

Bere Ferrers Parish Council

At a meeting of the F&G P Committee held in the Council Chamber Bere Alston on Tuesday 19th March 2019.

Present

Cllr. M. Page-Bailey Chairman
 Cllr. P. Dennis
 Cllr. B. Lamb
 Cllr. R. Leithall
 Cllr. Maycock

3165. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr. H. Boot-Handford due to holiday and Cllr. Pengelly due to illness.

3166. **Minutes of the meeting held on the 19th February and taken as read, to deal with matters arising.**Matters Arising

Minute 3065 The Clerk sought clarification on the query on Standing Orders 18f - she has asked the Assistant Clerk and the Chairman of Council as to what the query is about but neither knew. This Standing order is in bold so cannot be altered; also there are two paragraphs 18c which means 18f becomes 18g and 18f is Clause Superseded by Procurement Policy.

Minute 3068 –The Clerk reported that there has not been a reply to the letter sent to the gentleman with the motor bike, but he was hosing it off in the road yesterday.

Minute 3119 – With regards to the parishioner’s complaint to Cllr. Pengelly about cars parking over dropped curbs. The Clerk spoke with PCSO Greenwood who will put notes on any cars she finds parked over dropped curbs. With regards to the problem with the state of the road and the street lighting, the Clerk has had a reply from Tom Lee County Highways. When he is next in the area he will take a look at the road and if the verges need clearing out he will try and make provision for them in his budget, but they will not be done until the Autumn. As regards the lighting, that would need to be referred to Devon County Street lighting.

3167. **Accounts for payment.**

The Clerk circulated the March accounts for payment by email.

It has been noted by the Auditor that the invoices should be signed as correct by the Clerk; this has been put into operation. It was proposed that the Clerk to obtain a stamp with cheque number and signature on it to be used on all invoices.

Cllr. Dennis proposed payment of the accounts, seconded by Cllr. Page-Bailey.

The Clerk pointed out that the person signing the cheque must also sign the accounts for payment record sheet, this has also been brought to Councils attention by the auditor

3168. **Financial Statements**

The assistant Clerk sent the financial statements to committee via email.

Cllr. Leithall noted that the following categories are overspent; subscriptions, PAYE/NI, training, subscriptions and memberships. Cllr. Leithall proposed acceptance of the financial statements, seconded by Cllr. Page-Bailey.

3169. **To discuss and decide on headings for the F&GP Financial Statements for 2019/20.**

Discussions took place.

Cllr. Dennis asked if the categories could be put in alphabetic order. Cllr. Page-Bailey wondered if they could be grouped after the cost centres. Cllr. Page Bailey proposed acceptance of the headings for the financial sheets, seconded by Cllr. Dennis.

3170. **To accept reconciled bank statement.**

The Clerk emailed February's Bank Reconciliation sheets to committee members.

Cllr. Leithall proposed acceptance of the bank reconciliation, seconded by Cllr. Maycock.

3171. **Update on online banking/higher interest account.**

Cllr. Page-Bailey stated that no action had been taken on this, and will report back next month.

3172. **Staff sub-committee report.**

Cllr. Page-Bailey reported that there has not been a sub-committee meeting so there is nothing to report.

3173. **To review set up of Inventory of Assets.**

Cllr. Page-Bailey informed committee that he has not been able to complete the inventory so will pass it over to someone else to complete.

3174. **To discuss VAT on Precept.**

The Clerk was asked to clarify the VAT returns. The Clerk explained that VAT has its own account and will not be returned to committees. Clerk confirmed that the VAT can be claimed 3 monthly, Cllr. Page-Bailey thought it could be claimed add- hoc. Clerk to ascertain if this is so.

3175. **To review Council's Health & Safety policy.**

Cllr. Lamb stated that he would be undertaking this in the next three months. Cllr. Lamb to action.

3176. **To review fire risk and Bergen's fire/maintenance log.**

Cllr. Dennis stated that all the paperwork is present and correct.

3177. **To receive the Auditor's Interim report.**

Cllr. Page-Bailey went through the report item by item. The Councils responses are in bold type.

