

DALSTON PARISH COUNCIL

Forge Green

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Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday 27th October 2020 at 7.15pm.

M Watling (Assistant Clerk)

Present

Cllr Byers Cllr Baxter Cllr Craig Cllr Drouet Cllr Gray
Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski Cllr Kyle Cllr Irving

Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes

The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 February 2020 were approved to be signed by Cllr Byers as a true record.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Public Participation

There were no members of the public present.

1 Annual Review of the Financial Regulations

- The Financial Regulations had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The RFO confirmed of no changes to the July 2019 NALC Model Financial Regulations. Minor amendments are required to sections 5 and 6 appropriate to our procedures to enable payments due to Coronavirus. It was agreed to make the following amendments:-

Paragraph 3.4 'January' replaced with 'December' as the date notifying the City Council of the precept requirement has been brought forward to early January.

Paragraph 5.2 After 'together with the relevant invoices' add 'where possible'. RFO to scan non-routine invoices and forward with the schedule of payments for authorisation to the signatories.

Paragraph 5.4 The last sentence to read 'Cheques and faster payment requests for invoices authorised to be paid at the Council Meeting will be signed as soon as possible thereafter.'

Paragraph 6.3 'faster payment transfer' inserted before 'cheque' as the preferred method of payment.

Paragraph 6.20 The last sentence regarding personal credit or debit cards is to be removed.

After these amendments the Financial Regulations 2020 will be recommended for adoption at the next Parish Council meeting.

- It was proposed by Cllr Byers that Cllr Gray and Cllr Irving should be additional signatories on the building society mandate to make payments easier. Cllr Craig seconded this. All were in agreement. The RFO will obtain the relevant forms for completion.
- Cllr Gray stated there was about £10,000 maintenance in the budget and at least one quotation was usually presented to the Parish Council before work was carried out. A good working relationship with a small number of reliable local tradesmen was essential for emergencies. Two quotes will be obtained where possible in accordance with paragraph 10.3 of the Financial Regulations. Approved contractors to be discussed in item 9.

2 Annual Review of Rents

- It was agreed the rent would remain unchanged at £40 per annum for Forge Green Garden rents
- The rent for 1 Forge Green is currently £301.77 per month. Increments normally apply from 1st January based on the annual increase in RPI calculated to November 2020 which is <1%. The rent for 2 Forge Green is currently £500 per month. This was a new tenancy from August 2019. Any monthly increase in rent would be minimal. Cllr Craig proposed and Cllr Kyle seconded no increase in either rent this year. All were in agreement.
- The current Grazing Licence Fee for The Green is £100 per annum. The tenant is a good tenant who has rented The Green for a number of years. Cllr Craig proposed and Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski seconded no increase and a grazing agreement would be prepared annually. All were in agreement.

3 Review of Cemetery and Other Fees

The RFO produced a schedule comparing cemetery fees for Dalston, Wetheral and Carlisle. Carlisle Cemetery fees were all increased by 2.6% for the year to March 2021. Wetheral last reviewed their fees in July 2019. The fees between the three Cemeteries become more closely aligned. It was agreed the fees would remain unchanged. Cllr Baxter proposed a fee of £250 to transfer ownership of a cremated remains space for a resident and a fee of £400 for a non-resident. This was seconded by Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski. All were in agreement.

The schedule of charges for fishing permits, postcards and maps was agreed to remain unchanged.

4 Disability Access Statement

The RFO had circulated a draft Disability Access Statement with brief notes of its purpose prior to the meeting. The main issue is scanned documents and PDF's (Portable Document Format) may not be readable by screen readers on our website. The website designer indicated that due to the nature of information we publish it would not be feasible to replace this in an acceptable format for screen readers. The draft Disability Access Statement sets out the limitations of the website and makes provision to request information in a different format. Cllr Byers suggested a response of 14 days to user requests and add 'Creating documents to fully meet accessibility standards would put disproportionate burden on the Parish Council'. The statement will be reviewed on an annual basis. All were in agreement. The RFO will make the amendment for the November Parish Council meeting.

