

# LUDGERSHALL TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of the Finance meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at the Scout Hall, Chapel Lane, Ludgershall at 7.00pm.

**Present:** Cllr B Cordery (Chair), Cllr J White, Cllr M Giles, Cllr C A Allan, Cllr J Langley

**Public:** No members of the public attended the meeting

## AGENDA ITEM

- 001-20/21:** 1. Apologies – were received from Cllr CD Allan and Cllr B Dance. The committee resolved to accept these apologies and record under the LGA 1972 Section 99 and Sch 12 para 40.
- 002-20/21:** 2. Declaration of Interest – Cllr J White declared an interest at point 9 St James Church Grant Application.
- 003-20/21:** 3. Minutes of previous meeting – held 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – had been circulated and ratified at FTC on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020, there were no comments.
- 004-20/21:** 4. Financial Statement to end month 3 and Long Term Deposits at Lloyds, Nationwide and Santander banks – the Clerk asked to move the Long Term Deposit discussion to point 6, committee agreed. Month 3 accounts had been circulated and the Clerk confirmed that LTC were running well within budget at this time at 13.8%, spent.
- 005-20/21:** 5. Internal Audit Report – the report had been circulated and the Clerk confirmed that there were no issues and no new recommendations. The Internal Auditor had made comment that LTC are one of the best run Councils that she audits and that our corporate governance is very strong. The committee agreed to put forward to FTC for acceptance.
- 006-20/21:** 6. LTC Investment Strategy – recommendation of Finance to FTC on whether to go with CCLA or not and how much to invest – Information had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk went over the previous discussions from the January and February meetings along with the reports from 3 other local councils who are investing in the Public Sector Deposit Fund. She then detailed the Long Term Deposit funds that LTC have now and gave a few ideas of which to choose to invest. The committee discussed and Cllr J White proposed that Finance put to FTC that, when the second half of the precept is received £100,000 should be invested in PSDF (via CCLA) and that the Santander investment that matures on 6<sup>th</sup> August should be reinvested for 35 days and then £50,000 of this will be invested in PSDF at the same time, any monies over will be put into the Treasures Account, Mike seconded this proposal, all in favour, carried. Clerk to reinvest Santander now and once ratified at FTC, follow this proposal in September. The Committee will also discuss moving the Lloyds long term deposit nearer to its maturity on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020. LTC's Annual Investment Strategy 2020-21 had been circulated also, the Clerk is to update the Strategy with what has been discussed and put to FTC for ratification.
- 007-20/21:** 7. Committee Reports & items paid for during Lockdown that are not a usual monthly or annual payment – The Clerk informed the committee that monies spent by FTC, that are not a normal monthly expense, since 01/04/20 are Solicitors fees of £490 regarding the

