

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE PORTLAND COMMUNITY VENUE ON WEDNESDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2019 at 10.30 AM

PRESENT: Councillors Susan Cocking (Chairman), Jim Draper, Charlie Flack, Ray Nowak, Jo Atwell and Dave Thurston

IN ATTENDANCE: One member of the public

306. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received

307. Declarations of Interests

None were declared

308. Minutes of the Finance Meeting Held on 9th January 2019

These were agreed as a true record of the meetings and signed by the Chairman.

309. Minute Update and Matters Arising

Minute 288 – Distribution of Agenda and Minutes. The Clerk reported back that she had investigated the use of the notice boards in Easton Gardens but that they were both being used. It was suggested that rather than trying to use existing notice boards, that come the 1st April 2019 a Portland Town Council specific notice board be placed in the Gardens. Cllr Flack raised the point that there was a notice board at the bottom of Verne Common Road and that it might be of use to try and use that one. It was agreed that additional distribution of the agenda's and minutes should be concentrated around the Underhill area as, apart from the Council Offices, they were not displayed anywhere else.

Minute 300 (a) – Portland Community Venue (PCV) Signs. The Chairman advised that the signs had all been purchased and were now being displayed.

Minute 300 (b) – PCV Website. The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) informed the meeting that he had received an email from the PCV Administrator seeking authorisation for the monthly PCV website hosting costs. He advised that these would be £3.30 for the first 3 months rising to £4.14 per month in June 2019 and the renewal of the URL at £45.00. The RFO stated the costs would be attributed to the PCV cost centre.

Approval to pay these costs given and supported unanimously

Minute 300 (c) – Leader Grant. The RFO advised that the second part of the Leader Grant had been submitted by hand on 14th February and apart from one minor query he had heard nothing. He explained that Leader had a 6- week payment cycle and receipt of the final funds would put PCV budget in surplus.

Minute 300 (d) – Cllr Thurston stated that all the kitchen equipment has been delivered and is in the kitchen. He did highlight a problem that there was still no hot water in the kitchen as the water heater was not working. This meant that there was no facility to wash the dishes etc before putting them away.

The Clerk agreed to speak to the builder to get the issue resolved.

Cllr Flack suggested that it would be a good idea to have a 'sharps' box on site, to support diabetics. This was agreed and an action is with the Clerk to source one from Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP).

The Clerk to source a 'sharps' box for the PCV

310 – Public Participation

a) Mr Vincent informed the meeting that Tesco's were not displaying the Agenda and Minutes properly. Whilst the Chairman sympathised with Mr Vincent the proposal to put up a PTC specific notice board in Easton Gardens would alleviate the issue.

b) Mr Vincent also advised the meeting that there was an error in the last minutes. In recording the minutes – Minute 302 – Precept Discussion, para x. stated that the Clocks and Monuments original figure of £6,000 had been increase by 25% to £7,000. The percentage shown is incorrect.

311 – Payment Level of Expenditure for Officers

The Chairman explained that she was proposing that a payment level be set for Officers so that they could undertake small ad hoc purchases as required. She felt that with the need to manage a greater number of assets and services it would not be practical to have to wait for either a Finance Committee meeting or a Full Council Committee meeting to have purchases approved. She proposed that a limit of £150.00 per item be approved. A discussion ensued and it was finally agreed that Officers be given full pre-approval to spend up to £150.00 per item up to a maximum limit of £1,000.00 per month. A vote was taken which was unanimously agreed.

Officers are given full pre-approval to spend up to £150.00 per item up to a maximum limit of £1,000.00 per month with Standing Orders to be amended following Full Council Approval.

312 – Payment Level of Expenditure for Members

For this item the proposal applied to Councillors and not Officers. The proposal was made that, in exceptional circumstances Councillors be able to commit to expenditure up to a limit of £50.00 per transaction up to a maximum of £250.00 per month. It was made clear that this was by exception only and that proposals to commit funds should still be made either to the Finance Committee or to Full Council. A vote was taken which was unanimously supported.

Members are given full pre-approval, in exceptional circumstances to spend up to £50.00 per transaction up to a maximum limit of £250.00 per month with Standing Orders to be amended following Full Council Approval.

313 – Cash Holding Limits

The RFO stated that with the hiring out of PCV facilities there was now a requirement to hold cash in the office from the bookings. He asked the meeting to consider and agree a limit of cash that could be held in the office. He advised that once the limit had been reached then there would be requirement to deposit it at the bank. The Chairman proposed that the limit be set at £250.00 and following a brief discussion it was agreed that this was an acceptable limit. A vote was taken which unanimously supported.

A limit on the level of cash to be held in the office was set at £250.00, once that limit is reached then the cash must be banked.

