

Minutes of the meeting of Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council Finance Committee held on Monday 22nd November 2021 by video conference facility.

Present: Parish Council

Councillors:

A Mabbett;
S Clarke;
M Gibbs;
A Hood;
Dr R Morgan;
S Nock;
S Wilkes.

Clerk: Cheryl Powell

Public

There were 0 members of public in attendance

199/21 Apologies.

There were no apologies received.

200/21 Declarations of interest.

There were no declarations of interest.

201/21 Dispensations Requested.

There were no dispensations requested,

202/21 Minutes of previous meeting.

The Chair noted there were two sets of previous minutes to consider, these being the minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 20th September 2021 and the minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 18th October 2021.

Councillor Mabbett requested the following amendments were made to the minutes of the meeting held on the 20th September 2021. These being: -

- i. Page numbering should start from 46 and must continue sequentially.
- ii. Minute Ref: 182/21 – The assets were not reviewed in line with the current insurance policy. It was agreed that this would be considered at the Finance Committee meeting scheduled for the 13th December 2021. The policy documents will be emailed to Councillors for review also.
- iii. Minute Ref: 184/21 – The minute heading will need to be changed to Pepperwood to avoid ambiguity. Further, Councillor Mabbett requested the wording of
“...it was recommended that if there were any specific items that require purchasing the Parish Council would support its purchase...”
is amended to read
“...it was recommended that if there were any specific items that require purchasing the Parish Council may support this...”
- iv. Minute Ref: 185/21 – Councillor Mabbett requested an extra sentence is added to read

“...this proposal was accepted and the clerk instructed to prepare a cheque for £250.00...”

- v. Minute Ref: 186/21 – Councillor Mabbett requested the wording of
“...it was noted a virtual local number could be purchased with a Belbroughton dialling code...”
is amended to read
“...it was agreed a virtual local number could be purchased with a Belbroughton dialling code...”
- vi. Minute Ref: 187/21 – Councillor Mabbett requested bullets i – iii must clearly reference Fairfield Recreation Ground for accuracy.
- vii. In the table titled Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council – Finance Committee’s outstanding issues, Councillor Mabbett noted the typographical error of the word Lenghtsman and requested this is amended to read Lengthsman

Councillor Nock requested the following amendment is made to the minutes of the meeting held on the 20th September. This being: -

- i. Councillor Mabbett to be amended to read Councillor Mabbett

Councillor Mabbett requested the following amendments were made to the minutes of the meeting held on the 18th October 2021. These being: -

- i. Page numbering should start from 51 and must run sequentially.
- ii. A draft water mark must be displayed in all minutes until they have been agreed
- iii. Minute Ref: 192/21 – The minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 20th September 2021 were not approved by the Committee as a correct record and would need to be referred to its next meeting.
- iv. Minute Ref: 193/21 – The Committee noted that Cllr Morgan had not completed the reconciliation. This item will be deferred to the next meeting.
- v. Minute Ref: 193/21 – Councillor Mabbett noted the typographical error of the word Yhis and requested this is amended to read This
- vi. Minute Ref: 193/21 – Councillor Mabbett requested the additional sentence be included to read
“Cllr. Morgan to carry out the reconciliation procedures for the month ending 31st October 2021.”
- vii. Minute Ref: 194/21 – Councillor Mabbett requested the additional sentence be included to read
“Cllr. Morgan to carry out the reconciliation procedures for the month ending 30th October 2021. The Clerk to update the payments list.”
- viii. Minute Ref: 196/21 – Councillor Mabbett requested bullets iv is re-in stated as this was agreed at the meeting held on the 18th October 2021. The additional bullet to be included should read
“The Parish Council agreed to maintain financial support to organisations noted in the budget, namely the British Legion and Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)”

Councillor Nock enquired about the changes to the wording at 198/21. Councillor Mabbett confirmed he had changed this as the previous wording suggested Mr Palmer would be acquiring the Christmas Tree for free.

Councillor Nock suggested the clerk utilise the spell check function when drafting word documents as errors of this nature would be picked up when drafting and editing minutes.

Councillor Mabbett requested the Clerk send the minutes to him to proof read. It was agreed that these amendments would only be sent to Councillor Mabbett. It was agreed that once the amendments had been approved, the minutes of the meeting held on the 20th September and 18th October would be accepted by the Committee as a correct record

203/21 Update on outstanding items

The Clerk reported no further contact had been received from Councillor Patchell regarding Pepperwood. Councillor Mabbett suggested obtaining an update from Mr Conrad Palmer

The Clerk reported official documents had been requested from the network provider to issue the business contract and handset. The Clerk also informed the Committee that the BT Broadband and land line contract used by the previous clerk had been terminated, paid in full and all equipment had been returned to BT.

