



A Meeting of the Employment, Finance & Policies Committee was held on Monday 20th January 2020 at 7.30 pm, The Amesbury Room, Winscombe Community Centre.

Those present at the meeting:

Committee Members: Ms C Boase (CBo), Mr M Boddy (MB), Mrs E Buckland (EB),
Mr. A Forbes (AF), Mr. K Joyce (KJ), Mr. G Lloyd (GL),
Mr T Nicholson (TN), Mr G Paterson (GP) (Committee Chairman),
Mr. V Slater, Mrs L Stephens (LS), Mr J Taviner (JT) and Dr P Watkins (PW).

Clerk: Mrs L Rampton (LR)

Members of Public Present: None

Committee Members Absent: None

1. **Apologies for absence.** With all committee members present, there were none.
2. **Declarations of interest.** No interests were declared.
3. **Public Participation.** With no members of the public present, there was none.
4. **Minute Update from the previous meeting dated 11th November 2019.** None
5. **Re-wilding Consultation.** *To consider a Parish Council response to the NSC consultation – open until 24th January*
With it being preferred that ‘re-wilding’ did not take place at village gateways, the consensus from the committee was in favour of NSC proposals. Discussion took place on the considered benefits of the proposals versus some re-wilded areas that had concealed valuable native specimens.
It was proposed that a Parish Council response is submitted to the consultation supporting the re-wilding concept and looking forward to collaborating further with NSC on other areas such as some verges and land adjoining Parish Council owned land in the future. Consideration could be given to tree planting in hedgerow.
Proposed by CB, seconded by TN. 10 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention
6. **To review 2019/2020 Budget Summary and Bank Reconciliation to 31st December 2019**
The committee examined the budget summaries for the period, along with copy bank statements and bank reconciliation to 31st December 2019. Current budget positions for committees, including overspends, and the reason for these previously reported to the Parish Council were detailed. Areas of note included the requirement to replace the main PC computer along with the laptop used for council meetings, additional groundworks at the public conveniences and parish street lighting issues. Members were alerted to a recent issue of blocked gullies on Parish Council owned land and the Clerk was asked to authorise immediate instruction to clean and clear said gullies at a likely cost of around £500.
 - a. **To consider new small grant applications (2no.) received for the current financial year**
Proposed to be paid in the current financial year:
 - i. *Winscombe & Sandford Tree Wardens.* Whilst totally supportive of tree planting, members were divided in opinion in offering free trees to just new homes in the parish.
It was proposed that a small grant of £359 be awarded to the Tree Wardens for tree planting in the Sandford, Wincoving End Play Area along with offering to reimburse new homeowners for the price of a tree purchased from the Woodland Trust.
Proposed by EB, seconded by TN. 2 in favour, 9 against, 1 abstention. Motion failed
It was proposed that a small grant of £168 be awarded to the Tree Wardens for tree planting in the Sandford, Wincoving End Play Area.
Proposed by VS, seconded by JT, 11 in favour, 1 abstention
 - ii. *West of England MS Therapy Centre.* It was proposed that a small grant of £200 is paid.
Proposed by AF, seconded by CB. All in favour
 - b. **To instruct re-valuation of Woodborough Road Public Conveniences following refurbishment works**

It was proposed that following refurbishment works, a revaluation of the public conveniences for insurance purposes at a cost of around £350 is instructed.

Proposed by CB, seconded by MB, All in favour.

- c. **Parish Council bank accounts.** With HSBC current a/c bank charges offsetting interest paid on HSBC deposit (0.2%AER), it was proposed that both HSBC accounts were closed, and the balance transferred to a new 30-day notice business savings account with the Hampshire Trust Bank (1.2% AER). Four Parish Councillor signatories would be used to open the account, with two signatures used for instruction/withdrawals. Proposed by KJ, seconded by VS, 11 in favour, 1 against

7. **To agree regular payments from bank account to be made by standing order & direct debit.**

To reduce time spent preparing regular cheques or on-line direct payments, it was proposed that the following payments continue to be made directly from the bank account.

It was proposed that the following payments be made by direct debit or standing order for the 2020/21 financial year:

Regular payments already made by direct debit or standing order – reaffirmed for 2020/21

DD	Public Works Loan	Frequency – half yearly
DD	BT telephone lines x 2	Frequency – quarterly
DD	Water2Business WMRG	Frequency – half yearly
DD	Water2Business Cem & Allots	Frequency – half yearly
DD	Water2Business – public conveniences	Frequency – half yearly
DD	EDF – electricity WMRG Change Rooms	Frequency – monthly
DD	SSE – public conveniences	Frequency - monthly
DD	SUEZ – waste collection at WMRG	Frequency - monthly
DD	E.ON – parish street lighting supply	Frequency – monthly
DD	Information Commissioners Office - data protection	Frequency - annually
DD	NSC non domestic rates - Cemetery Store	Frequency - monthly
DD	Grenke - photocopier lease rental	Frequency – quarterly
SO	All staff salaries and pension contribution	Frequency – monthly
SO	T Nyamunda – grass hedge cut & open of Toilets	Frequency – monthly
SO	IDF Client - staff pension contributions	Frequency – monthly
SO	Greenways Ground Maintenance – dog bin empties	Frequency - monthly