- a) The External Auditor issued the final report on 21st November and raised a number of issues. On reviewing the minutes of November and December 2018 Full Council it does not appear that any discussions took place addressing the issues raised in the report. The external Auditor also noted that issues raised in 2016/17 had not been addressed. The Council must ensure that it has properly acted on the points raised by the External Auditor in order for it to provide a positive response to Assertion 7 of the Annual Governance Statement. This should be clearly reflected in the Minutes of meetings of the Council - The smaller authority has not addressed the 'except for' matter raised by the external auditor. The smaller authority has not restated the 2016/17 figures and information received indicates that the current year figure for Section 2, Box 9 is also incorrect. Please ensure that amendments are corrected in the prior year comparatives when completing next year's AGAR. - **Clerk to investigate the minutes. On investigating the External Auditors report the only thing we think it might be is the restating the 2016 figures.**
- b) The Council has not published the Notice of Conclusion of Audit. - **The Clerk had them put on the website on the 22nd February 2019.**
- c) It was noted that the bank mandates have 5 Councillors who have since left but have not been removed. These 5 Councillors that have since left the Council must be removed from the accounts as bank signatories. – **Cllr. Lamb proposed that these 5 ex-councillors be removed from the bank mandate, seconded by Cllr. Maycock. The Clerk stated that the Chairman of Council needs to get a bank mandate from the bank.**
- d) It was noted that the bank reconciliations have not been signed by a Councillor of independent review and

approval. On a regular basis bank reconciliations must be subject to independent review by Councillors. The banks reconciliation and the supporting bank statements should be signed/ initialled and dated as evidence of this independent review. – **The Clerk instigated this on last month’s bank reconciliation.**

- e) It was noted that there have been some delays in reconciling bank accounts and the bank reconciliations are being carried out for different accounts at different dates. The Council should ensure that all bank accounts are reconciled on a regular basis. Where monthly bank statements are issued accounts should be reconciled each month end bank balance. – **The Clerk explained that the bank reconciliations for November/December were late because the Assistant Clerk needed to clarify what cost centre 2 items should be issued to.**
- f) A review of the bank reconciliation was carried out and it was noted that there is a cheque number 7526 which remains unrepresented. It appears that the cheque did not reach the company and subsequently the cheque was cancelled and a replacement cheque issued. The cancelled cheque needs to be reflected in the accounting System so that this does not appear on the bank reconciliation as unrepresented. The Council may need to contact the software supplier to clarify how this should be done. – **Clerk to confirm what action has been taken on this cheque. The committee need to know the process of how a cheque gets cancelled, for next F. & G.P.**
- g) It was noted that it is not current practice to stamp or date and sign invoices as correct and authorised for payment. A payment run report is produced and presented to members but this is also unsigned. Invoices should be signed and certified by the Clerk as being correct and approved. The payment run report should be signed as approved by the Chair of the Meeting when approved. – **This has been implemented on March accounts and the Clerk given permission to purchase a stamp with cheque number and signature on it.**
- h) The precept account code 1076 records income of £61,523; however Central Government data records a precept for the Council of £59,514 - a difference of £2,009. It appears that this difference may relate to Council Tax Support Grant which should have been coded to account 1077. The Council should review the transactions on account 1076 and ensure that the income credited to the code agrees with the value of the precept raised.- **The Clerk stated that the BACS payment would come in as precept and tax support grant together and they would need to be split into 1076/1077**
- i) During the audit visit it was noted that there was some uncertainty as to the value of General and Earmarked Reserves as different reports produced with the Alpha system appeared to state different values. This was queried with the software suppliers during the audit visit. Council to clarify with the software suppliers the correct report (and values) to be used for monitoring of reserves. – **The Assistant Clerk to go back to the software suppliers and the auditor to find the correct value to be used.**

The Clerk to contact the Auditor and ask what minutes he expects to see, and clarify what he was looking for.

On looking back over the minutes for 2017/18 the minute number on the Accounting Statements for the 31/07/2018 reads 1920 and it should read 1902.

3178. To review Financial Regulations.

It seems that no-one has actually reviewed the Financial Regulations as they did not think they had them,

Cllr. Leithall confirmed that Cllr. Boot-Handford had sent them out on 23rd February.

These to be an agenda item for April’s F. & G.P.

3179. To arrange staff performance reviews.

Cllr. Page-Bailey stated that Staff performance reviews are to be discussed by Staff Sub-committee.

3180. Correspondence

West Devon Borough Council

Blooming Great Deal

Council relaunches Garden Waste Club and gives existing customers a spring gift.

Date of issue: 11 March 2019

Good news for existing customers of West Devon Borough Council’s garden waste collection ser-

vice. The Council have extended the subscription year to next March which means existing customers, or anyone who signs up this summer, will get a full six months of extra collections for free. West Devon Borough Council has been running a garden waste collection service since 2017. Currently the subscription year runs from October to September but will now run from April to March to coincide with the main growing season.

It is an opt in service, which was introduced to enable residents to continue getting their garden waste collected from their homes, when the Council could no longer offer the service for free. So far, 5000 residents have signed up to the service and have their garden waste collected fortnightly.

Cllr Robert Sampson, Lead Member for Commercial Services said: “When we made the decision to run the garden waste service, the timing of the decision meant that we had to launch the annual service in autumn.

“We have always felt that this does not sit well with the growing season. Those residents who find themselves looking for a garden waste collection service at the start of the growing season are unlikely to sign up in spring and pay £40, if they are only going to benefit from 6 months of the service.

“Therefore we have decided to relaunch the service starting in spring this year. So anyone who signs up now will be signing up for a whole year from now until the end of March 2020

2.) West Devon & South Hams Borough Council.

As you know we are heading towards local elections on the 2nd of May.

The time between the notice of election and the results, is called **PURDAH**. During this time restrictions apply to what councils can publish.

These rules also apply to Town and Parish Councils.

PURDAH – what you need to know.

This year, the Purdah rules will apply from 21st March 2019 when the notice of election is posted, until the ballot closes on 2nd May.

The pre-election restrictions mean that Councils cannot: “**publish any material which in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.**”

This does not mean that councils are not allowed to communicate with their residents.

What Councils are not allowed to do:

- Produce publicity on matters which could be seen as promoting any political group or individual
- Make reference to individual politicians or groups in press releases
- Arrange proactive media events involving candidates
- Issue photos which include candidates
- Help with national political visits

What Councils are allowed to do:

- Continue to carry on with normal council business and continue to make council decisions
- Publish factual information
- Use relevant lead officers rather than members for reactive media releases (in practice this means the Clerk for your councils)

3) The Clerk has had a second letter from Devon County Highway Maintenance Community Enhancement Fund asking for a brief case study of the works undertaken showing the location and description of the works carried out.

3181. Agenda items for next meeting.

1. Update on online banking/higher interest account
2. Inventory of Assets.
3. Update on community fund for defibrillator at the Recreation Ground Bere Alston.
4. Staff sub-committee report.

- 5. VAT on precept
- 6. Health & Safety
- 7. To Review Financial Regulations.
- 8. Auditor Report from interim audit.
- 9. Councillors need to know the process of how a cheque is cancelled on the new account package.

3182. Questions from any members of the public present at the discretion of the Chairman.

- 1.) Cllr. Leithall asked what the situation is with the basket swing at Sarah Park.
 Cllr. Page Bailey stated that it has been put in but needs realigning the right way as it should swing into the park and not swing towards the Social Club, he assured Council that three Councillors met with Rhino on site and discussed the position of the swing and the way it should be placed, they were Cllr. Page-Bailey, Cllr. Crozier and Cllr. Pengelly.
 Discussions took place and the Clerk was asked to write to Rhino seeking clarification as to why the basket swing has been put in 90 degrees out to their instructions and stating that this is unacceptable and that the swing be placed as instructed.
 Cllr. Page-Bailey Also stated that the wood surround leading into the area of the new swing needs to be removed as it is a trip hazard. This to be sorted out when the drainage is undertaken. The Clerk pointed out that Open Spaces have proposed that they fill the area with bark chip as a temporary move to be able to claim the TAP grant.
 Cllr. Lamb was asked to talk to West Devon to see if they would grant an extension until May when they hope to do the drainage work and cover the whole area in rubber chip.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.17pm.

Signed this 26th day of March 2019.

Chairman.....