Wicksteed had attended to repair the damaged playground surface on the 17th November. The Clerk informed the Committee that pictures of the repair work had been requested to ensure the work was carried out appropriately.

The Clerk informed the Committee the QuickBooks package would be cloud based only from June 2022. Councillor Nock stated he would not be able to sign off any budget without understanding the figures currently informing the budget. He requested he needed the use of The Committee QuickBooks in the Cloud as a matter of urgency. Councillor Nock also reminded the Clerk that the Committee had requested an annotated version of the budget and this had not been provided. As such, he would not be able to carry out a review in any detail. Councillor Mabbett requested the discussion is paused until the Committee considered the Draft Budget at item 8.

204/21 Bank reconciliations:

Councillor Morgan stated the reconciliations provided were satisfactory, safe for the cheque presented to the Toddlers Group. This has been re-issued as it was destroyed by the ATM machine used to deposit the cheque. Councillor Mabbett enquired how this might affect the Audit process in terms of issuing two cheques for the same recipient, he also enquired if the cheque had been stopped. He requested the Clerk request the Bank issue correspondence to confirm the initial cheque has been destroyed and not cashed.

Councillor Mabbett elected himself to review the bank reconciliations for November 2021.

ACTION: The Clerk request the Bank issue correspondence to confirm the initial cheque has been destroyed and not cashed.

205/21 Accounts for Payment

The clerk had previously circulated the November list of items for electronic payment totalling £6650.15. Councillor Mabbett and the Committee confirmed and agreed the payment schedule for November instructing the clerk to make the payments.

206/21 Draft Budget

Councillor Mabbett stated he had spent two hours reviewing the budget and surmised that the handling of budgets was not what the Clerk was used to on a daily basis. The Clerk concurred, stating the budget setting process was a specialised skill set and not one she possessed. Councillor Mabbett noted the Clerk had not included the 25% allocation of the salaried costs leaving a profit of £9840.00. Councillor Mabbett enquired as to how this may have been calculated as this would not present as a balanced budget. Councillor Mabbett also noted there were other discrepancies that he had noted and expressed his concerns regarding the current position.

Councillor Mabbett informed the Clerk the dates presented are incorrect being a year in advance. The Clerk informed the Committee that she had neglected to consider and factor in assumptions such as the Retail Price Index, changes in fees and charges or the fees to be paid for the lighting columns. Councillor Mabbett referred to the minutes of the Finance Meeting held 17th May 2021, as at paragraph 57/21 (b) the previous Clerk had recorded: -

The Committee recommended that further works to replace aged wooden brackets and the remaining conversions to 'l.e.d.' lanterns should be carried out. W.C.C. had given an indicative cost of £17,900 and the Committee would seek a firmed-up price to include the disposal of asbestos which was not included in the indicative pricing. The Committee recommended that the costs of this further work be met initially from reserves (during the next financial year) but at the budget setting in December 2021 for the financial year 2022/23 a recommendation would be made as to what amount should be funded from the Precept and over what term.

Councillor Mabbett voiced his concern that this allocation had not been included in the current budget process, further enquiring if other lines in the budget such as the Lengthsman scheme or rent increases had been assumed and included in the budget lines. Councillor Mabbett enquired how the cost of the lighting column would be met in line with minute ref 57/21(b)

It was also noted that although the Parish Council has reserves it was the policy that the reserves would be maintained at their current level for future generations. The Parish Council has the flexibility to spend the reserves if needed but they are attempting to retain this with a view of using the interest recouped. Councillor Mabbett suggested the precept is increased slightly by £5,000 to cover costs of the lighting column to 2023.

It was recommendation of the Finance Committee to Full Council that the precept is increased by £5000.00 (from £65,000 to £70,000) to combat some of the costs for the improved lighting.

In terms of the accuracy of the budget Councillor Mabbett and Councillor Nock suggested they would review the budget as this would require an element of intelligent guesswork.

ACTION: The Clerk request costs of the lighting columns from WCC as a matter of urgency.

The Clerk request the time schedule of the work involved to replace the lighting columns.

The Clerk to provide the current position of the Parish Council's surplus.

The Clerk to provide the current position on the status of the VAT return.

The Clerk to provide the date for the precept application to be submitted.

207/21 Investments

Councillor Mabbett informed the Committee of assets in the region of £327,000.00 with an obligation of a proportion of this money being available on short term notice. The first 3 products are subject to 31 day, 95 day and 100 day notice respectively. It was agreed to retain the products within this notice period, whilst remaining consistent with the current strategy.

Councillor Nock enquired about the investment released by Shawbrook Bank as this was transferred to the Parish Council's current account on the 6th May 2021. The Clerk informed the Committee that there was no rationale behind the release of this money to the current account and this was not recorded in the minutes.

ACTION: The Clerk to provide the current investment rate of the Parish Council's current account. The Clerk to update the P.C. Cash Investment schedule.