Parnhams Covenant (previously agreed in October 2019) & £700.00 for the structural survey on the community building (the choice of surveyor was voted for via email/newsletter replies, Inviso Building Surveying were chosen by a majority of 10 votes) also 2 items were funded in the last financial year but need ratifying they were, £34.99 for emergency mobile phone and £2000.00 grant to Health Services Support, Cllr M Giles proposed that LTC pay this grant, seconded by Cllr B Cordery, all Cllrs were in favour, carried. Cllr J Langley informed the meeting that the committee are back to inspecting the Allotments, letters enquiring if the allotment holder may have been shielding, have been sent by Admin to those allotments that have not been tended. Unfortunately, some allotments are looking very bad and may need clearance and could be a cost to the Council. There will be 1 more month before LTC's protocol for untended plots will restart. Cllr J Langley wishes to thank Cllrs O White and V Dixon, for all their help with the planters and flower gardens, keeping them weeded and watered. Cllr O White will continue to water until the end of the season. Monies spent by the Allotment committee, that are not a normal monthly expense, since 01/04/20 are £99.15 for tools for water supplies (H & S necessity), £64.76 clearing of an allotment plot (previously agreed that Chair/vice chair can agree this expense), £84.67 removal of a conifer from headstone border in cemetery, this was an email consultation Cllr B Dance proposed, Cllr O White seconded, all in favour, carried, £33.00 repair to gate at Bell street entrance to allotments (agreed by Chair), £100.00 repair to leaking tap on trough at Bell Street Allotments (emergency repair agreed by Chair). Cllr J White went through the monies spent by the RLE committee, that are not a normal monthly expense, since 01/04/20. £75.00 re repairs to push up bars (previously agreed in Feb RLE), £62.40 Heras fencing (which was required until new gate arrived), £11850.00 & £3950.00 for hardstanding at Rec entrance (agreed in prior meeting), £245.00 repair of bench in Faberstown (agreed in Jan RLE), £380.80 purchase of Heras fencing (agreed with Cllrs M Giles & B Cordery), £570.00 Play park Quarterly inspection and repairs (agreed in Jan RLE) and £350.00 Skate park quarterly maintenance and inspection (agreed in Oct 2019 RLE). Cllr J White asked for the play park contractors to be put up for discussion on the next RLE agenda. Clerk will ensure. Cllr CA Allan stated there was nothing to report from Civic Events apart from that herself and Admin are looking in to getting new Christmas lights. Also, she signed for £30 petty cash for Easter Egg prizes before lockdown, she bought the eggs, the event was cancelled, and she gave the eggs to the children who were instrumental with an Easter egg trail in Ludgershall. Unfortunately, she has not got the receipt to balance the petty cash. The committee agreed that Cllr CA Allan can sign a paper to that affect and both the Finance Chair and the RFO will authorise, giving an audit trail. The Clerk then explained that the two contracts with Odd Job Barry, Play Park Agreement & Maintenance & Small Works had been extended due to lack of meetings. Odd Job Barry has confirmed there will be no increase to his fee, so the Clerk asked if F & P could agree to continue with Odd Job Barry's contracts as is until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021, all agreed. Clerk to update contract and complete with Odd Job Barry.

**008-20/21:** 8. Bills for Payment (Received to date) – totalled £5800.93 with vat of £448.17, permission was given to pay two invoices straight away, play area contact of £455.00 & Quarterly office rent of £1565.00, proposed by Cllr CA Allan seconded by Cllr J White all in favour, carried, clerk can pay the 2 agreed invoices. Full details will be given at the next FTC, after which payments will be made.

**009-20/21:** 9. Grants – Castledown FM & St James Church – the committee discussed the grant application for Castledown FM, there were concerns that Ludgershall was not getting the support they used to receive. Cllr M Giles proposed that a document of commitment of helping both the residents and Council of Ludgershall over the next year should be requested prior to the next FTC, when this application will be discussed again, Cllr CA Allan seconded 4 agreed 1 against, carried. Clerk to contract Castledown FM with the request. The committee then discussed the application from St James Church, during lockdown the church asked if LTC could increase the grant for Church yard maintenance. Votes were taken via newsletter to increase from £650 to £750, Cllr B Cordery proposed the increase, Cllr M Giles seconded, there were 8 votes for and 5 votes against with 1

abstention (no vote). The F & P committee were happy with this and agreed to put this application forward for ratification by FTC.

**010-20/21:** 10. Policies & Protocols – Lone working & Remote Meetings – the Clerk had in error not attached this paperwork to the agenda, she explained that the Lone Working Policy is necessary due to the nature of the small number of staff and the Remote Meetings Protocol which had been produced by NALC/WALC because of the government agreeing to Council meetings being called by remote meetings. Both of these will be attached to the next FTC for agreement.

**011-20/21:** 11. Unaudited Financial Statements/Year End Accounts – the Finance committee discussed and are happy to put forward to FTC for approval.

**012-20/21:** 12. CIL Annual Report – unfortunately, the Clerk has not had time to prepare this and will put on the next F & P agenda.

