

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on Friday 7 December 2018 at 16:00 in Room 2, Alington House, 4 North Bailey, Durham, DH1 3ET

Present:

Councillors J Ashby, V Ashfield & A Doig (Chair)

Also present A Shanley and Cllr E Ashby

1. Welcome and receipt of apologies of absence

Councillor Doig opened the meeting by welcoming all Members of the Finance Committee and Cllr E Ashby who attended the meeting to provide information pertinent to item 5 of the Committee's Agenda.

2. To receive any declarations of interest from Members

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th November

The Minutes were unanimously agreed as a true and accurate record of the Finance Committee held on 19th November. The Chair signed the Minutes.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

Cllr Doig reminded the meeting that Cllr Elmer had resigned from the committee and there would be a need to augment the Committee further to make it more operational. A further call for new Members would be made at the next Full Parish Council meeting on 20th December.

Cllr Doig asked the Clerk for an update on future banking arrangements for the Parish Council, as discussed under item 6 of the Agenda from the Finance Committee meeting held on 19th November, A Shanley advised that he would be putting a report before the Full Parish Council on 20th December to make a decision on this. A recommendation would be put to Councillors as part of this report along with details of Bank mandates etc. The Clerk reminded Councillors that Banking arrangement could not be devolved to a Committee but rather a decision which needed to be made by Full Council.

The Clerk also reported to the meeting that, since the last Finance Committee meeting, he had researched the number of Allotments within the Parish and discovered there is currently only one Allotment under the ownership of DCC, which recent correspondence suggested they would be looking to transfer to the Parish Council at some stage. Cllr Ashfield made the point that before any transfer took place, the Parish Council would need to assess what the implications would be in terms of the time required by the Clerk to do duties relating to the Allotment.

A Shanley and Cllr Ashfield also reported that, since the last meeting of the Finance Committee meeting, they had met in Durham to have an informal review of potential office sites for the use of the Parish Council. This was for information only at this stage however and it is envisaged that a report would be provided to the Parish Council on this matter on 20th December.

4. Public participation on the following Agenda Items.

There were no members of the public present at this meeting.

5. To hold further discussions on expenditure against the 2018/2019 budget and the preparation of the 2019/2020 budget. To assess the implications of committees wanting to spend monies in 2019/2020

The Clerk reminded Members that the known spend to date for Financial year 2018/2019 was approximately £30,000 and therefore the remaining balance of the precept collected for this financial year would be transferred to the Parish Council once banking arrangements had been arranged and the process carried out with the County Council who are currently holding this on behalf of the Parish Council. This would be placed in reserves until committed by the Parish Council.

The Clerk reported that, to date, no Committee had submitted a budget plan for 2019/2020, however the Environment Committee Chair had submitted a work plan for the Committee, which is likely to be the biggest spending committee of the Parish Council, and costs were being worked through.

Cllr J Ashby made the point that no Committee had been asked to submit a budget plan to date. A Shanley advised that he would raise this with each of the Chairs of the Committees as this process needed to be agreed relatively speedily. Cllr A Doig made the point that all budgets needed to be submitted no later than 3rd January so as to allow time for these to be considered and discussed at the Finance Committee meeting on 11th January, with a formal recommendation going to Full Council in January, thereafter a precept request would be submitted accordingly.

At this point Cllr A Doig invited Cllr E Ashby to provide the Committee with her information in relation to potential expenditure against the 2018/2019 budget. Cllr E Ashby advised that the Environment Committee were potentially looking to purchase a multi-use snow plough/grass cutting machine for the use of the Parish Council to clear roads and pavements at times when there is snow and to cut the grass where DCC may not be providing this service at present. Cllr E Ashby advised that she had done some research and received a cost for a brand new grass cutting machine at £14,250 and a further £1,950 (excluding VAT) for the snow plough equipment to be used on the machine. Cllr E Ashby advised that this would be the top scale of the costs associated with the purchase of such a machine and that she was intending to research further on the costs of a second-hand machine. Cllr E Ashby advised that she had had a preliminary discussion with Craig Morgan at the AAP to see whether or not the AAP would be interested in supporting this and had been informed that the AAP may be interested in supporting this but only with the option of the second-hand model. Cllr E Ashby advised that she would also look into the potential of leasing out the vehicle to other neighbouring Parishes at a cost which would therefore bring the costs down for City of Durham Parish Council so that the Council could review the full facts of such a project. Cllr E Ashby advised that the Parish Council would need to employ someone on a part-time basis to carry out this role. Cllr E Ashby advised that this was a very worthwhile thing to do and there was also the potential of working with local students to set up a network of volunteers who could assist in clearing areas badly affected by snow. Cllr J Ashby advised that County Councillors used to hand out bags of salt when the snow was bad.

A report on this matter would go before the Full Parish Council meeting to decide.

Cllr A Doig thanked Cllr E Ashby for attending the meeting and for providing this information. He advised that he felt that this a worthwhile project which could increase the profile of the Parish Council and advised that the Environment Committee should investigate this further.

6. Confirmation of Council tax base and localisation of Council tax support grant 2019/2020.

The Chair asked that Members consider and take note of the report relating to the localisation of Council tax support, noting that City of Durham has no LCTRSG issued to it. The Chair also asked Members to note the actual Council Tax Base figure as set out in the report. Members agreed that they felt that the council tax property charge ought to be kept at 2018/19 level of £150,000 which would mean that, on the basis of the 2019/2020 Council tax base provided by the County Council which shows an increase of chargeable properties, the precept for 2019/20 would therefore be £152,124.

7. Dates of future meetings

It was agreed that the meeting on 4th January ought to be cancelled to allow the Committees time to put together budget proposals for 2019/20.

Signed

Chair City of Durham Finance Committee
11th January 2019