

## CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL

### FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held virtually via Zoom on 3 November 2020 at 7.00pm.

**Present** Cllr K Small (Chair)  
Cllr M Lucas (Vice-chair)  
Cllr J Ballman  
Cllr R Ballman  
Cllr P Exell  
Cllr S Exell

**Officers** A Reeves (Clerk/RFO)  
H Armagan (Allotments Officer)  
G Barr (Grants Manager)  
A Briggs (Estates Manager)  
A Cripps (Libraries Manager)  
J Smart (Head of Finance & Governance)  
A Webb (Youth Worker)

**Also Present** Cllr S Henderson  
Cllr J Yeowell

**Public** None

#### **248** Apologies

No apologies were received from Cllr J Rodrigues nor Cllr T Smith.

*The Chair announced an additional emergency agenda item will be added at the end of the agenda, due to the Covid 19 lockdown announced on Saturday 31 October, due to come into force on Thursday 5 November 2020.*

#### **249** Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensation

Cllr J Ballman declared that he is a Trustee of the Hreod Burna Urban Forest and member of the RSPB.

#### **250** Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee meeting held on Tuesday 6 October 2020 were reviewed and approved as a correct record of the meeting.

#### **251** Transaction Logs

Members noted that the most recent Transaction Logs had been checked by Cllr S Exell and there were no anomalies to be raised.

#### **252** Capital YTD Spend

Members noted the capital expenditure spreadsheet 2017-2020, a copy of which appears as Appendix A in the Minute Book.

The Chair presented that the bottom-line figure is £814,363.39 including all reserves. The Chair put forward a proposed split for the total figure which resulted in there being £184,363.39 available to be spend on a capital project yet to be decided. The Chair suggested that members should consider what projects they would like to propose and agree within committees to make bids on the available funds.

There was some discussion over the process for bidding on the available capital reserve of £184,363.39. The Chair suggested that members agree within committees and bring proposals to F&GP, which will then make recommendations to Full Council for final decision. The Chair noted that the majority of the funds were likely to be spent in the next financial year, however, there were items later in this agenda that may result in bids for these funds.

Members **RESOLVED** to make the following recommendations to Full Council regarding the capital reserves:

- a) That the total reserves figure be split as follows:

£450,000.00	General Reserve
£50,000.00	Capital Reserve (Contingency)
£40,000.00	Election Reserve (£30,000.00 for 2021 election costs, £10,000.00 to cover any by-elections with a £10,000.00 annual contribution to the reserve).
£25,000.00	Insurance Reserve
£65,000.00	Play Areas Reserve
£184,363.39	Available for Members and Committees to bid on for Capital Projects.

- b) That the F&GP Committee recommends to Full Council that members, through Committees, bring forward (before Christmas) ideas for a capital programme for 2021-22.

There was further discussion raised by Cllr J Ballman around small groups meeting outside of the meetings. The Chair stated that it was necessary and usual practice for Chairs to meet with Officers to informally discuss items and receive briefings. Both Members agreed that Councillors who were not committee members, should attend if they so wish and be made welcome at any Committee meetings.

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#### **Southbrook Car Park**

Members noted the report of the Estates Manager regarding the resurfacing of the Southbrook pavilion car park, a copy of which appears as Appendix B in the Minute Book.

The Estates Manager presented the report and stated that the item had been bought to this Committee at the Chair's request. The Estates Manager detailed the quotations received and recommended that Committee should not accept any quotations today as they need to go to tender. The Estates Manager further recommended that the item be returned to the Leisure and Recreation (L&R) Committee to agree a final scope of works which will allow for a robust procurement process.

Members debated whether to make a recommendation to Full Council or pass the item back to the L&R Committee. The Chair advised Members that should it be returned to L&R Committee it would form part of their bid for the 2021/22 capital programme.

Members **RESOLVED** to refer the item back to the Leisure and Recreation Committee for further discussion in terms of scoping out the project for the tendering process.

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#### **St Marks Tennis Centre Car Park**

Members considered the report of the Estates Manager regarding the resurfacing of the Car Park extension to the south, a copy of which appears as Appendix C in the Minute Book.

The Chair stated that he had requested this item be placed on the agenda and that a

(legally binding) letter could be obtained from Swindon Borough Council to confirm that a lease is in process and any investment in the site is secure.

The Chair asked the Estates Manager to confirm that Committee could recommend this project takes place. The Estates Manager agreed and stated that the project would need to go out to tender due to the estimated costs.

There was discussion around the type of surface proposed and whether lighting would be included.

There was further discussion around funding for the project, Cllr S Exell stated that she was in favour of the project but would prefer a cap on the spending and that not all of the required expenditure be taken from the capital projects reserve.

Members **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council that the extension to the car park at St Marks Rec takes place. That the surface will be tarmac with lighting, funded from the identified capital projects reserve. If there is surplus in the revenue budget at the end of current financial year, that money will be used instead and the original capital source will be restored to the 21-22 capital project budget.