Proposed by AF, seconded by VS, All in favour

8. **Budget Planning for the 2020/21 financial year & to agree a precept figure for recommendation to the full Parish Council for approval.** Members considered rental charges and income along with projected expenditure (Jan – Mar 2020) in advance of the 2020/21 budget proposals.

a. Sports Clubs contributions to grounds and changing rooms maintenance – whilst members considered contributions to the grounds to be low, a £50 rise pa was recommended that represented an 8.3% increase on current charges

b. **Office Rental.** Rent is currently paid six-monthly in arrears. The WCC Trustees would now like the council to move to monthly payments (in-line with their other users) w.e.f. April 2020, this would effectively mean the payment of 18 months rental in 2020/21

c. **Internal Audit.** The current 3-year contract expires at the end of the 2019/2020 financial year. Two quotations have been received for a new 3-year contract.

Auditor	1	2
Annual Costs for 3 visits pa.	£675	£795

With both Auditors having worked for the council, and the council being entirely satisfied with their work, it was proposed that a new 3-year contract is awarded to Auditor 1.

Proposed by AF, seconded by MB, all in favour

d. **Grants.** A list of grant applications received has been included within the budgets. The application from Winscombe Youth Club has increased this year primarily due to the cost of engaging paid helpers – one per week, with sometimes a second helper when volunteers/parents are not available to assist. Members considered the Youth Club to be a valuable asset to the Parish and supported the increased grant application. Proposed by GL, seconded by KJ, all in favour.

- e. **Staffing – general.** Aside from one, no pay increases had been included in the draft budget. It was noted that the minimum 'living wage' increases to £8.72 per hour with effect April 2020 and the council has one employee currently paid below this threshold.

It was proposed that with effect 1st April 2020, the hourly rate paid to the WMRG Gate Orderly is increased to £9 per hour. Proposed by MB, seconded by VS, all in favour

- f. **Grounds Maintenance Contract.** The current 5-year maintenance agreement expires end March 2020; therefore, proposals had been sought for a new 3-year contract. Works at the recreation ground continue all year round, works to the remaining areas take place during growing season only. Below are annual costs for the works

Contractor	1	2	3
WMRG	£5,352	£4,880	£4,800
Cemetery	£2,280	£640	£2,856
Sandford Play Area	£1,248	£240	£1,050
Land at toilets (estimated)	£360	£400	£600
Weed control for all areas	<u>FOC</u>	<u>£150</u>	<u>£220</u>
	£9,240	£6,310	£9,526

Contractors are asked to carry out some public right of way clearance works in addition to the above contract.

All three contractors had worked for the Parish Council, although not necessarily as ground maintenance contractors. It was considered that contractor 1 had not complied with the tender brief and was therefore dismissed. Considerable discussion took place regarding the remaining tenders with experience regarding previous works along with references being the main focus of discussion.

It was proposed that a 3-year contract April 2020 – March 2023 is awarded to contractor 3

Proposed by MB, seconded by VS. 10 in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention

- g. **Parish Street Lighting.** Members are aware through reports at Parish Council meetings that 100+ parish council owned streetlights were very old, with replacement parts no longer available for many of these. As those lamps failed, they would need replacing at a cost of around £600 per lantern. The Parish Council has chosen to replace lighting with a more energy efficient LED lights. Following a hard wire electrical report of our lights, works had been instructed to replace faulty wiring and GRP boxes to ensure our lights remain in a 'safe condition'. In addition to this 8 lanterns have been identified that are no longer serviceable and require replacement at a cost of £4,800.

There were considered to be three options available to the Parish Council

- i) Take a (preferably interest free) loan to replace all 100+ streetlights in 2020/21 and negotiate a less costly maintenance contract.

- ii) Engage in a 5-year replacement programme, setting aside money from the Parish Precept annually

- iii) Continue to allocate funds into street lighting ear-marked reserves and replace lanterns as they fail.

The Environment Group has recommended that whatever option the council chose, by setting aside a sum of £11,000 it could meet a repayment/replacement programme. Grant applications had been sought to assist with street lighting costs, but the outcome of those applications was awaited. With limited funds available, a reduced sum was allocated for maintenance costs and ear-marked reserves with the Environment Group to re-assess replacement proposals along with a suggestion, that following public consultation, de-commissioning lights as they failed.

Proposed by AF, seconded by TN. 9 in favour, 3 against.

