

FELSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 25 November 2020 at 5.00 pm by Zoom video conference.

- Present** Councillors Graham Harvey (Chair), Roy Ramm and Penny Learmonth.
- F20/39 **Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**
Apologies were received from Councillors Peter Rose and Frances Marshall. There were no Declarations of Interest.
- F20/40 **Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020**
The Minutes of the meeting were agreed. They will be signed by the Chairman at his next meeting with the RFO.
- F20/41 **Matters arising from the October meeting**
41.1 Woodleys Car Park resurfacing (Item F20/25.1) – Members noted that the works had been completed.
41.2 Bank account signatories changes (Item F20/35) – The RFO confirmed that the change of signatories on the Nature Area accounts was in process. The RFO also confirmed that once the signed minutes of the 4 November Full Council meeting were available then he would begin the process of registering as a signatory on the Felsted Parish Council Barclays community account as agreed at the 4 November meeting (as per 20/189.4). Once the RFO was registered as a signatory then the move to online banking would be progressed further. The opening of the Felsted Community Trust account (20/189.3) was currently on hold pending the receipt of the signed Deed of Trust from Holmes and Hills but will be progressed as quickly as possible once this is received.
- F20/42 **Bank Reconciliation and PAYE records**
The outstanding reconciliations to 30 September 2020 had been reviewed and signed by both the Chair and Cllr Roy Ramm. The bank reconciliations for October will be signed by the Chair and Cllr Roy Ramm at their next meeting with the RFO.
- F20/43 **Consideration of the External Auditors Report for 2019-20**
Members were pleased to note that PKF Littlejohn LLP had reviewed the 2019-20 Audit Return (AGAR) and found the information to be “in accordance with Proper Practises”. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit was currently being displayed on the PC website and notice boards.
- F20/44 **Review of accounts for the current year to date**
Members studied the Budget Comparison prepared by the RFO. The proposed Budget levels remain unchanged from the October finance committee meeting and the RFO had produced an Estimated Year End amount for each item. The following items were noted
44.1 Receipts
- ‘Grants’ estimated year end figure was amended to £6,000 following confirmation of receipt of the full amount of the Essex County Council CIF Grant which had been applied for (see item 20/193.2).
44.2 Payments
- The salary figures for the Clerk had been updated to reflect the increase in the salary point for the current Assistant Clerk when she moves into her new role as Clerk from 1st December.
- The salary figures for the Assistant Clerk had likewise been updated to reflect the salary point for the new Assistant Clerk following her appointment.
- ‘Additional Play Equipment’ expenditure was increased to £12,000 to reflect the £6,000 of expenditure by the council in matched funding to the Essex County Council CIF Grant (see F20/44.1 above).
- The above amendments would result in Estimated Receipts of £89,195 and Estimated Payments of £154,380. Members noted the £65,185 deficit which would reduce the Council’s reserves to a level in the region of £67,170, below the lower end of the expected 1x to 2x precept range.

F20/45

Consideration of Precept for 2021-22

The RFO presented a draft budget for 2021-22 which was considered by members. As drafted the March 2022 year-end balance would be £64,000 which is below the External Auditor's recommendation of a minimum reserve balance equal to the annual Precept. Members discussed options and agreed to recommend an increase in the Precept to £85,000, with the aim of increasing reserves back to the recommended minimum over a period of 2 years. Members noted that there had only been 1 previous increase in the precept in the last 7 years and that expenditure on capital projects was the primary reason for the current level of the reserves. It was further noted that council expenditure was well controlled and capital projects accounted for the majority of the discretionary spending.

F20/46

Staff Matters

Heather Read Pension

It was confirmed that the Assistant Clerk had selected the government NEST pension schemes as her choice of pension provider when she takes up the Clerk role. The RFO confirmed that he had received the activation documentation from the payroll providers and had submitted the required direct debit form, signed by 2 bank signatories, to allow payments to be made from 1st December.

Diane Smith's Retirement

It was confirmed that Heather Read would take over the role of Clerk from 1st December and that Diane Smith would be employed until 31st December to enable a smooth handover, after which time she would retire. It was noted that due to the Coronavirus situation Diane had not taken all her allotted holiday during the year and that the outstanding days would be paid in lieu.

F20/47

Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items

None.

F20/48

Next meeting

The meeting closed at 6.05 pm.

The next meeting will be held in February 2020 (Date and Time to be confirmed).

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Chairman

Dated