



Stainland and District Parish Council

15th Policy & Finance Committee

DRAFT Minutes

25th October 2021

Present:

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

Minutes taken by Councillor Liddell

	Item
2021PF15.1	Apologies. Cllrs. Fieldhouse and Mullany, Parish Clerk (PC)
2021PF15.2	Public Participation. No members of the public were present except for David Weston, a representative of Stainland Cricket Club attending to speak in favour of their grant application. The Cricket Club were well established in Stainland and wished to spend £5,000 on improvements to their facilities. They had raised £1,000 so far on their own account and obtained a grant of £500 from the Ward Forum. <u>Resolved to recommend to the Council</u> a grant of £2,000 towards these works, subject to the completion of the Council's Grant Application form.
2021PF15.3	Declarations of Interest None made.
2021PF15.4	Minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd of September 2021. The last minute for this meeting was incorrectly numbered. Instead of 2021PF12.8, it should be 2021PF14.8 Subject to the above, the minutes were approved as a correct record.
2021PF15.5	Review of Financial Reporting Pack The committee were pleased with the progress which had been made in implementing the new accounting system, albeit this was incomplete. It was noted that, subject to clarification from the supplier, budget reports do not include current financial month transactions. This was not seen as an important issue but PC would review this with Rialtas. Carry over from previous years was also not clearly shown. The reports showed the Council maintained a healthy financial position. Further work will now be carried out by PC to complete implementation.



2021PF15.6

Review of Committee Budget Bids

The budgets for most committees now needed review and validation by the respective committee chairman with PC and MF as set out below, together with any estimates as part of the preparations for next year's annual budget which are due to start in the next cycle of meetings.

Asset Management (GL/PL)

- Estimates required for likely expenditure for CAT transfers for the allotments and for the Community Centre (e.g., professional fees)
- Financial estimates taken from the business plan for Community Centre operating costs and repairs needed to be included for FY 2022/23 onwards. In the interim, a figure of £10,000 for repairs would be included for the next three years
- Premises costs would refer to the figure in the business case and would be likely to be the level of subsidy required in excess of rental income (if any)
- Tools and consumables should be deleted.

Communications (PL)

- Details for Press and Publicity and Events and Communications (total £4,000) are insufficiently granular. It is assumed that Press and Publicity should include estimates for the quarterly newsletters (4 x £500) and, if so, should be renamed as Parish Newsletters. Events and Communications requires better definition of what it covers to be included as a budget item – if this covers GoLocal articles then it should be renamed as such
- Website Development will include new development or modifications carried out by the supplier outside the general support contract only. All other charges such as software support, hosting and domain registration arise under Website Operations
- Estimates for next year are needed

Council (GL)

- Insurance is currently a three-year contract; the estimates should show the pro-rated annual premium in each year
- Software charges should include Office365 licence costs and the accounting system subscription and support fees; costs associated with the web site and domain registration fall within the Communications Committee budget
- Subscriptions are currently YLCA
- Estimates for next year are needed

Environment (LF/TW) with assistance from PL please

- The figure of £25,200 now needs to be apportioned across all of the projects to which it relates for approval to be granted (projects will not appear in financial statements if they have no budget allocated)



- All figures should be reviewed to reflect what will actually be spent by 31 March 2022, with any unspent forming part of the estimates for next year
- Tools and Equipment requires a budget estimate (the Warden)
- ***It should be noted that except for those projects showing actual expenditure to date, no other expenditure has yet been approved***
- It is assumed that 4720 Repairs and Maintenance is a budget item to cover expenditure on non-project work
- Projects and estimates for next year need to be identified and estimated. To be able to select from a longer list, these should be ranked in priority order (In view of possible developments next year, the total budget allocated to Environment is likely to be capped)

Planning (MM)

- ***Policy and Finance did not feel able to accept the bid for funds to develop a conservation area policy document until greater detail and justification for it could be given.***

Policy and Finance (MJ)

- Costs associated with the Quality Accreditation initiative need to be included
- Estimates for next year are required

Staffing (TW)

- Staffing costs requires division to show staffing costs separated to show standard salary payments, overtime payments, training costs and expenses incurred or paid, separately for each employee
- In relation to funds for Training and Development, this is intended to cover Councillors only, as part of the Quality Accreditation initiative. Policy and Finance (and the Council) have asked Staffing to provide details for such a programme, based on appropriate YCLA courses. ***Until this is provided, Policy and Finance did not feel able to accept the bid for funds for Training and Development.***

In summary and as provided for in the Financial Regulations, the role of Policy and Finance includes the orchestration of the preparations for budget-setting, working with each committee on their estimates. Subject to any direction from the Council, Policy and Finance then presents a consolidated picture of the present and future budget as a whole, resolving priorities and making recommendations to the Council for its approval.

2022/23 Budget preparations commence in the November cycle each year and MJ as Chairman of Policy and Finance will be in contact with each committee to push forward the work required above.