314 – Purchase of New Laptops

The Chairman advised that Full Council had pre-approved the purchase of two new laptops and that a quote had been received from Southwest IT (SWIT) for the supply of two new HP laptops at £999.98. The RFO explained that he had undertaken a cost comparison to understand whether the SWIT proposal offered value for money. He advised that for two Acer laptops it would cost £1,199.00 and these were a lower specification, in comparison it would cost £1,599.00 for one Alienware laptop and the equivalent to purchase one HP commercially came to £829.00. He felt that given this it was clear that the proposal from SWIT was value for money. In addition, he advised that there was sufficient money in the equipment reserves to cover the cost of the new laptops. The Chairman proposed that the purchase of two new laptops from SWIT taking the cost from the equipment budget. The proposal was unanimously agreed.

Two new laptops are to be purchased from SW IT at a cost of £999.98.

315 – Purchase of Cloud Storage

The Chairman advised that SWIT had provided a quote of £950.00 to provide cloud storage of information in addition, the funds could be made available as a one-off payment from general reserves using the specialist services allowed for in the financial regulations. He also explained that it was incredibly difficult to undertake a like for like comparison on this type of service as no cloud provision was the same. Cllr Draper asked whether, in addition to the one-off charge there was any ongoing annual financial commitment? The RFO stated that the quote did not show any further annual commitment. The Chairman proposed that the quote from SWIT be accepted and was unanimously agreed.

Purchase of cloud storage from SWIT be progressed.

316 – Review of PCV Room Hire Charges

The Chairman advised that she had received some feedback that suggested that the hire rate for the Hall was excessive and did not compare well with other offerings on Portland. However, she remained content that the costs set out for the hire of the other rooms was appropriate. She reiterated that it was critical that the rooms be hired out and that the rooms should be accessible to the community and with the increase in long term tenants a reduction in the hire price of the hall was permissible. She proposed that the hire rate for the Hall be dropped from £20.00 per hour to somewhere between £12.50 and £14.00 per hour, but still giving the PCV administrator the freedom to negotiate a session rate if required. Cllr Nowak stated that his preference was £12.50, and Cllr Flack reminded the meeting that PTC had been paying in the region of £17.50 per hour for the hire of church halls to hold meetings prior to the PCV being available. It was agreed that the one-off charge of £10.00 for the use of the kitchen should remain as this was appropriate. In being put to the vote there was a majority decision that the hire rate for the Hall was set at £12.50, but with the proviso that it be reviewed in six months' time.

It was agreed that the Hall hire rate be set at £12.50 per hour.

317 – External Lighting Modifications

The RFO stated that the quotes received for the changes to the outside lighting had been agreed via email but that he now wanted it to be formally approved and for the record included in the minutes. To reiterate he stated that the quote to change the outside lighting to be motion sensitive rather than permanent was a cost of £233.00 (vat ex) and to add a new spotlight at the rear of the PCV (required for the safety of users arriving and leaving by the back entrance) a cost of £210.00 (vat ex). A vote was taken on the acceptance of these two quotes with a unanimous response.

The quotes provided for the external lighting work to be taken up immediately

The RFO also asked for approval to get Garden Duck to provide a quote to cut a path and gravel it to the side of the PVC.

Approval was given for the RFO to proceed.

318. Portland Services Update

a) **Public Toilets** – The RFO explained that he had received two quotes for the cleaning of the public toilets. One from Glen Cleaning at just under £25,000, excluding consumables which he believed would account for a further 25% of the quote (totalling around £31,000.00). This would provide eight cleans in the summer with opening times of 8am to 8pm, and four cleans in the winter with opening times of 10am to 4pm. The other quote was from Churchill who had quoted £54,000 with the same number of cleans and the same opening times. He added that he had engaged with Kingdom but that they had never gotten back to him. He reiterated that these quotes were simply for the cleaning and did not include any repair or maintenance costs. He asked that the meeting consider going ‘firm’ in principal today or delay the decision. Cllr Flack questioned why PTC were being asked to clean the toilets when there was no guarantee that ownership would be passed to it. Cllr Nowak agreed that it was unlikely that there would be a definitive decision imminently, but that Glen should be made aware that PTC were favourable to their quote, but that a decision was unlikely to be made in the next few weeks. Cllr Thurston felt that until such time that the terms of the lease were known it would be difficult to make any final decisions. However, it was generally considered that a decision could not be delayed until the final details of the lease were known. Following a unanimous vote, the RFO was instructed by the Chairman to inform Glen that the Council were looking favourably on their proposal and they were currently the preferred supplier. In addition, the Chairman felt that there was a requirement, regardless of who owned the buildings to ensure that sufficient public liability insurance was in place. The RFO confirmed that public liability insurance of £10M was in place.

RFO to contact Glen Cleaning and let them know that they are the preferred supplier for one year.

c) Burial Ground Fees –

- i. The RFO explained that, with the transfer of burial services to PTC from 1st April, there was a requirement to discuss the fees to be applied as those fees needed to be advertised in the next couple of weeks. The Chairman advised that W&PBC were currently charging £1,650.00 for a burial and double this for non-residents. The Chairman asked for views on the level

of charges to be applied for Portland burials, noting that from previous discussions the proposal had been for the total cost to be £1,000.00 and that only residents (on the electoral register) of Portland would be eligible for the service. The RFO suggested that there needed to be a Burial Committee to deal with any grey areas, such as previous residents who had moved away and now wished to be buried on Portland. The RFO explained that there were two types of charge; the exclusive rights of burial charge and the internment charge. The RFO suggested that the charge for the exclusive rights of burial be £650.00 whilst the internment charge be set at £350.00 making a total cost for Portland of £1,000.00. He explained that the internment charge needed to cover the cost of the hire of a digger, and whilst not yet known, he believed that a cost of £350.00 would amply cover the cost. Cllr Nowak felt that the charges suggested would not be sufficient in the event that future costs increased and proposed that a charge of £700.00 be applied for exclusive rights of burial and £500.00 for the internment cost making a total cost of £1,200.00. The Chairman proposed that a total of £1,200.00 be accepted and the vote to accept was unanimous.

The exclusive rights of burial charge to be set at £700.00 and the internment fee to be set at £500.00 being a total cost of £1,200.00.

- ii. **Crematorium internment Fees** – Following a discussion of the internment fee for ashes. It was unanimously agreed that this should be set at £200.00

Crematorium Internment Fees to be set at £200.00

- iii. **Exclusive Rights of Burial for a Cremation** – It was proposed that this should be half of the burial costs at £350.00. It was unanimously agreed that that this should be the case.

Exclusive Rights of Burial for a Cremation to be set at £350.00.

- iv. **The Right to Erect a Memorial** – It was proposed that the fee to erect a memorial should be waived, and that the right to erect a memorial should be free recognising that the cost of erecting the memorial (headstone) would fall to the family. This was unanimously agreed.

The Right to Erect a Memorial is to be waived.

- v. **Burial of Children** – It was proposed the cost to bury a child under the age of 2 would be free. This proposal was unanimously agreed.

Burial of Children under the age of 2 is to be free.

- vi. **Children between the age of 2 and 16** – it was proposed that the cost to bury a child between the age of 2 and 16 should be set at half of the adult cost; that is £350.00 for exclusive rights of burial and £250.00 for internment fees. A vote was taken with a unanimous agreement to agree those costs.

Burial of Children between the age of 2 and 16 is to be set at £350.00 for exclusive rights of burial and £250.00 for internment.

d) Allotment Fees – The Chairman explained that the current fees for allotments was £5.85 per rod (five and half yards). The RFO has suggested that it would be simpler to classify the allotments as small, medium and large and to price in that way. He further explained that whilst there were 60 allotments it was unclear as to whether all of those allotments belonged to PTC, as it was believed that some belonged to Portland Stone. The RFO added that all of the allotment fees had already been collected for the upcoming financial year and given this, there was no requirement to make any decision at this point in time. The Chairman agreed and felt that it would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the allotments, the leases in place and the liabilities to be taken over before making any decision on the charges to be applied. This proposal returned a unanimous vote.

The decision on the costs to be applied to allotments is to be delayed until a better understanding on leases etc had been gained.

319 Payments for approval

Payments for approval were presented by the RFO totalling £1,160.22 and as detailed below:

305	water2business	DD	213.81
306	BNP Paribas	DD	293.76
307	SWIT Spiller	BACS	151.70
308	Dorchester	BACS	23.98
309	Steven Jones	BACS	75.00
310	Terry Mutter	BACS	120.00
311	Council	BACS	238.80
312	Nisbets	BACS	43.17
			1,160.22

Noting that there is to be a refund of £10,000 for Council Tax as the Council tax paid for the PCV has been incorrectly calculated and, once corrected, a bill for correct level of Council Tax will be presented. He also advised that he would cancel the extant direct debit to ensure that no further payments could be taken. The refund would be placed in a reserve so that the funds were available to cover the bill when it was presented.

The chairman proposed that the payments presented for approval be accepted and the vote was unanimous.

320. The Committee's next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 13th March 2019 at the Council Offices, Portland Community Venue, Fortuneswell starting at 10.30 am.

The meeting closed at 12.00 o'clock.

Signed Dated
(Chairman)