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#### **Penhill Bowls Club Wall**

Members noted the report of the Estates Manager regarding repairs to the Penhill Bowls Club Wall, a copy of which appears as Appendix D in the Minute Book.

There was discussion around the current safety of the wall, the use of the site and whether the wall could be removed. The Estates Manager confirmed that it is a retaining wall due to the different ground levels either side of it.

Members **RESOLVED**:

- a) That the expenditure of up to £7,000.00 (allowing a contingency) be approved from the minor capital works budget for repairs to the Penhill Bowls Club wall.
- b) That Committee delegate authority to the Estates Manager to permit the works and agree a final price with the Contractor.
- c) That the Estates Manager continues to challenge Thames Water to fund the entire repair.
- d) That the long-term use of the Penhill Bowls Club facility is reviewed by the Leisure and Recreation Committee.

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#### **Budget 2020/21**

Members noted the report of the Head of Finance & Governance (HoF&G) regarding the second quarter budget review, year-end projections and 2021/22 budget recommendations, a copy of which appears as Appendix E in the Minute Book.

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#### **Bad Debt**

Members noted the report of the Finance Administrator (presented by the HoF&G) regarding the writing off, of aged bad debts, a copy of which appears as Appendix F in the Minute Book.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the writing off, of £1,600 in unpaid or unallocated allotment invoices dating back to 2018/19 and to introduce a budget right off system for allotments of 50% after 3 months, 100% after 6 months non-payment.

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#### **Essential Car Users Allowance**

Members noted the report of the Clerk regarding shared vehicle restrictions for front line Officers, a copy of which appears as Appendix G in the Minute Book.

There was some discussion over the responsibility of insuring cars, whether it should be the Officers or Parish Council. The Clerk confirmed that Officers make a declaration that they are covered for business use on their personal motor insurance and that the Council performs an annual check on all driving licences.

Members **RESOLVED** that whilst shared vehicles are not recommended. To temporarily assign Essential Car User status to Front line Officers during CV19 restrictions; backdating payment to August 2020 and monthly therein until March 2021; or sooner if CV19 status changes.

Identified Eligible Officers:

Assets Manager  
Estates Manager  
Youth Officer  
Libraries Manager  
Administration Assistant

Approve the NJC ECU allowance of between **£70.50** and **£103.25** per month depending on vehicle engine size. Overall maximum cost for all eligible staff to March 2021 **£2,256-£3,304**. Costs to be met from the CV19 budget.

**259**     **Grounds & Handyperson**

Members considered the report of the Clerk regarding the appointment of a Grounds and Handyperson, a copy of which appears as Appendix H in the Minute Book.

Members **RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the debate on this item, in accordance with Standing Order 3(d) that 'Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.' Reason: Staffing matters.

*All Officers except the Clerk left the meeting during the debate and were invited back for the vote.*

Members **RESOLVED** to recommend the appointment of a Grounds and Handyperson to Full Council as per Appendix H, with the following amendments:  
Change job title from Manager to Officer, reduce salary banding to £24,313-£26,999, remove street cleaning/litter picking from the job description, include RHS qualification or working toward as essential in the person specification.

**260**     **Audit Working Party Meeting**

Members noted the notes of the Audit Working Party meeting held on Tuesday 20 October 2020, a copy of which appears as Appendix I in the Minute Book.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation of the Audit Working Party to Full Council regarding the appointment of the Internal Auditor.

**261**     **Covid-19, Emergency Item**

The Clerk gave a verbal update on the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions announced on Saturday 31 October, to come into force on Thursday 5 November 2020. The Clerk informed Members that it is a slightly lighter lockdown than the previous. It is proposed that under legislation that the following facilities should close:

Community Centres  
Libraries  
Reception and Parish office

Tennis Courts  
Football Pitches

The Public Conveniences will be open with extra cleaning. The lunch club deliveries will also continue.

The Clerk added that this legislation is pending a vote in parliament tomorrow. As it stands Officers will continue to work from home. No furlough arrangements are proposed. No arrangement with Swindon Borough Council (SBC) to help with the shielding programme have been made. Local authorities will be supporting the vulnerable so there may well be a request.

The Clerk confirmed that he is still running under delegated authority in the emergency and will consult with the next possible council meeting, which is F&GP given the timescale of the recent announcement. The Clerk suggested that the Parish Officers can help SBC in a different way, rather than formal secondment. The Parish should retain staff and deploy as and where needed.

There was further discussion around assisting SBC where the consensus was that SBC were much better prepared for the second lockdown and that the Officers should be prioritising Parish work and assisting SBC where possible thereafter.

The Libraries Manager informed Members that he had received an email from SBC just prior to the meeting, informing him that a library exemption from lockdown for click and collect services is being discussed at parliament tomorrow.

The meeting closed at 9.41pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Finance & Staffing Committee