**013-20/21:** 13. Insurance Renewal – the Finance committee discussed and are happy to put forward to FTC for approval.

**014-20/21:** 14. Transparency Code – Quarterly reports of payments over £500 & tenders/contracts over £5000 – the Clerk explained that because LTC's income is now over £200,000 that the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 will apply. Quarterly reports of all payments over £500 (not including payroll) are to be published on the Town Council website. Along with advertising for any tenders over £5000 and then signed contracts also over £5000. She reiterated that it is extremely important that all quotes are obtained through the office.

**Under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the following agenda items will be closed to the public due to its confidential nature.**

**015-20/21:** 15. Salaries (Admin Assistant agreed increase from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020)/Training/Office – For minute purposes; It was agreed at the Staffing Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020, agreed by finance and reported in the newsletter of 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020 to the FTC, that after Admins appraisal and due to the wish of LTC that the admin assistant take on more responsibility by way of being able to stand in fully for the Town Clerk that the position should increase to SCP6 the top of the other staff section from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020. The committee also agreed that the admin assistant should take ownership of all the spending committees meetings and work that comes from this, this will free up a little more time for the Town Clerk to be more active as the RFO and keep the Council up to date, as more and more work is coming in to the council. The Clerk reported to the committee the salaries for payment in August as £3351.40 which includes no overtime, as agreed. The exact figures will be available at FTC. The Clerk has 4 ¾ hours and the Admin Assistant had no extra hours that need to be taken back over the next few weeks. The Clerk then advised that there are a number of remote training sessions that herself and admin should attend, along with the annual Regional Training Seminar in November. The training budget stands at £750, these 6 training sessions total £300, the committee agreed that these were necessary. The Clerk reported that the office in the new configuration was working well as is the appointment system (apart from Cllrs only 1 resident has made an appointment so far). Cllr J Langley suggested that face shields should be provided so that any visitors to the office will be able to see and hear the staff more clearly, all agreed this was a good idea. The Clerk will order. During the latest staffing meeting, the Clerk presented a request to increase the staff hours, the staffing committee asked for this to come to F & P. The Clerk then explained to the F & P committee; During the last 4 years the workload in the office of LTC has increased way more than anticipated. The Precept for 2015 -2016 was £114,045 and now in 2020 - 2021 is £201,794, approx. 76% increase, some of which was due to LTC increasing the Band D amount, but the majority is because of the increase of residents. In addition, Ludgershall is not a small town anymore please there are 238 Wiltshire precepting authorities for 2020/2021, and LTC on size and precept stand 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. As agreed previously, the Admin Assistant has taken on all the spending committees, while the Town Clerk is moving forward with Finance/Policies and projects. In 2016 there were 2 staff at 50 hours, now there is 2 staff at 57.5 hours, 7.5 which is approx. 14.5% increase of hours. I know that myself and Ali cannot keep going the way we are, it is

very stressful to work so hard trying to fit all the work within 57.5 hours a week. Things get left and staff get overwhelmed. My suggestion is to increase both mine and Ali's hours to 35 hours a week which will give us 70 hours which is a 40% increase of hours (from 50 to 70). This will go some way to alleviate the strains and stresses that are now showing. I know the budget did not take this into account, but this is a necessary increase that can be buffered later in the year when accounts are balanced. If this started from 1<sup>st</sup> August, then the increase would be around £8000 for this budget year. Looking forward to the end of the year at what has been spent so far this leaves, £3820, still in the Salary budget. Therefore, this budget will go over by approx. £4200. The committee had a lengthy discussion, they understood the workload has increased substantially, and not wanting staff to be anxious or stressed. Cllr M Giles proposed that F & P put forward to FTC that staff hours increase to 70 (35 for each member of staff) from the 1<sup>st</sup> August for a trial of 6 months (3 months to catch up from lock down and 3 months of working the hours normally), then reassess what hours the office needs at the end of the trial, Cllr J Langley seconded, all in favour. Clerk to put on next FTC agenda.

**016-20/21:** 16. [Agenda points for next meeting](#) –none.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 9.01pm.  
Next meeting tbc.

Signed.....Date.....