208/21 Parish contractors

Councillor Mabbett suggested this item is deferred to the next Finance Committee scheduled for the 13th December 2021.

209/21 Outstanding Grant Application

Councillor Mabbett discussed the procedural error made by the Clerk of issuing a cheque without the agreement of the Committee. Councillor Mabbett suggested this should be described as a misunderstanding by the Clerk. The Clerk stated she had spoken to CALC regarding the position she had put the Council. Initially it was noted that the Auditor would need to be informed of this error. Councillor Hood suggested a review of current signatories should be considered going forward.

Councillor Mabbett suggested the Committee agree to the financial support outlined in the Minor Grant Application, that there has been a misunderstanding and a mistake made by the Clerk and the processes of the Parish Council will be reviewed to prevent a similar incident happening again.

210/21 Standing item regarding environmental impact of the Parish Council

Councillor Morgan suggested the environmental impact of work of the Parish Council will need to be considered when awarding contracts in the future. It was recommended that this item will need to be considered as an item of the Full Council Meeting on the 6th December 2021.

ACTION: The Clerk to provide Full Council with any amendments to be included in the Parish Council's current standing orders because of this additional agenda item.

211/21 Parish Council Support

Councillor Morgan discussed the appetite to provide vouchers to families in need. Councillor Nock recommended to Full Council that the Parish Council allocate up to £500.00 for the food bank based in the Catshill Baptist Church and £500.00 to each school to distribute to families in need during December.

212/21 Maintenance Work Councillor Mabbett suggested this item is deferred to the next Finance Committee scheduled for the 13th December 2021.

213/21 Any other Finance Business

Councillor Mabbett discussed the renewal of the Fairfield Villa Lease and as such what would be the terms and conditions of the new lease. In terms of Community Engagement Councillor Mabbett stated there would be a requirement to understand the needs of the Community regarding the future use of Fairfield Recreation Ground which also involved the Villa possibly remaining.

Councillor Mabbett suggested a zoom meeting, face to face meeting or a questionnaire could be used to collate to views of the Community. This would need to be carried out by January / February 2022 at the latest to inform the decisions of the Parish Council.

Councillor Morgan stated it was important to provide the Community with the ability to express their views and this could shape the lease discussions. Councillor Hood stated the Parish Council would need to review the income received for Fairfield Villa Football Club. Councillor Nock suggested a paper-based survey or an online questionnaire such as Survey Monkey could be used to understand the views of the Fairfield residents. Councillor Wilkes noted the Recreation Ground is a green space meant for residents to use and that nothing can be decided until residents had been consulted. An online method might not be best approach. Councillor Morgan suggested as this is such a contentious issue, the lease could be extended for 12 months to consider the views of the Community.

It was agreed to devise a paper questionnaire to collate opinions on the future of the Fairfield Recreation Ground.

It was agreed that Councillors Clarke, Gibbs and Wilkes would convene a working group to devise the questionnaire in order to get the decision ratified at the Full Council Meeting in December.

ACTION: The Clerk to obtain legal advice as to whether there are any restrictive covenants on the land

N: The survey to be devised and distributed before Christmas 2021.

The Meeting closed at 21:49

To be agreed as a true record by future Committee Meeting.

Signed: **Date:**

Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council – Finance Committee’s outstanding issues

Minute Ref.	Agenda Item	Action Required	Correspondence Sent	Deadline	Status
205/21	Accounts for payment	Circulation of November payments for approval	N/A	N/A	Complete
206/21	Parish Council Budget 2022/23	For the Clerk to prepare a draft balanced budget for consideration at the meeting scheduled for the 15 th November	N/A	18.10.21	In progress
184/21	Pepperwood	The Clerk to discuss the implications and origins of the proposed contribution with Councillor Patchell.	Email sent to Cllr Patchell requesting clarification	13.11.21	In progress
186/21	Purchase of the Clerk’s phone	For the current BT contract to be terminated and the Samsung Galaxy A12 for Business is purchased.	04.10.21 - Passport and utility bill sent to O2 for identification purposes. Email sent to previous Clerk with last quarterly bill attached for action. Samsung Galaxy A12 for Business to be purchased.	13.12.21	In progress
187/21	Maintenance Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playground repairs 	Works have been carried out on 17.11.21 – awaiting confirmation and pictures for audit purposes An onsite meeting took place on 21.09.21 with Wicksteed to assess the work required to repair the affected	01.12.21	In progress

			areas in the Playground. Email sent to Councillors outlining the timescales required to carry out repairs		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planters in Fairfield 	Clerk to review the contract to understand what work has been outlined in the contract.	13.12.21	In progress
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The paths leading to Bradford Lane from Bradford House require general clearance 	Text message sent to Lenghtsman requesting attendance and to carry out work required.	18.10.21	Complete

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