- h. **Environment Working Group.** The Group wished to replace old wooden planters with wood look-alike ones made from re-cycled plastic containing water reservoirs, these being more Environmentally friendly. It was also recommended that the Parish Council continue to provide 50/50 costs towards village Christmas trees for both Winscombe and Sandford (local businesses also meeting part costs) and a three year contract entered into for the supply of these. Proposed by KJ, seconded by AF, 9 in favour, 3 against.

Works to repair and refurbish one parish finger-post sign had been instructed, and if works were satisfactory, the remaining three signs should also be repaired and refurbished.

- i. **War Memorial Recreation Ground Advisory Committee.** Existing pitch barriers for the first team football pitch were in a poor condition with the football wishing to replace these with new metal barriers. As landowners, the Parish Council was not in favour of this type of barrier and subsequent advice from a Health and Safety Adviser recommended a UPVC type post and rail fence. This more than doubled costs and therefore the committee had included £4,000 in their budget request towards this with the football club contributing the remaining amount. This funding should be carried forward into the 2020/21 budget with works to take place in May 2020.

Football goal posts to the open/training area of the grounds were in a poor condition as highlighted in monthly play area inspection reports and require replacement. Other expenditure for consideration is car park kerb and patching work along with additional CCTV and lighting for the grounds. In order to manage PC budgets, the additional CCTV cameras were removed from the budget

- j. **Play Areas.** A covered youth shelter has long been requested for the Sandford Winnowing End Play Area with Parish Orderlies to carry out the installation. At the WMRG, safety surfacing beneath the junior swing set requires replacement. Costings for both had been included in budget proposals.
- k. **Winscombe Skate-Park.** One ramp is nearing the end of its useful life and will require replacement surfacing in 2020.
- l. **Community fund and miscellaneous expenditure.** The Parish Council has over the past three years included a section of the budget for community projects, or to help out when assistance such as NSC funding for school crossing patrols been withdrawn – the council may wish to continue with this funding and therefore an amount has been included for consideration. Items paid from this budget in 2019 include £1,000 towards the running costs for the Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children’s Centre and £900 for a traffic report used in the Aurora Planning Appeal.
The committee recommended continued support for the Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children’s Centre with a contribution of £1,000 being made in 2020/21. Proposed by EB, seconded by CB, all in favour.
- m. **Citizens Advice Rural Outreach Service.** Members were in favour of continuing this valuable and well used service in 2020/21. Proposed by CB, seconded by MB, 11 in favour, 1 against.
- n. **Recreation Ground Roadway.** The Parish Council owns the roadway from the last property on The Vinery leading to the grounds and this is now slowly subsiding. To gain an idea of costs, a quotation has been obtained to either patch, or resurface this section of the road. As it was considered that the road had been in this condition for a number of years, and the risk level to users of the grounds being low, works should be considered in future years. Should a pothole on this section of road require repair, this could be funded through the ‘community’ section of the budget.

The Employment, Finance & Policies Committee recommend to the full Parish Council that the projected forecast figures (2019/20) and budget (2020/21) as detailed is approved. This would result in a Precept figure for the 2020/21 financial year to be increased from £143,000 to £149,000 and would mean a Local Council Element of Headline Council Tax per D Band property increase from £70.25 to £71.86 which is equivalent to a 2.3% increase per ‘D’ band equivalent on the current financial year.

Proposed: Cllr T Nicholson

Seconded: Cllr V Slater

All in favour

- 9. **To consider staffing matters:**
 - a. **To agree to a staff member carry forward of annual leave entitlement into the 2020/21 holiday year.**
The Clerk left the meeting. Members wished to consider individual requests on a case by case basis, but in this instance, the Clerk was permitted to carry forward unused holiday entitlement for 2019/20 into the 2020/21 holiday year.
Proposed by KJ, seconded by AF, all in favour
The Clerk returned to the meeting
 - b. **To agree payment of unused holiday entitlement for part time staff members.** Whilst all staff members were encouraged to utilise their full holiday entitlement, it was considered difficult for some to take annual leave due to the limited hours worked. It was therefore proposed that unused holiday entitlement for staff working less than 10 hours per week is paid at the end of the financial year.
Proposed by VS, seconded by KJ, 11 in favour, 1 against.
 - c. **To agree any changes to salaries to take effect 1st April 2020.** No salary increases were recommended at this time.
 - d. **Office working conditions.** Following a report carried out on the fabric of the Parish Council Office, a letter should be sent to the landlord asking for a response outlining their proposals for planned works. A response should be requested within 10 days of the letter to enable the council to assess possible options.

Proposed by TN, seconded by GL, 11 in favour, 1 against

10. Matters for Information

- *Sustainable Winscombe & Sandford.* A meeting to discuss the climate crisis was to take place on 23rd January, 7pm at the Winscombe Community Centre.

With no further business, the meeting concluded at 10.00 pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....

Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council acknowledge the general duty to consider the following matters in the exercise of any of its functions: Equal Opportunities (age, race, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status, religion & belief, pregnancy & maternity and disability) Crime and Disorder, Health & Safety and Human Rights.