

MADELEY PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on
Monday, April 23rd 2007 at Jubilee House, 74 High Street, Madeley,
commencing at 6.30pm.

**PRESENT: Councillors P Taylor (Vice Chair), D Edwards, G Green,
C Muddiman, M Swift.**
Clerk

F06/53 Apologies for Absence

Cllr D Davies	-	Out of area	-	Approved
Cllr J Jones	-	Illness	-	Approved
Cllr A Mackenzie	-	Work Commitment	-	Approved

F06/54 Remarks from the Chair

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair Cllr DP Taylor presided.

F06/55 Public Discussion

No members of the public were present.

F06/56 Minutes

Resolved:

that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting held on 12th
February 2007 be confirmed and approved for signature.

F06/57 Reports

57.1 Leisure & Community – March 12th 2007

Cllr M Swift presented the report of the Leisure Committee for
information – Noted.

57.1.1 Grant Application – John Randall School

Funding was requested to provide an after school disco for the
children. The disco was planned as a means of thanking those
children who have fund raised throughout the year for a number of
charities and good causes.

Resolved

That a grant of £75.00 be awarded to John Randall School to provide
a disco for the children.

57.2 Environment Committee – March 5th & April 2nd 2007

Cllr C Muddiman present the reports of the Environment Committee for Councillors information – noted

F06/58 Budget & Finance – Business Plan Report

The Clerk presented the Business Plan Report (Appendix A) and explained that the RFO is currently undergoing a process of review of financial procedures to ensure that financial regulations are fully complied with.

58.1 Expenditure Approval List

Resolved:

that the expenditure transactions recorded be confirmed and approved for payment.

58.2 Financial Budget Comparison

Noted.

58.3 Amendment to Financial Regulations to accommodate payment by Credit Card

The RFO had prepared a report (Appendix B) requesting an amendment to Financial Regulations to accommodate payment by Business Credit Card. The clerk informed the meeting that this issue is currently under discussion with the NALC and who have put forward the view that Credit Card transactions could be considered as a loan and as such are not allowed.

Members felt that it is not acceptable for staff to use personal credit cards for later re-imburement and that the flexibility of a credit facility is becoming increasingly necessary to the overall efficiency of the organisation. Councillors were happy to support the RFO in his efforts to reach an understanding with NALC and as per recommendation:

Resolved:

That Madeley Parish Council amends Financial Regulations (2003) to include paragraph:

16.6 Business Visa Card payments may only be established upon the signature of two appointed elected member's signatories and shall, as far as practicable, be signed at a duly convened meeting of the Council or its committees.

Business Visa Card payments may only be instructed by the Clerk to the Council and the Responsible Finance Officer and are subject to an overall credit limit of £1,500.

F06/59 Assets – Business Plan Report

Distributed for information (Appendix A) – noted.

The Chair read out the following statement:

'Section 100B (4) Local Government Act 1992 – I am of the opinion that the following items should be dealt with as a matter of urgency at this meeting to avoid any unnecessary delay.'

The Clerk informed the meeting that to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) order 2005, which came into force on 2006, the parish should carry out a fire risk assessment. A quote had been obtained through Gra-Bern and the clerk sought permission to commission the work.

On examination, Cllr P Taylor discovered the recommended contractor was a personal contact and he was obliged to declare an interest. The meeting was therefore inquorate for the purpose of making this decision.

Cllr Swift supplied information for an alternative/additional quotation for future consideration.

59.1 Staff Accommodation

The Clerk had prepared a report (Appendix C) that outlined the various options for the expansion of the staff accommodation at Jubilee House. Five solutions were summarised, for which Telford & Wrekin Council had supplied estimated costings.

Councillors discussed the proposals in detail and were agreed that Parish needs must come first and that major expenditure should be avoided.

Resolved

That the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre be given notice to quit and that their current office space be used by Parish Council staff.

Any alterations to render the space fit for purpose will be considered at a later date.

59.2 Tenants Rent Review

Advice from Nock Deighton had been received on the morning of 23.04.07. which had not afforded enough time for the compilation of the necessary information for decision at the meeting. It was noted that the property had been valued at a commercial rate of £7.50 per sq. ft, furthermore, that current leases had expired 31st December 2005. Comment was made that figures supplied by Nock Deighton suggested a significant rent rise which could cause difficulty for the tenants. It was agreed that further consideration is needed to decide a method of implementation and that initial discussions with the tenants should start as soon as possible.

59.3 The Coach House

The proposed partnership development with Stonham Housing Association has run into difficulties as Stonham have been unable to secure the required revenue funding, without which, further progress is impossible. Chris Lewis (National Business Development Manager)

had written expressing regret at the position and had supplied the Building Condition Appraisal and draft conversion plans.

Councillors were most disappointed that the project with Stonham could not proceed. Stonham had suggested that another Housing Association might be interested in taking on the project and carrying out the conversion to provide single person accommodation for rent.

The meeting could not agree on the best way forward and it was agreed to revisit the problem at the next Finance & General Purposes Committee.

F06/60 Partnerships – Business Plan Report

The Clerk drew councillor's attention to items in the Business Plan report (Appendix A). In particular the £20,000 that has been made available by Telford & Wrekin Council, as matched funding for a five year period. Additionally there is an invitation to bid for a share of a further fund of £110,000. Both these funds are available only to district centres and are restricted to regeneration projects. Suitable schemes need to be worked up to take advantage of these opportunities and (in year two) a Regeneration Group or Forum should be created.

Further partnership work is taking place through South Telford Neighbourhood Management, who have been very supportive of MPC Spring Clean and community concerns. A scheme to work with young people in Madeley has recently started, the idea being to signpost and fund constructive activities that are available locally.

60.1 Broadband & VOIP Telephony System

The Deputy Clerk had supplied a written report (Appendix D) that outlined a proposal to install Broadband and VoIP Telephony through Telford & Wrekin Council. Installation costs would be high but it was considered that the benefits could justify the expenditure. An integrated system would provide free calls to all Telford and Wrekin departments, server back up, web hosting and anti virus management.

The meeting considered that with the appropriate safeguards, this was a positive way forward that would ultimately provide a better public service. They asked that the Deputy Clerk proceed with negotiations with a view to achieving a reduction on the installation costs and that a representative from Telford & Wrekin ICT Business Transformation is asked to give a presentation at the next Finance & General Purposes Committee.

60.2 Request for Financial Assistance – St Michael's Churchyard

Madeley Parish Council had covered the cost of churchyard maintenance at St Michaels since March 2002, on the understanding that the churchyard would be declared closed and so become the responsibility of Telford & Wrekin Council. Rev Henry Morris had requested further

funding of £2,386 to for 12 grass cuts over the summer. Formal application to close the cemetery has been made and is expected to take approximately 12 months.

Councillors felt that there has been a significant amount of money spent looking after the churchyard but accepted that it is a public amenity. They agreed that the support should continue for one more season, particularly to support the Thomas Telford celebrations.

Resolved:

that an award of £2,386 be made to St Michael's Church to maintain the churchyard for 2007.

F06/61 **Correspondence**
There was none

F06/62 **Information**
62.1 Postwatch
Comment on government proposals on Post Office closures.

F06/63 **Date of Next Meeting**
The next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is scheduled to take place on Monday 9th July, commencing at 6.30.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.35pm

Signed..... Dated.....