
Hollinswood and Randlay Parish Council

Chairman of the Committee: Cllr H Unwin Clerk: Katrina Baker MBE MILCM

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 17th August 2020 at 7.30p.m. via Zoom

Present: Councillor H Unwin
Councillor S Unwin
Councillor S Vaughan-Hodkinson
Councillor S Snell
Councillor V Holt

In Attendance: Katrina Baker, Clerk

FA20/635 Welcome

Councillor H Unwin welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for attending this additional meeting which is required to consider the current financial position of the Council and to confirm the Parish Council responses to the consultations on the HEMS pre-application and TWC Housing Strategy.

FA20/636 Apologies

Councillor C Turley Holiday
Councillor L Ricketts Personal Circumstances

RESOLVED that the apologies, as listed, be accepted.

FA20/637 Declarations of Interest

Councillor H Unwin Matters relating to Randlay Community Centre
Councillor S Unwin Matters relating to RCC and Randlay Rockets

FA20/638 Minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2020

It was proposed by Cllr Snell and seconded by Cllr Vaughan-Hodkinson, with one abstention, all were in favour and thus it was

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2020 are a true record and they will be signed by the Chairman.

FA20/639 Matters Arising from the Minutes

None

FA20/640 Finance & Governance Matters

a) Aged Analysis

A current AA had been circulated for information. The overall amount outstanding

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remained at around £1000 and members were disappointed that some groups had still not brought their accounts up to date since March.

It was confirmed that no groups will be allowed to use the community buildings, when re-opened if their accounts are not up to date.

The new invoicing system is working well and there are no overdue payments at this time.

b) Revised Budget (August 2020)

The Clerk had circulated a revised budget for all members to peruse. The new figures have taken into consideration some of the changes necessary due to the loss of income from the hire of the community buildings.

It remained disappointing that no financial assistance has been available from TWC, despite assurances from Government that funding had been provided. This would have been much appreciated due to the fact that both RCC and HNC had been closed between March and June with no income available.

Members were pleased that savings had been achieved in some areas with careful management of staff and contracts. However, as the year progresses, it may be necessary to make some difficult decisions. Similarly, Members accepted that they will have a difficult task in setting the budget for 2021/22.

RESOLVED that the Revised Budget (August 2020) be adopted in order that the Council can continue to operate and support the community as much as is possible in these difficult circumstances.

7. TWC Housing Strategy Consultation Document

The document had been available to all Members and a number of comments had been received. The Chairman thanked Members for their thoughts which would be included in the Parish Council response. However, initially, the Parish Council will inform TWC that the timing of this consultation was poor and that this will result in a reduced representation of views being submitted before the closing date. Also, the receipt of three Government Consultation Documents may have a significant effect on planning across the country and it was therefore suggested that the consultation should be delayed.

Other points to be raised as part of the consultation are:

- Insufficient information included regarding preservation
- More consideration for infrastructure, climate change etc.
- Ways to improve the quality of housing provided
- Support Nuplace developments as good rented accommodation
- Encourage the private sector to be involved

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Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council and Telford & Wrekin Council have signed up to a Parish Charter –
A commitment by all to work together for the benefit of the wider community.

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- Manage and control HMOs
- Sufficient and appropriate parking

On the whole the Parish Council believes that the 3 objectives are appropriate, however, more attention is required to ensure that the principles are supported by the mechanics to achieve them.

There needs to be a greater more meaningful definition of brown field and an emphasis on protecting green spaces.

Whilst it is believed that the land identified is already included in previous plans, there may be a need to review land allocations and this should be done in association with Parish & Town Councils, as they have the local knowledge available to make informed decisions.

8. HEMs pre-application consultation

The Clerk had circulated a draft document for consideration, this had been as a result of the public consultation events at RCC and to bring together Council's previous comments on aspects of housing, transport and infrastructure.

Members discussed the document and considered some minor alterations believed necessary to ensure that the document fully represents the views.

It is also necessary to include within the PC response, the need to protect the access and viability of the nearby Farm, if at all possible.

9. Parish Council Strategy 2021 – 2026

Members considered the process for reviewing the current Strategy and to develop the 2021 version, taking into consideration the financial position due to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

It was agreed that all Members of the Parish Council should consider our current strategy (a copy is available on request) and add Red, Amber and Green (RAG) to it to identify the Council's priorities in the short, medium and longer term. This information should be sent to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk as soon as possible so that it can be analysed before the first Strategy Meeting (28th September at 8pm).

10. Date of Next Meeting

26th October 2020 8pm After the 2nd Strategy Meeting (at 7pm)

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50-pm.

SignedDate

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In March 2020, an enhanced risk assessment was completed, which related to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

RECOMMENDED that the Risk Management Policy and Risk Assessments be confirmed as adequate and appropriate and that continued monitoring will take place. This will be a standard item on each Finance & Audit Committee meeting in order that Members are kept up to date particularly in periods of excessive change, such as we are experiencing due to Covid-19.

b) Aged Analysis

As we move towards the new invoicing system, via Edge Facilities Package, the Aged Analysis will be automatically produced by the system.

However, at this time, the AA includes outstanding amounts relating to the use of the community buildings prior to March 23rd 2020, when we closed due to the pandemic. Many of the contract users have now brought their accounts up to date. However, there are some that remain unpaid that will continue to get regular reminders. We are grateful to those who have been able to pay and it will be a requirement of returning to use the buildings in September, that accounts are clear or special permission has been granted.

c) Internal Audit Report

Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council has employed the services of LightATouch, a company dedicated to Internal Audits and approved by Littlejohn's External Auditors. It has been necessary to undertake the Audit remotely and the Auditor had thanked the Clerk and Finance Manager for their help in providing all the necessary information for the audit to be completed. This had been undertaken at an earlier date than originally planned. A copy of the Audit report had been circulated to all Members and the Chairman pointed out a few statements contained in it.

- All transactions for 2019/20 were recorded on Advantage Software and its continued use will provide the Parish Council with an effective system of recording financial transactions and budget information.
- Confirmation has been obtained of good practice and compliance with the Transparency Code 2015 from the Council's website.
- Good practice that is being followed – use of AdvantEdge Software; aware of the requirements of GDPR; registered with ICO; financial input is up to date and easy to follow; income correctly recorded; budgeting process is detailed and thoroughly monitored throughout the year; each invoice is checked by the RFO and two Councillors, bank reconciliations are checked and reported monthly; the council takes an active scrutiny role; the insurance is appropriate; HMRC and PAYE payments are paid

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regularly; the Asset Register is up to date and VAT reimbursement claims are submitted to HMRC on a regular basis.

There was a recommendation that the Minutes of a Finance & Audit Committee meeting should list the number of payments made and an overall amount of total expenditure approved at each meeting.

The following was brought to the attention of the Committee.

It had been confirmed that the Risks of the Council had been reviewed during 2019/20, but these were not found to be in the Minutes and is a requirement of the External Auditor. This will result in the Council having to answer 'No' to assertion 5 of the AGAR. This is reflected in a 'No' on the Annual Internal Audit Report.

The 2019/20 AGAR requires the Auditor to check that the Council has correctly provided proper opportunity for the exercise of public rights in accordance with the regulations. Whilst this was confirmed and a copy available, there is no evidence to prove it was on the website at least one clear day before the 30 day period. It should be noted that compliance will be resolved at the time of posting the Notice for the Exercise of Public Rights 2020.

The Finance Officer had checked that the Asset Register is correct, details of new purchases and disposals were accounted for when completing Box 9 of the AGAR.

The Website Accessibility Regulations 2018 have been considered by the Parish Council as part of the arrangements for a new website which will comply with the Regulations along with assurance that it will remain compliant with the Transparency Code 2015.

It was proposed by the Chairman and seconded by the Vice Chairman and all members were in favour that the report be accepted and that thanks be extended to the Auditor, Rose and the Clerk for their work to prepare this useful report and associated documents. Members confirmed that the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights will be Monday, 27th July 2020 to Tuesday, 7th September 2020.

RECOMMENDED that Hollinswood & Randlay Parish Council completes the AGAR as clearly advised by the Internal Auditor and that the dates for the Exercise of Public Rights be confirmed as Monday, 27th July 2020 to Tuesday, 7th September 2020.
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d) End of Year Accounts, AGAR and supplementary evidence

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All the documents will be published on the Website from 27th July 2020. This will include the Explanation of Variances. The Council had been praised for the end of year accounts which had resulted in only one explanation being necessary, that of an increase in the precept.

FA20/633 Other Matters

Revised Budget

The Clerk reported that it had been very useful to approve a revised (Coronavirus) budget in April and that it would be good to re-assess and monitor this during August in preparation for September.

Employment of a 'new' Internal Auditor

The Clerk wished to record that the employment of a different internal auditor had been very positive and a useful experience.

FA20/634 Date of the Next Meeting

An additional meeting will take place on 17th August 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom.

The next meeting of the Committee will be determined as part of the Schedule of Meetings to be agreed at Full Council.

There being no further business, the Members asked the Clerk to pass on their thanks to the Finance Manager and then the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

Signed Date