Clerk to complete.**
 7. **Update on Welsh Government regulations concerning the remote conduct of Council meetings , and advice received from One Voice Wales.:** The Clerk had circulated a report to members summarising the main Parts of the regulations made by Welsh Government , following the CoronaVirus Bill. The Chair went through the report and advised that these regulations supersede the current Council Standing Orders , for a temporary period. A discussion took place, and recommendations were made concerning the manner of voting and muting for remote meetings. Regarding voting, Committee shall recommend that where members can be seen on screen , a hand up shall indicate the manner of voting which can be counted by the Chair and Clerk. If someone is not able to be seen, they can indicate to the Clerk by email or by chat facility.
 8. **Consideration of further delegated powers:** The Clerk had circulated a paper detailing a suggested additional clause which could be included in the current Scheme of delegation as an amendment. The purpose is to ensure the ability of the Clerk to act for the Council in the event of unforeseen emergency, and restrictive circumstances, as had recently been the case. This was considered and a change suggested to state, 'Chair and Chairs of Committees as far as relevant'. It was agreed that this be recommended to Full Council to be adopted for a three-month period and then reviewed and that the wording should be sent to each member as soon as possible. **Action: Clerk to inform All Councillors and send out the recommended amendment.**
 9. **Consideration of Report concerning Electronic Banking:** The Clerk had previously circulated a report detailing difficulties experienced by operating a cheque only payments system and with three options for consideration. The Chair introduced the report and the points for discussion. After discussion it was **AGREED** to recommend Option 3 of the report to Full Council. This would give the Clerk the facility to make payments each month to the value of £3500 in total. It was **AGREED** that this could take place for a **limited period of three months** and to be reviewed, and when **RECOMMENDING to Full Council** it would be made clear that this is an interim arrangement while exploring and moving to a system with the current bank or another bank whereby the Clerk could make an entry and one of the other signatories could approve it. **Action: Clerk to place on Agenda for full Council and to make necessary arrangements with HSBC bank.**
 10. **Consideration of comments received on amount of reserves held:** The Chair and Clerk advised that a query had been received for a resident and the Chair had replied. The balance of unearmarked reserves is well within the recommended amount. A discussion took place and it was

determined that the amount of reserves held overall had in fact increased but planned future expenditure has led to them being earmarked for those projects. **Action: Clerk to circulate the Chairs response and the amount of reserves each year.**

11. **End of Year Financial Report** : The Chair presented a Financial report on Income and expenditure for the Financial year 2019-2020. This report was **AGREED**. **Action: Clerk to circulate a breakdown of costs under the heading marked Cemetery 'Other' to members of the Finance and Cemetery Committees.**
12. **Any Grant requests received.** Consideration was given to a request for a grant for replacement window frames received from Marford Community Group. The Chair reminded Committee that the procedures for considering grants received through the year ,outside of the grants considered in January for payment in March each year, was firstly to consider if the need for the grant is urgent. A vote took place and the majority of those attending considered that it should be considered under the terms of an urgent request. A discussion took place, with a number of members stating their views and concerns. The outcome of the discussion was that members felt it necessary to see a copy of the lease before considering the matter further, to determine that, if any money were to be awarded, that it was going to the correct party responsible for the upkeep of the fabric of the building. There was also a need to see more than one estimate for the costs, in line with policy, and also to determine audited accounts, and whether steps have been taken to access other forms of funding. **Action: Clerk to contact Marford Community Group.** The Clerk also advised the Committee of a donation that had been made to AVOW for a sum of £300 towards the production of PPE through their 3D printing scheme. The Clerk had consulted Members via email and had received nine responses , positively endorsing a donation. The Chair had given the final approval and the cheque signed and sent. The Committee **AGREED** this course of action in retrospect and it would be reported to Full Council.
13. **Update of Audit Matters:** The Clerk advised that the Internal Audit process had been completed and the requirements had been met and the report was awaited. The Clerk advised of the advice received from Wales Audit office concerning change to the Audit timetable. However for Gresford there seemed to be no reason why the External Audit should not proceed according to its usual timetable ,now that remote meeting has been set up, Council will next month be able to approve the Accounts and Annual Return, but that there might be an amendment to the dates required for the publicising of electors rights. The Guidance received from Wales Audit office was to ignore the timescale set by the external auditor , and instead, once lockdown restrictions had been lifted, a revised timescale and date would be sent out, which would then be publicised, enabling the public to arrange to go to a physical place to inspect the Council's accounts if they so wished. The Chair requested something be publicised via the website to this effect. The Clerk advised of revisions to the assets register, and that the Council's Insurance Renewal was due imminently. The revisions to the assets register will mean that the Insurance company is able to consider the current replacement value of each item. The Chair thanked the Clerk for her work on the Audit and end of Year. The Chair also confirmed that he had independently verified the Accounts as is recommended practice, and had signed them off via email, and this had been sent to the Auditor.
14. **Draft Lone Working Policy:** The Clerk had forwarded a Draft Lone working policy, and explained the background and how the document had been drafted. She advised she was also looking at a remote alarm. It was **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council that this policy be **ADOPTED**.
15. **Members urgent matters for consideration.** Councillor Harriman raised the issue of the meetings being conducted remotely, and although this meeting had gone fairly well it could perhaps be improved with more practice. This was **AGREED**. **Action: Clerk to set up two trial meetings prior to Full Council meeting. To look at the costs of purchasing the software required and for what period.**
16. **Date of next meeting.** The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be **29th June 2020 at 6.15pm at a venue to be notified in due course.**