The active support of committees for this process is requested.



2021PF15.7	<p>Business Plan Review</p> <p>The Environment Committee have made a request to include a new a strategic objective in the Business Plan approved earlier this year, concerning the promotion of projects concerning biodiversity and climate change.</p> <p>The Council’s Business Plan will be reviewed and updated in parallel with the work in preparing the FY2022/23 budget. The Environment Committee’s request will be considered as part of that review.</p>
2021PF15.8	<p>Reporting on Strategic Objectives</p> <p>The committee endorsed an email sent by GL to all members on this subject and dated 23rd October 2021. For ease of reference, it is reproduced below, to be reported with these minutes to Council for confirmation or otherwise:</p> <p><i>“There appears to be some confusion of these and how they should be managed and I hope this note clarifies some things:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><i>1. In our approved strategic plan, we have set out a number of initiatives we intend to pursue in each year of the plan period. These initiatives are allocated to each committee to get on with, within the budget allocated to each committee. As part of the recent work to establish budgets (which hopefully has now ended) I shall be updating the plan as part of the normal half-yearly review with any changes. There may also be further changes as part of budget setting, which starts in the November cycle.</i><i>2. Each initiative allocated to a committee needs to be adequately progressed by that committee to ensure best efforts are made to deliver that initiative within the budget allocated to it and clearly, this is an important measure of the committee’s performance. It is for this reason that I have suggested that each initiative allocated to a committee should appear as a standard and separate item on the agenda of every meeting of that committee until it has been completed and that the minute for that item should record the current status. It is not satisfactory to have a single item on the agenda called “Strategic Initiatives” or something else; each initiative needs its own agenda item.</i><i>3. Obviously, there may be little or no activity anticipated for an initiative in a particular month and therefore no discussion is required. In these cases, I suggest that the minute should simply show what the next task is, when it is scheduled to take place and whether the initiative is on time for delivery and within budget.</i><i>4. The project control templates have been helpful in giving detail on each initiative and tracking progress, particularly for Environment projects although they could and perhaps should be taken up for all other initiatives. They or some other form of project/initiative document describing the initiative, its timetabling, its status and so on needs to be published to the website and updated regularly. If there needs to be a discussion as to what the format and content of the information published and updated to the website needs to look like, someone should initiate that.</i>



	<p><i>I hope the above is helpful in setting out what I think the Council has previously agreed through discussion and the papers presenting it, such as the Financial Regulations, the paper on proposed arrangements and so on. If views have changed, that ought to be recognised and accommodated otherwise I hope all committees can give effect to the approach outlined above from their next meeting."</i></p> <p>The required format is illustrated in the report made concerning the strategic objectives set for the Policy and Finance and included in these minutes as Minute 2021PF15.9 below.</p>
2021PF15.9	<p>Review of Strategic Objectives for Policy and Finance</p> <p><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 process details, evaluation criteria and a revised form in consultation with PL, to be circulated to all members of Council by the October Council meeting. If approved, PL will start to promote the grant scheme.</i></p> <p><u>SLA/2/2020: Use of CMBC Buildings and Assets</u> 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. <i>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.</i></p> <p><i>A draft CAT business case for the former Library building has been submitted to Calderdale MBC for comment and circulated to all members of Council. The financial sections will be completed and included in about a week. The required submission date is end January 2022.</i></p> <p><i>TW is attempting to expedite the allotments transfer on behalf of this committee.</i></p> <p><u>STB/1/2020: Plan and Budget Reviews</u> Plan for and conduct systematic reviews of Business Plan and Forecast Actual Budgets at six-monthly intervals and re-plan accordingly. <i>In development (see earlier minute)</i></p> <p><u>STB/2/2020: Delegated Powers</u> To review current delegations and their limits and adjust accordingly. <i>Preparations complete and spending delegation will commence once budgets have been approved.</i></p>



	<p><u>STB/3/2020: Local Council Award Scheme</u> To seek the Foundation Award for quality from the Local Council Award scheme in 2021/22 and higher levels of accreditation in future years.</p> <p><u>STB/3/2020: Local Council Award Scheme</u> <i>Noted that Staffing Committee are examining the training and developmental aspects of the criteria set out for Foundation accreditation on behalf of this Committee. Confirmed that, in view of current pressures, it is unlikely that significant progress will be made until 2022/23.</i></p> <p><u>It was resolved that</u> no changes to the Business Plan arising from the activities of this committee had been identified as necessary apart from rescheduling.</p>
2021PF15.10	<p>To review payments to be approved The Environment Committee had requested expenditure of £164 for a training course for the Warden and £526 for equipment, pending approval of their 2021/22 budget allocation.</p> <p><u>Resolved to recommend approval of this expenditure and adjust the relevant budgets accordingly.</u></p>

The meeting closed at 20.45.

GL/26.10.21