



Stainland and District Parish Council

13th Policy & Finance Committee

DRAFT Minutes

19th August 2021

Present:

Councillors James (MJ - Chairman), Fieldhouse (LF) Lassey (PL) and Liddell (GL)

Minutes taken by Councillor Liddell

	Item
2021PF13.1	Apologies. None received.
2021PF13.2	Public Participation. No members of the public were present.
2021PF13.3	Declarations of Interest None made.
2021PF13.4	Minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd of July 2021. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minute 12.9 is incorrect. The sum of £3,000 was allocated to bring in additional resource as needed to regularise the position on the accounts and not allocated to any computer-based solution.Minute 12.14 shows an incorrect date for the next meeting – it should have read 23rd August. Subject to the above, the minutes were approved as a correct record.
2021PF13.5	Approval of Financial Regulations This approval was noted as having already been given in Minute 2021PF12.5 of the last meeting.
2021PF13.6	Business Plan Review <u>SLA/1/2020: Grants</u> Develop policies and award criteria for grants to be paid by the Council to external bodies for purposes of benefit to parishioners and to recommend a suitable budget for this accordingly. <i>MJ will provide PL with documentation for the current Ward Forum Grant Scheme for PL to adapt to meet the Council's requirements and present to the next meeting.</i>



SLA/2/2020: Use of CMBC Buildings and Assets

In association with others, work to seek and implement alternative uses for CMBC assets within Stainland and District in order to preserve them as community assets, operating Community Asset Transfers where this can be justified and viable. Assets within scope are the former Stainland Library, Sowood Community Centre and the Allotments site.

Noted that Council have resolved to create a Community Assets Committee to address this area, which is currently focused on the Community Centre CAT. The committee has not yet been formally constituted and the activities are being led by GL and PL, reporting directly to the Council.

STB/1/2020: Plan and Budget Reviews

Plan for and conduct systematic reviews of Business Plan and Forecast Actual Budgets at six-monthly intervals and re-plan accordingly.

Current review is in progress; the six-month review is due in September and progress is being made in reviewing bids by committees for spend in the remainder of the 2021/22 FY. (See Minute 2021PF13.7)

STB/2/2020: Delegated Powers

To review current delegations and their limits and adjust accordingly.

The review has been completed by all committees and agreed. Its operation is contingent upon aligning accounting and budgets to support devolved budgeting and needs to be in place no later than the start of the 2022/23 FY.

STB/3/2020: Local Council Award Scheme

To seek the Foundation Award for quality from the Local Council Award scheme in 2021/22 and higher levels of accreditation in future years.

STB/4/2020: Staff and Councillor Training

To seek the Foundation Award for quality from the Local Council Award scheme in 2021/22 and higher levels of accreditation in future years.

Noted that Staffing Committee are examining the training and developmental aspects of the criteria set out for Foundation accreditation on behalf of this Committee. In view of current pressures, it is unlikely that significant progress will be made in 2021/22 but the status of this initiative will be examined in greater depth at the next meeting of this committee.

It was resolved that:

- These items should now appear as standard items on the agenda of each meeting of this committee, so that progress on these strategic initiatives is exposed to regular review and increased focus.
- Council be recommended to instruct all committees to extract their own strategic initiatives from the Council's Business Plan and similarly list these on the agenda of each of its meetings in future.
- No changes to the Business Plan arising from the activities of this committee had been identified as necessary.



2021PF13.7	<p>Terms of reference and proposed method of delegation</p> <p>This approval was noted as having already been given in Minute 2021P12.10 of the last meeting.</p>
2021PF13.8	<p>2021/22 Income and Expenditure Budget (to August 2021)</p> <p>This item stimulated considerable discussion on the contents of the financial reports and the absence of the Clerk on holiday made comprehension of what had been presented difficult. Without explanations being available, the majority of the committee felt that this was still work in progress. As such, they felt they could not accept the financial reports as they stood and were not confident that they set out the Council's financial position sufficiently accurately. There was marked concern about this situation and the view the internal and external auditors were likely to take at the annual audit, where there was a risk that the Council would be sanctioned publicly.</p> <p>There was a long debate about what steps were now considered necessary. A minority view was expressed that, whilst work remained to be done, the position was much better than others thought and if the Clerk had been present, members could have understood that more clearly. The committee recognised the difficulties the Chairman and the Clerk had had in pulling out information for the reports and were grateful for the efforts which had been made. However, the majority felt that we were still struggling to achieve control over the Council's affairs and it was taking too long to reach this objective.</p> <p>It was decided that external assistance was required to provide guidance and resources in assisting the Clerk and this committee to get the Council's finances and reporting in order and GL was asked to contact accounting firms and brief them for an early meeting with this committee to agree scope and roles for the work required.</p> <p><i>(Subsequent to this conclusion, MJ indicated his support for contacting Scribe in the first instance, as they may have an ability to provide enhanced support in sorting out user data and restructuring budget headings to accommodate devolved budgets as part of a system implementation. GL agreed to contact them and report back.)</i></p>
2021PF13.9	<p>Software for Finance- Scribe</p> <p>Information noted.</p>
2021PF13.10	<p>Outstanding Policy Approvals</p> <p>MJ agreed to review these and recommend approval or otherwise (agreed policies need to be circulated to all members and loaded to the web site)</p>
2021PF13.11	<p>Review of activities relevant to Finance & Policy committee in the approved business plan to confirm 2021/22 commitments and request any changes to the Business Plan</p> <p>This is a duplicated agenda item (See 2021PF13.6)</p>
2021PF13.12	<p>To review payments to be approved</p> <p>No details of any payments were submitted and hence no approvals were given.</p>



2021PF13.13	To agree agenda items for the next meeting MJ to circulate draft agenda
2021PF13.14	To schedule a date for the next meeting As all meetings are now scheduled, this agenda item may be unnecessary as a general rule, unless an unscheduled meeting is needed.

The meeting closed at 20.35.

GL/24.08.21