

Minutes of the Meeting of Aston Clinton Parish Council
Finance & Staff Committee
held on 25th February 2015 at 7.00pm
at Aston Clinton Parish Meeting Room

Present:

Councillors: -

G Plowman (Chairman)
D Wallis
J Hoinville
R Maskell

Clerk: Not available (Cllr J Savigar recorded the minutes)

No members of the public

15.001 Apologies

Cllr M Watson

15.002 Minutes

Cllr Plowman apologised that he had not circulated the December meeting minutes; therefore those minutes were not signed and need to be signed at the next meeting in March.

15.003 Declaration of Interests

None

15.004 Open Forum

Nothing raised.

15.005 Clerk's Report

The Clerk reports that after 3 months in post she has no doubt that 20 hours a week is not sufficient. She has requested the services of a temporary, part-time project assistant for approximately 3 months. Her work schedule could include projects such as finalising the transition of the Pavilion and the proposed "new councillor promotion evening".

A cleaning lady for the Parish Office has been engaged. She will undertake 1 total office clean per month at a cost of £20. It was RESOLVED to appoint a cleaning lady for this cost.

The Council has received an extremely large Thames Water bill, as outlined in last month's full PC meeting.

The Clerk has investigated and discovered that a previous Clerk had initiated a Leakage Allowance application but that this had been put on hold by Thames Water after a break in communication from the Clerk. This application has now been reactivated and Thames Water appears to think that we would qualify and therefore the bill could be significantly reduced to cost £73.44. A decision will be given in 7-10 days.

The Clerk reported that the Council's insurance policy is due for renewal in April. Cllr Maskell questioned this: both he and Cllr Savigar recollected that the insurance premium had been paid in autumn 2014.

The Clerk also wished the Committee to know that Cllr Maskell has asked Aviva to reconsider their decision not to indemnify him for his personal legal case on the grounds that he claims his action was undertaken as the Parish Clerk at the time.

The Clerk has been investigating the confusion surrounding a VAT claim, which had been sent to the VAT office on 20th November. The Clerk is resubmitting the paperwork.

15.006 Situation Report on 2014 -2015 Financial Year

The financial total held in all bank accounts and petty cash amounts is £26,366.10.

It was confirmed that the invoice figure of £844.62 from AVDC was for the hire of Eurobins and is a quarterly charge.

15.007 Precept

It was reported that Mr Skeggs of AVDC has advised that because the precept figure is higher than £140,000, the Parish Council needs to inform the parishioners prior to April. It was resolved that Cllr Plowman would publish the details on the website.

Similarly the amount will have to be published on the AVDC website with a breakdown of the expenditure. Cllr Plowman has presented a set of figures and is awaiting comment from AVDC.

15.008 Internal Audit - timetable and selection of Internal Auditor

The Clerk has decided she will use the services of a company called I.A.C for the annual internal audit.

The Clerk and Cllr Plowman are to meet with BAS on 26th February to discuss their input to the 2013/14 annual internal audit. The council was not satisfied with the audit conducted by BAS.

15.009 Recommendations of the Staff sub-committee

The Committee noted the report and recommendation of the Staffing Sub-Committee at Annex A.

It was RESOLVED to take the recommendation to the full Council that the Clerk's hours be increased from 20 to 25 hours per week. It was further RESOLVED that the Clerk enlists the services of a temporary clerical assistant to work with the Clerk, for 4 hours per week until end of June.

The Clerk's 6 months probationary period expires on 10th May, and this occurs between the outgoing and incoming Council's after the election. It was RESOLVED that the Clerk's appraisal takes place at the end of March. The recommendations of Chairman of the F&S Committee can then be brought to the March Finance Committee meeting and subsequently presented to the full Council meeting on the 1st April.

15.010 Bank Mandate

There has been a lapse in communication with Barclays Bank which has resulted in a serious delay in obtaining the bank mandate for 2 signatories. The reason given is that we are changing to a complex arrangement because we have a sole signature on the BACS system and are requesting dual signatories on cheques. Cllr Plowman will visit the Barclays branch in Hemel Hempstead to speak to the Branch Business Manager to resolve the issue.

15.011 Mowing by AVDC vice BCC

Further information is needed to discuss this matter. Cllr Plowman is to research this further.

15.012 Any Other Business

Following on from the earlier discussion about the precept analysis, Cllr Maskell wishes it to be recorded that the Precept is set at "what is required".

Cllr Plowman expressed concern that the Council is still paying individuals for services on an ad-hoc basis and without any formal agreements. He is seeking guidance with regard to our potential responsibilities for ensuring that statutory and/or good practice guidelines are being followed.

ALF at Green Park have requested the Council's support for them to apply for Section 106 money. This matter might be raised as an agenda item at next week's full Council meeting. Cllr Plowman wished to highlight that the Council needs to understand the situation fully and prepare an appropriate response to the request from ALF.

15.013 Date and time of next meeting

7.00 pm on Wednesday 25th March.

There being no further business of the Committee, the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.50pm

Signed:

Date:

Annex A: Report and Recommendation from Staffing Sub-Committee

A. Report and Recommendation from Staffing Sub-Committee

Governance

- Cllr Wallis elected as Chairman of Staffing Sub-Committee

Salary increase

- Implemented 1st January salary increase

Training

- Clerk has embarked on programme of training that will lead to Level 1 ILCA
- Additional CPD training events may be identified
- Two up-to-date books have been purchased for council offices
- Currently being mentored by Wendover Clerk, as well as Halton Clerk

Work plan

- The large volume of work was highlighted, especially the need for schedule of reviews and checks that the Clerk/RFO needs to perform. Action in hand to prioritise these for the Clerk.
- Requested extra hours for herself bringing total hours up to 25 per week, and clerical assistance for one morning each week until June
- Planning to assume responsibility for financial tasks from 1st April, with Cllr Plowman providing ongoing support after that date
- Currently taking on responsibility for website maintenance
- **Recommendation:** Clerk hours to be increased to 25 hours per week; additional 4 hours per week of clerical support be agreed until June 2015

Concerns and current issues

- Feeling under considerable pressure with the current workload which includes sorting out a legal case, the pavilion after the repossession, and the grounds maintenance procurement
- Clerk's main concern is prioritising workload, experiencing when there is considerable interruption in her working day.
- Measures have been discussed to help her manage situation of interruptions
- Clerk was also advised to seek advice and support from an external body such as SLCC in light of the pressures she has faced in her role

Appraisal and Probationary Period

- Appraisal to be completed before the end of April by Cllr Plowman