5 Memorial Seats and Trees

We have 9 memorial seats and benches, one tree and one rose bush in the Parish. A request was made to place a seat in memory of a non-resident of the Parish. This request was turned down. It was unanimously agreed that Memorials would only be considered for residents of the Parish. It was agreed not to have a formal policy and each request be considered on its merits. The Parish Council to approve the location, materials and design of the seat. The purchase of the seat and its maintenance would be the responsibility of the person making the request.

6 Contracts for renewal

- The two-year fixed term electricity contract with Opus ends on 2nd December 2020. The RFO obtained quotes from suppliers and the schedule of current rates was circulated before the meeting. British Gas Lite were the least expensive for a fixed term contract. A flexible contract with Bulb was the least expensive option. Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski commented Bulb are a renewable energy supplier. Cllr Kyle proposed that Bulb be the electricity supplier and prices kept under review. This was seconded by Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski, All were in agreement.
- The grass cutting contract with Wigton Town Council terminates on 31 March 2021. The Clerk has updated the documentation to incorporate all the variations and is ready to send out to tender. Cllr Kyle proposed Wigton Town Council should be invited to price again for the contract without competition. If the price is acceptable no further contractors would be asked to tender, this was seconded by Cllr Craig. All were in agreement.

- Cllr Baxter enquired about a parishioners request to cut the edges of the cycle path to be included in the Parish grass cutting contract. Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski commented this action could indicate the Parish Council were accepting responsibility for the cycle path. It was agreed not to include this in the Parish grass cutting contract.

7 Draft budget 2021/22

The RFO had prepared a draft budget which had been circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Baxter was in favour of no increase in the precept in view of the current financial difficulties parishioners experienced due to Coronavirus pandemic. Cllr Drouet enquired if the £10,000 grant could be transferred to the Charitable Trust. Cllr Kyle stated that there were no conditions attached to the grant and any transfer to a reserve for devolution for example would be a matter for discussion for the year end accounts. In the past after no increase there was unrest amongst parishioners when the precept eventually had to be substantially increased. The prospect of Local Council Devolution will have budget implications and Cllr Kyle recommended that the Parish Council should start planning for this. It was agreed the roof replacement should be in the 2023/24 budget and to begin the tender process after Christmas 2022 with work planned for spring 2023. Cllr Byers proposed a precept increase of 2.5%. This was seconded by Cllr Craig. Five Councillors were in favour. One Cllr was against the proposal.

The RFO will revise the budget for a 2.5% increase in precept & try to obtain an up to date estimate for the roof replacement at Forge Green. The revised budget will be circulated to the Policy & Resources Committee with presentation to the December Parish Council meeting for approval.

Cllr Gray left the meeting during this agenda item.

8 Village signs

Cllr Byers obtained quotes for basic Village Entrance Signs. Four signs are required and 8 poles. We have one large sign at Buckabank and three smaller versions. Draft artwork had been circulated before the meeting. Cllr Auld suggested a logo and some colour on the signs. Cllr Baxter suggested 'Bloom' to have a capital B, 'award' replace winners and to read 2018 and 2019. Cllr Craig proposed £1,000 be budgeted for in 2021/22. This was seconded by Cllr Kyle. The RFO will amend the budget accordingly.

9 Tenders and Quotations

The Clerk had compiled a list of contractors as a starting point for obtaining quotations. This had been circulated for additional recommendations. The following were suggested:

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Fencing & tree work | Nigel Park |
| Tree work | Lawn Order |

Cllr Irving will find a name for a plasterer. Suggestions for surveyors and someone to prepare tender documents would be welcomed.

10 Councillor matters

Cllr Kyle gave an update on the progress being made clearing the triangle of land at Raughton by the residents volunteer group. 2,500 daffodil bulbs have also been planted.

Cllr Kaye-Kreczkowski would be unable to lay the poppy wreath on Remembrance Sunday, but will ask Cllr Utting if he is able to do this.

Cllr Baxter encouraged the Clerk and RFO to claim the HMRC tax allowance of £6 per week as they were required to work from home during the Coronavirus pandemic

11 Dates of Forthcoming Meetings

Next meeting of The Parish Council to take place on 10th November 2020 at 7.15pm Via Zoom

Policy & Resource Meeting dates for 2021:- 23 February 2021 and 26th October 2021 at 7.15pm the location to be confirmed. An additional meeting in between to be arranged if required.

Property & Maintenance Meeting dates for 2021:- TBA

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm