

**MINUTES OF A MEETING (19) OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE OF CAWSTON PARISH COUNCIL**

MEETING HELD REMOTELY ON TUESDAY 9th FEBRUARY 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Members in attendance:	Councillors R. Bishop, (Chairman), S. Bestwick, and M. Cool.
Guests in attendance:	None
Minutes:	R. Nash (Clerk)
Officers in attendance:	Mrs V. Moody (Facilities & Communication Manager)
Cawston Parish Council, Scholars Drive, Rugby, CV22 7GU	

F20-94 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

F20-95 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Bishop indicated that he would be updating his Registered Interests to reflect that he was no longer Regional Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses. There were no other declarations at this time.

F20-96 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (18) held on 12th January, 2021, were considered.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee (18) held on 12th January, 2021 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

F20-97 Finance Reports

A report setting out payments arising during the month of January had been circulated and was considered.

Payments requiring approval totalled £4408.08. The current account and Community Hall bank reconciliations and bank statements for January had also been circulated and were considered. The position with regard to the long-term debtors was also noted. The Facilities & Communication Manager advised in relation to the one income transaction arising during the accounting period of January.

It was noted that the current practice was to approve individual payment transactions at the meeting in addition to the independent verification conducted by Cllr Cool prior to the Meeting. It was agreed that the additional verification undertaken by the Committee was unnecessary subject to the continued submission of a signed reconciliation by a nominated Councillor prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) that current account payments arising in the sum of £4408.08 are approved;
- (2) that the bank account reconciliations for the period to 30th December are received and approved
- (3) that the position in respect of aged debtors is noted.
- (4) that individual creditor payments continue to be reconciled prior to the meeting and countersigned by a nominated Member as sufficient verification of the Council's transactions.

Action: Clerk

F20-98 Cawston Community Hall

The Facilities and Communications Manager reported that the Community Hall was now in use for educational support purposes by Warwickshire County Council on Tuesday mornings and Fridays. With that exception, the Hall remained closed to use for all other purposes in accordance with the current restrictions imposed by the Government.

Following the last meeting, she had requested quotations for the repairs to the heating manifolds which were awaited. However, based on the cost of remedying an identical fault previously, the cost of this work was expected to be in the region of £1300. Following the last meeting, initial contact had been made with a number of Architects to obtain quotations for work to modify the rear access to the main hall. No formal responses had been obtained; the Committee would be updated on progress at the next meeting.

RESOLVED

- (1) that the report of the Facilities and Communications Manager is noted;
- (2) that the FCM is authorised to proceed with any works essential to the servicing and maintenance of the Community Hall and mechanical plant, subject to the costs being within the approved budget and reported to the Committee subsequently;
- (3) that a further report on options for enhancements to the external fire doors and shuttering mechanisms at the Community Hall is made to the next meeting upon conclusion of discussions with local Architects.

Action: FCM

Action: FCM

F20-99 Investment opportunities with CCLA

The Clerk reported that a response had now been obtained from James, Ryan Thornhill in relation to procuring for the Council an Independent Financial Appraisal of the Local Authorities Property Fund managed by CCLA. This was a legal requirement before CCLA can accept an investment from the Parish Council.

The Committee was advised that James, Ryan Thornhill had merged with a new partner company and was unable to accept new clients of CCLA until compliance approval had been obtained. The Council's request to commission a Financial Appraisal had therefore been declined for the present time.

The Council must either now await a decision by James, Ryan Thornhill, the date of which was extremely uncertain, or source a Financial Appraisal elsewhere.

Cllr Cool referred to a possible solution available locally and would pass details to the Clerk after the meeting. It was concluded that in view of the need to exercise diligence in this matter before proceeding, the Clerk should be authorised to proceed with inquiries independently of James, Ryan Thornhill and to ensure close liaison with CCLA in terms of all factual information necessary for the completion of the Independent Financial Appraisal.

RESOLVED that further investigation of the availability of an Independent Financial Adviser is conducted by the Clerk and a report made to the next Meeting.

Action: Clerk

F20-100 Appointment Process – Parish Clerk

The Clerk had been requested to bring forward proposals for the conduct of an appointment process to recruit a new permanent Clerk.

A flow-chart setting out the key stages of the process had been circulated and was considered. The Clerk advised that the commencement of a recruitment process afforded opportunity to review the grading of both the Clerk and FCM posts via the National Agreement for Council employees. This would also provide the opportunity to ensure that the duties of each employee were appropriately assessed, graded and the roles aligned prior to proceeding with an appointment.

The Committee supported the early commencement of the recruiting process initially through a comparative exercise utilising the National Agreement as a basis for evaluating the duties of both the Clerk and FCM posts against a defined benchmark. The option of securing external assistance for the shortlisting and interview stages was supported and the Clerk requested to obtain further details and costings.

RESOLVED

- (i) that a Report is made to the next meeting to enable early commencement of the review of the Job Description and Salary Grade of the posts of Clerk and Facilities and Communications Manager:
- (ii) that the Clerk obtains further details of the availability and costs associated with employing the services of a Consultant to assist with the process of Candidate shortlisting and selection

Action: Clerk

F20-101 Appointment to vacant Council seats

Following public notification of the casual vacancy of two seats on the Council, the Clerk reported that six written expressions of interest had now been received and these were summarised in a document circulated prior to the meeting.

It was considered that all the applicants should be afforded an opportunity to witness a full Council meeting before further consideration of their applications as this would enable them to understand the responsibilities of a Councillor and the work of the Council. A formal appointment would then be facilitated at the meeting of the Council to be held in March.

RESOLVED that all candidates for the vacant seats on the Council are invited to attend the next meeting on 16th February, 2021 and that a formal decision to appoint two Councillors is deferred to the meeting to be held on 16th March.

Action: Clerk

F20-102 Pension Contributions

The Clerk advised that following the decision of the Council to approve participation in the National Employment Saving Trust,(NEST), the Committee had been delegated to consider and recommend the employer rate of contribution. The Committee was advised that:

- the current minimum contribution payable by the employer was 3% of salary;
- the employer can elect to pay a contribution in excess of the minimum;
- options available included paying the employee contribution of 5% of salary or any percentage contribution above 3% agreed by the employer.

The available options open to the Council were discussed at considerable length. The Committee endorsed the principle of making a significant contribution to employee pensions whilst recognising the financial implications for the Council both now and in the future.

RESOLVED to recommend the Council:

- (i) that with effect from the 1st April, 2021, the employer contribution to employee pensions within the NEST scheme commences at the rate of 5% of gross annual salary;
- (ii) that the employer contribution is made up to the rate of 7% of gross annual salary in all cases where an equivalent employee contribution is made;
- (iii) that the rate of employer contribution is reviewed not less than on an annual basis.

Action: Clerk

F20-103 Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

No items were raised.

F20-104 Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 9th March 2021, commencing at 7.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 9.32 pm.