WALFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Finance Committee Meeting

Held Wednesday 1st February 2023 at 7:30pm
At Walford Village Hall

Present: Councillors: Chinn, Akers, Cole, Whelan.
In attendance: N Richmond (Clerk) and three members of the public

1. **Apologies for absence:** - Cllr Drummond reason accepted.

2. **Declarations of interest and written requests for dispensation**: - None made.

3. **Adoption of Minutes of previous meeting:** - It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2022 as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the chairman.

4. **Public participation session**: - Dave Berry advised that he wished to speak on three items on the agenda. The chairman Cllr Chinn agreed that Dave Berry would be allowed to speak for three minutes on each as they came up on the agenda. Graham Morgan-Watson requested the same dispensation which was also agreed.

5. **Financial information: -**

5.1 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank statements and reconciliation up to December 2022, and councillor Whelan signed the reconciliation.

5.2 **Year to date accounts**. The year to date accounts having been circulated no questions arose. Cllr Chinn noted that year end was approaching. The clerk said he would contact the internal auditor Jayne Dunstan to confirm she was in a position to carry out the audit. Cllr Chinn advised that he should do so but full council approval was required to appoint her as internal auditor.

5.3 **Unity Trust charge card.** The clerk had spoken to Unity Trust Bank who had confirmed that they had the application but it required approval via Lloyds Bank who were delaying the process. The clerk will chase them and once he has the go-ahead council can consider who should have a card.

5.4 **Assets Register.** It was **AGREED** that the clerk would update the register with the addition of a table and chairs and a freezer purchased for the Community Support Scheme in 2021 and add a note that it had only now been realised that these items should have been placed on the register. Cllr Chinn made the following proposal **: 'Consumable assets purchased for a value in excess of £100 will be recorded in the assets register, and the assets policy will be updated to reflect this'**. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Akers and all voted in favour.

5.5 **Riverbank Restoration quotations.** The three quotations having been circulated councillors discussed their merits. Cllr Chinn pointed out that the best value quotation was from JPR Environmental with whom Cllr Petersen had been working to obtain a permit from the Environment Agency, and that the Environment Agency had provided positive feedback in respect of JPR Environmental, so she proposed that JPR Environmental be selected as the council's preferred contractor. This was seconded by Cllr Cole and all voted in favour.

5.6 **To consider a £950 budget for NDP referendum publicity.** Cllr Akers explained that the NDP steering group had requested this budget before becoming aware of the likely cost of a leaflet drop via Royal Mail so the expenditure was more likely to be under £300 and in any case would come out of the NDP grant rather than council funds. Cllr Akers proposed that the budget be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Whelan and all voted in favour.

6. **Payments**: -

6.1 It was **resolved** to approve the payment on Appendix 3 by a vote of three in favour and one (Cllr Cole) against.

6.2 It was **resolved** to ratify payment of the clerk's salary with all voting in favour.

6.3 **PKF Littlejohn invoices.**
Dave Berry spoke in relation to PKF's assertion that council had not minuted approval of the Tree work expenditure at KBCL. Cllr Chinn advised him that the signed minutes had now been placed to the council website and sent to PKF, who had acknowledged that the matter was resolved although they were unable to change their decision report. Cllr Chinn summarised the current

position that council had not received a suitable response to the questions it had raised with PKF concerning a proper breakdown of how the hours had been accumulated, that there had been several duplications of information requests made to council and the investigations appear to have been handled by different people at their end resulting in further duplication of work. The clerk advised that he had spoken to Lynda Wilcox at HALC and sent her the three separate years reports and invoices from PKF. Lynda Wilcox felt that if the same objections were made in each of the three years they could not justify making very similar large charges for two of the three years to cover the same objections. Graham Morgan-Watson asked when the council became aware of the extent of the charges. Cllr Chinn advised him that these only came to light in December 2022. The clerk explained that for each of the years PKF had issued a 'holding' report saying that they were unable to finalise their external audit until objections had been fully investigated.

Cllr Chinn proposed that she draft a new response to PKF Littlejohn to be circulated to the committee members for approval to be then sent to PKF Littlejohn by the clerk. All voted in favour of this action.

7. Compliance: -

7.1 **Riversea Holdings Insurance Cover.**

Cllr Whelan had circulated his analysis of the various liability certificates held by Riversea, from which he concludes that cover is held in the appropriate amount for all the Riversea activities. He suggested that council might consider asking Charlie Baker to confirm to council that he has seen all the canoe launch companies public liability documents, their risk assessments and that they hold an AALA license for activities on the water. He also suggested that Charlie be encouraged not to assist with canoe launches as this might invalidate his insurance. It was felt that council was not in a position to demand these things from Riversea so it was **AGREED** that the clerk would write to Riversea Holdings suggesting that they consider these measures. The question of indemnity was discussed and it was also **AGREED** that the clerk would write to Riversea requesting that their insurance included a clause that would indemnify Walford Parish Council from any loss resulting from any actions of Riversea Holdings Ltd at the Kerne Bridge Canoe Site and car park during the times of it's operations at the site. It was further **AGREED** that the clerk would write to it's insurers Gallaghers to request written assurance that the council is covered for any losses at the Kerne Bridge Canoe Launch site and car park that are not met by Riversea Holdings own insurance.

At 20.30 Cllr Cole left the meeting

7.2 **Resilience Plan.**

Dave Berry having been involved in drafting the document together with Cllr Petersen, he expressed concern that it had not been concluded. Having now had a further amendment on suggestions made by Ward Councillor Watson he felt it should be submitted to the Herefordshire Council Resilience Team. Cllr Akers proposed that the plan be submitted. This was seconded by Cllr Whelan and all voted in favour.

Cllr Cole rejoined the meeting at 20.34

8. Daycroft Lane drainage work.

The clerk reported on a meeting with an alternative contractor (Richard Mills) to the parish lengthsman held before Christmas with Cllr Cole and himself at Daycroft Lane. Mr Mills had subsequently revisited the site with a camera and had established where there was a blockage. He thought the cost of clearing the blockage to be between £2k and £3k, but he did not want to quote for the work, his reason being that he felt the pipes at the end of the culvert where too small for the potential volume of water and this might lead to recriminations over his work if that proved to be the case. As the job had been submitted to Herefordshire Council for completion under thev drainage grant, the clerk was asked to contact Mr Mills to find out if he would quote for the work if council put in writing that it appreciated that clearing the blockage was not necessarily the entire solution and therefore no blame would attach to him. Cllr Cole advised that he had heard from the Balfour Beatty Locality Steward that the grant could be spent on drainage 'maintenance days' if specific jobs applied for could not be completed. The clerk is to contact Balfour Beatty for confirmation of this.

9. General Powers of Competence.

Dave Berry advised the committee that losing the general powers might have a considerable impact on council's ability to spend funds on things such as KBCL and the Community Support Scheme. The clerk believes that most such areas are within statutory powers and is to check with HALC to see if these areas of expenditure might be affected.

10. Items for next meeting agenda: -

10.1 Unity Trust charge card.
10.2 Approval of the internal auditor
10.3 Assets register approval
10.4 Accounts year end.

Next meeting: - Wednesday 5th April 2023 2022 – 7:30 pm at Bishopswood Village Hall
The meeting closed at 8:56 p.m.

SIGNED ______________________ DATE 5.4.23