

# LEAFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Annual Meeting

held as a Virtual Meeting at 8pm on Wednesday 20th May 2020

**Those Present:** Cllr Gina Pearce (Chairman), Cllrs Luke Caunt, Richard Hamilton, Jeremy Russ

**In attendance:** Sharon Henley, Clerk/RFO

**Members of Public:** None

### 1. Election of Chairman of the Council

- 1.1. **To elect the Chairman for the forthcoming year:** Cllr Pearce chaired the meeting as existing Chairman and requested nominations. Cllr Pearce was nominated by all councillors and there were no other candidates so Cllr Pearce was unanimously elected.
- 1.2. **Completion of Declaration of Acceptance of Office by Chairman:** Cllr Pearce signed a hard copy during the meeting and it was agreed that this would be passed to the Clerk for signature at a later date.

2. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr Kevin Ward, County Cllr Liam Walker, District Cllrs Mullins and Hill.

3. **Election of Vice Chairman of the Council for the forthcoming year:** Cllr Caunt was proposed by all councillors and was unanimously elected. Cllr Caunt signed a hard copy of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and it was agreed to pass it to the Clerk for signature at a later date.

4. **Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda.** None

5. **Approval of Annual Memberships for subscription payments across the year as required:** The Clerk/RFO produced the following list, approximate amounts had been included in this year's approved budget:

- 5.1. Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
  - 5.2. Society of Local Council Clerks
  - 5.3. Community First Oxfordshire
  - 5.4. Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association
  - 5.5. Open Spaces Society
  - 5.6. ICCM (Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management)
- Council approved the above list.

6. **Approval of Regular Standing Order and Direct Debit Payments:** The Clerk/RFO listed all regular payments not requiring pre-approval prior to each payment. All expenditure to be reported to Council at the monthly meeting.

List of Standing Orders & Direct Debits 2020-21				
Company/Payee	Amount	Reason	Frequency	SO/DD
Sharon Henley	Personal	Clerk's Salary	Monthly	SO
Zoom	£14.39	Video Conferencing	Monthly	DD
Bitdefender	£39.99	Clerk's laptop anti-virus	Annual	DD
Ionos	£1.20	Website Hosting & Domain Name	Monthly	DD
Castle Water	£48.96	Pavilion Water	6 Monthly	DD
EE	£13.28	Clerk's Mobile Phone	Monthly	DD
ICO	£35.00	Registration with Info Commissioner's Office	Annual	DD

Council approved the above list.

**7. S137 Expenditure (Section 137 Local Government Act)**

7.1. **Expenditure Limit for 2020-21:** The Clerk/RFO advised that the current year’s amount as advised by NALC was £8.32 per elector x 742 on electoral roll = £6,173.44. This was the maximum amount available to spend under S137 where there were no other legal powers to spend.

**7.2. Report on 2019-20 Expenditure:**

Date	Amount	Payee	Reason
10/04/2019	£20.00	Leaffield Guides	Donation towards community defib training 19th March 2019
14/10/2019	£17.00	British Legion	Poppy Wreath for Remembrance Day
13/11/2019	£45.00	Open Spaces Society	Membership Subs
15/01/2020	£9.84	Co-Op	Refreshments for Public Consultation 15th Jan
03/07/2019	£150.00	PCC	Donation towards maintenance of Church Floodlights
<b>Total s137</b>	<b>£241.84</b>		

This was noted by Council.

**8. Approval of Grants for 2020-21:** As per the agreed budget

£815.00	Village Hall Committee	Donation towards annual running costs of Hall	LGA 1972 s.133
£750.00	The Villager Bus Service	Donation towards community bus service	Transport Act 1985 s106A

Cllr Pearce to check whether the Village Hall Committee still intended to claim this grant following receipt of the Business Continuity Grant from WODC. The Villager Bus Grant was approved, if the service was restarted following the Covid-19 interruptions to service.

