

NEWTON POPPLEFORD AND HARPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held at the Pavilion, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford on Monday 19th February, 2024.

Present: Cllrs. Walker (Chair), Lipczynski, Tillotson and Tribble (quorate)
Jacqui Baldwin, Parish Clerk and RFO
Mr Andy Squires, Devon Investigations Ltd

Chair opened the meeting at 7pm and outlined the Fire Regulations and evacuation procedure. As there were no members of the public present no Public Forum took place.

		Action:
FC23/69	To consider apologies for absence and approve if accepted: Apologies received from Cllrs. Carpenter and Dalton were accepted and unanimously approved.	
FC23/70	Declarations of interest from members / Dispensations afforded	
	Cllr. Tillotson was afforded a dispensation to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to Parish allotments at the Annual Meeting held on 22 nd May 2023. This dispensation applies until May 2027 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and is afforded in respect of her personal and disclosable pecuniary interests as Allotment Manager and an allotment tenant.	
FC23/71	To consider and, if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Council held on 15th January 2024: Chair proposed that the Minutes be approved as an accurate reflection of the business of the meeting. Seconded by Cllr. Tillotson and resolved unanimously. To consider Matters Arising from those Minutes not dealt with elsewhere on this Agenda: It was noted that a vote on the recommended increase to Cemetery Fees was not taken at the January Council Meeting due to the lack of members present. This item will be on the Agenda for discussion at the February Council Meeting.	
FC23/72	BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED:	
A	To consider proposals from Devon Investigations Ltd for the protection of Council land from unlawful access: Chair welcomed Mr Andy Squires to the meeting. Mr Squires advised that Devon Investigations had been acting on behalf of landowners and removing unauthorised encampments from private land for over 30 years. Using Common Law provisions trespassers can be removed from property within, on average, a maximum of 3 days. Since 2021 Devon Investigations has set up 99 protection schemes and, to date, there has only been one incursion onto “protected” land. Mr Squires set out the options available to enable Council to protect the two fields in Webbers Meadow, the Pavilion playing field and the Tennis Club and Pavilion car parks. Mr Squires was asked to visit Venn Ottery Village Green and advise whether protection was recommended at this location. Cllr. Tribble advised that Council grounds maintenance contractors had been requested not to cut the grass in the second Webbers Meadow to deter trespassers. It was noted that the playing field is the most vulnerable	

	<p>site as this area is ideal for caravans. Mr Squires was asked to provide written confirmation of the “silver” package of protection to include 6 signs at a cost of £1,395 exclusive of VAT for one year. A quotation for additional protection for Venn Ottery Village Green to be provided separately following his site visit.</p> <p>Cllr. Tillotson proposed that the Finance Committee should recommend that Council proceeds with a protection scheme if the annual cost is within the sum included in the 2024-25 Budget. Seconded by Cllr. Walker and resolved unanimously.</p> <p>Clerk to place on the Agenda for discussion and ratification at the February Council Meeting.</p> <p>Chair and Councillors thanked Mr Squires for his attendance and advice. Mr. Squires left the meeting at 7.45pm.</p>	Clerk
B	<p>To review Council’s current Financial Regulations:</p> <p>Chair noted that clauses 7.1 and 7.3 of the Financial Regulations appeared to be contradictory and not in accordance with other Council policies. Cllr. Lipczynski also pointed out that clause 11(j) made reference to EU regulations which may no longer apply. Clerk advised that the Policies and Personnel Committee meets on 18th March and this document should be reviewed by that committee. Any revision to the regulations will require adoption at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2024.</p> <p>Clerk to place this matter on the agenda for the PPC Meeting on 18th March.</p>	Clerk
C	<p>To review the draft Annual Risk Assessment for 2024:</p> <p>Councillors reviewed and updated the Financial Risks section of this document. PPC to be asked to review Physical and Management Risks at their meeting on 18th March. The revised document will require adoption by Full Council.</p> <p>Clerk to place this matter on the agenda for the PPC Meeting on 18th March.</p>	Clerk
D	<p>To consider a grant application received from Exmouth & District Community Transport Group:</p> <p>Councillors considered an application for a grant of £356.32 calculated on the parish population x 16p per person. Cllr. Tillotson suggested that the services of this group were not as widely used as those of the Ottery Help Scheme. It was agreed that £356.32 is quite a large sum for a service which benefits a small percentage of local residents. Cllr. Tribble therefore proposed that, for consistency, a grant of £200 be paid to the Exmouth & District Community Transport Group. Seconded by Cllr. Lipczynski and resolved unanimously.</p> <p>Clerk to place on the Agenda for ratification at the February Council Meeting.</p>	Clerk
E	<p>To receive an update on matters pertaining to the Devon Air Ambulance landing site:</p> <p>Clerk reminded members that the site is currently operational as a “dark site” and assurances have been received from the DAA that the absence of a landing light does not put anyone at risk or compromise the operation of the air ambulance in any way. The costs quoted to investigate and repair the fault exceed the sum available in the sinking fund and members suggested that Council should therefore consider disconnection and removal of the lighting column. Cllr. Tribble proposed that quotations to carry out this work should be obtained from local contractors. Seconded by Cllr. Walker and resolved unanimously.</p> <p>Clerk to obtain quotations for discussion at the next Finance Committee meeting.</p>	Clerk

FC23/73	A	<p>To review and, if thought fit, approve payments for February 2024: Chair proposed that invoices totalling £4,849.31 be approved for payment. Seconded by Cllr. Lipczynski and resolved unanimously. Clerk to place on the Agenda for ratification at the February Council Meeting.</p>	Clerk
	B	<p>To receive financial reports to the end of January 2024: i) Cashbook Summary ii) Cashbook Analysis Cllr. Walker proposed that these reports be noted and approved. Seconded by Cllr. Tillotson and resolved unanimously.</p>	
	C	<p>Questions to RFO on the financial reports: None raised.</p>	
FC23/74		<p>Matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion only: None so considered.</p>	
FC23/75		<p>To agree date, time and venue of next meeting Tuesday 19th March 2024 commencing at 7pm. The meeting will take place at the Pavilion, Newton Poppleford.</p>	
FC23/76		<p>It is proposed that, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. Proposal not made as there were no confidential matters to discuss.</p>	

With no further business to consider, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.05pm.