**9. RFO’s Report on End of Financial Year 2019-20 (to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020):** The Clerk/RFO reported as follows:

2019-20 Precept was £42,279

Total income received was £53,245 and Expenditure was £48,213.82 creating a net gain of £5,031.

**Bank Balances at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

The total balance of all bank accounts £61,419.62 so that amount was Brought Forward to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

Community Direct Plus £60,855.52

Business Select £564.10

Balance Brought Forward at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 was £56,388 translating to an additional £5,031.62 in Reserves at

The £61,419.62 bank balance at year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 was made up of:

- Earmarked Reserves of £41,078.29
- General Reserves of £20,341.33

**% of Precept in Reserves**

The 2019-20 year-end balance of £61,419.62 was approx. 145% of the total 2019-20 year’s Precept amount in Reserves.

However, the new 2020-21 precept was increased to £61,945.90 which meant just over 100% of the current year's precept amount was held at the start of the financial year 2020-21.

### **Earmarked Reserves**

The following income has been received and added: Car Park Project donation of £1,000, a Memorial Bench donation of £460, Red Phone Box Project Donations £652.87, VE Day Grant £375. £772 was taken from Earmarked Reserves to fund the new website.

### **Receipts**

A total of £2,487.87 was received towards various projects and was transferred to Earmarked Reserves.

Total VAT reclaim receipts were £8,160, including £3,750 due from the previous year.

A new Wayleave from SSEN on the Greens gave a receipt of £177.45.

### **Payments**

Car park budgets had a total of £6,500 at the start of the year but a total of £8,942 was spent, resulting in a budget overspend of £2,442. This was due to more progress being made on this project than was originally planned or budgeted for. Monies were vired from the VAT Reclaims budget, trees and burial ground project.

The request for the Bus Donation for The Villager was received after the budget was approved so £750 came from the Village Regeneration Budget.

Playing Fields & Playing Equipment Maintenance budget was £3,000 but £4,915 was spent due to a large amount of remedial work being required on the play equipment. This was caused by wear and tear on ageing equipment but also some instances of criminal damage.

The Clerk's Pension costs were unbudgeted due to a misunderstanding on pension requirements when budgeting took place in Autumn 2018. Staff costs increased from the previous year, partially due to the fact that there had been a period during the previous financial year when no Clerk was employed.

The grass cutting budget was underspent at £4,249 against a budget of £5,500 which represented good value for money from the contractor. However, the very hot, dry summer meant that grass cutting wasn't required during high summer and a very wet spell in early autumn also meant cutting was not possible.

Councillors received and noted the report.

10. **Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) (wet signatures required):** The Clerk/RFO had circulated draft AGAR documents prior to the meeting and these were screen shared via Zoom.

10.1. **Review and Completion of Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2019-20:** The Clerk/RFO ran through each statement and explained its meaning prior to councillors agreeing on the correct response.

Councillors approved that sections 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 should have a Yes response. Section 5 had a No response, as recommended by the Internal Auditor. This was due to the review of the Risk Register taking place after the end of the financial year as meetings were cancelled due to illness and Covid-19. The Clerk/RFO to include an explanation when submitting to the External Auditor. Section 9 was n/a.

10.2. **Approval of End of Year Bank Reconciliation to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020:** Documents had been previously circulated and shared and approved.

10.3. **Review and Approval of Explanation of Significant Differences 2019-20:** This was approved, subject to the amount of VAT claims increase being slightly amended.

- 10.4. **Review and Approval of Section 2 Accounting Statements 2019-20:** The Clerk/RFO ran through the draft figures and these were approved. The Clerk/RFO signed the accounting statement. Council agreed that the Chairman should sign the hard copy of the AGAR as soon as possible following the meeting. The Clerk/RFO to submit the AGAR and accompanying documents to the External Auditor as soon as possible following this.
- 10.5. **Confirmation of Dates for Period of the Exercise of Public Rights**  
The Clerk/RFO tabled the statutory notice with inspection dates set as Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June to Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July (30 working days) and this to be displayed on the website and noticeboards.
11. **Review of General and Earmarked Reserves:** The statement as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 had been circulated.
- 11.1. **Sufficiency of Funds Available:** As stated in the RFO's report, the Council currently held just over 100% of precept in General & Earmarked Reserves. A total of £20,366.33 in General Reserves (unallocated) and £41,053.29 in Earmarked Reserves. Councillors considered this amount sufficient for current requirements, although General Reserves were relatively low there was the option to re-allocate Earmarked Reserves should monies be required.
- 11.2. **Objectives of Earmarked Reserves:** All Earmarked Reserves were quantified by project and this was considered sufficient by councillors, especially as these were regularly reviewed at Council meetings.
12. **Fixed Asset Register:**
- 12.1. Review of Register: The current register dated Feb 2019 was reviewed. It was agreed to amend the following and review at the June meeting:
- 12.1.1. Lych Gate – this was not previously listed as an asset, but it was understood that it had been gifted to the PC so would be listed as a gift. The Clerk to ask the Churchwarden if any additional information was known. The nameplate listing to be retained.
- 12.1.2. Wi-fi extender to be added at a cost of £50.
- 12.1.3. Printer WF2510 was disposed of.
- 12.1.4. The old CCTV system to be disposed of and the new system added.
- 12.2. **Arrangements for Physical Review of Assets by Councillors:** The internal auditor had commented that Councillors should physically inspect items on the Fixed Asset Register and that it was not sufficient for the Clerk to confirm the existence of the assets. It was agreed that Cllr Russ would work with the Clerk to complete this task which can be done across the year.
13. **Village Hall Car Park Tender:**
- 13.1. **Review of Tender Submissions:** These had been circulated and Cllr Caunt updated the Council that two tenders had been received, both of which were significantly above the projected cost.
- 13.2. **Award of Tender or Agreement on next steps:** After discussion it was agreed to review the specification with the design contractor and re-tender. A third contractor had been invited to tender and it was agreed to contact them to determine why a tender had not been submitted. Revised submissions to be reviewed at the June meeting.
14. **Burial Ground PWLB Application:** The initial application had received a response with questions to be addressed. The following were agreed as a result of this:
- 14.1. **Resolution to confirm type of repayment scheme – Annuity or EIP:** After discussion, it was agreed that an EIP loan would be the preferred option.
- 14.2. **Resolution to clarify wording and terms for PWLB Burial Loan Application as per Resolution 11.2 on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020:** The PWLB had requested that the detail of the April resolution was more clearly worded. As the April minutes had already been approved it was agreed to re-state and approve the resolution. The Clerk/RFO read out the following statement for approval:

It was RESOLVED to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to apply for a Public Works Loan Board Loan of £40,000 over the borrowing term of 25 years for the construction phase 1 of the new Burial Ground project. The annual loan repayments will come to around £2,281.20.

The Council Tax precept for 2020-21 was increased for the purpose of the loan repayments by 5.39%, which is the equivalent of an additional £2,281.20 per year, or £6.13 per Band D household. This was following a precept increase consultation held between November 2019 and January 2020.

The above was unanimously approved. All other queries from the PWLB to be responded to and submitted as soon as possible.

14.3. **Draft Agreement for Land Access:** The neighbouring land owner had requested that a formal written agreement was drawn up for land access during the burial ground construction phase. A draft had been requested and received and this to be sent to the solicitor for review and advice. Once this and the scope of works was agreed, the Clerk to send to the insurers.

15. **Application for SEN Grant for Covid-19 Support:** It had been decided not to submit an application at this point.

16. **Date of next meeting:** Ordinary Parish Council Meeting at 8pm on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June via video conference (tbc).

17. **End of Meeting**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21.11 hours.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_