

**MADELEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, held on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008 at Jubilee House, 74 High Street, Madeley, commencing at 6.30pm.

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**PRESENT:**     **Councillors: J Jones (Chair), DP Taylor (Vice Chair), D Davies, D Edwards, G Green, A Mackenzie, E Swift, S Taylor.**  
Clerk & Deputy Clerk

**F07/50**     **Apologies for Absence**  
There were none.

**F07/51**     **Declaration of Interests**  
There were none.

**F07/52**     **Remarks from the Chair**  
There were none.  
The Vice Chair expressed his concern at the change of meeting time without prior consultation. He was assured that every effort would be made to prevent this situation occurring again.

Councillors were reminded that the 'Annual Parish Meeting' (All Electors) will take place on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May, commencing at 6.30pm

**F07/53**     **Public Discussion**  
No members of the public were present.

**F07/54**     **Minutes**  
**Resolved**  
That the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting held on Monday February 11<sup>th</sup> be confirmed and signed as a true record.

**F07/55**     **Reports**  
**55.1 Leisure & Community**  
Noted.  
  
**55.2 Personnel**  
Noted.

### **55.3 Environment**

Noted.

(60.2) Investigations into the feasibility of a path sweeping service are ongoing.

## **F07/56 Budget & Finance – Business Plan Report**

*to effectively monitor and control the council's budget to ensure best value for the community*

The Deputy Clerk presented the Business Plan (Appendix A) for Councillors information. He informed the meeting that the Audit Committee would meet in early June, and that a new External Auditor had been appointed.

### **65.1 Expenditure Approval List**

#### **Resolved**

That the expenditure approval list be approved for signature.

### **65.2 Financial Budget Comparison**

The financial comparison report was submitted for Councillors information.

Noted.

### **65.3 Internal Audit**

#### **65.3.1 Letter of Appointment**

The Deputy Clerk informed the meeting of the re-appointment of the Internal Auditor Mr R E Bennett.

#### **65.3.2 Interim Audit Report**

In March 2008 Mr Bennett had carried out an interim audit of the systems of internal control and had found them to be operating satisfactorily.

#### **65.3.3 Audit Plan**

The Deputy Clerk submitted a report and recommendation (Appendix B) detailing the Audit Plan that had been agreed with the Internal Auditor.

#### **Resolved**

That the internal audit continues to be a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of internal controls

### **65.4 Debit Card Payments**

The Deputy Clerk had submitted a report (Appendix C) that explained the potential difficulties if payments are made by Credit Card. Advice from the NALC is that use of Credit Cards may not be lawful on the groups of 'borrowing without approval'. Although there has been no challenge from the Auditor, the Deputy Clerk suggested that as the question has yet to be resolved it would be prudent to abandon this method of payment

**Resolved**

That the expenditure using the Business Visa Card be declared 'de minimis'.

**Resolved**

That the Business Visa Account be terminated.

There remain occasions when card purchase is the only option available and the meeting felt it unacceptable that staff should use their personal cards for later reimbursement. The Deputy Clerk advised that a Debit Card could be considered in the same light as a Direct Debit in that the instruction is signed by two members, and that this could provide a suitable alternative.

**Resolved**

That subject to a single purchase limit of £250 and a total debit limit of £1,500, Madeley Parish Council consent to payment (in exceptional circumstances) by Co-operative Bank Business Debit Card by authorised officers.

**65.5 Councillor Allowances**

The Deputy Clerk presented the details of Councillors allowance received 2007/2008, for publication with the Annual reports in Madeley Matters. Noted.

**F07/57 Assets – Business Plan Report**

*to continuously improve all Council owned and managed properties and to provide facilities that are safe, well maintained and welcoming.*

*to publicise these facilities effectively and to deliver an efficient, value for money service.*

The Clerk presented the Business Plan (Appendix A). Particular mention was made of the following:-

- Councillors were informed that the office IT system is now 4 years old and that quotations would be sought for a replacement system. Cllr DP Taylor offered assistance and advice in the drawing up of specifications.
- Following repair and refurbishment the ladies public toilets are now open to the public.
- A water leak at the Sutton Hill allotments had been traced and repaired and a refund obtained from Severn Trent for water charges.

The report was noted.

**F07/58 Partnerships – Business Plan Report**

*to develop effective working partnerships with other agencies and organisations to ensure a co-ordinated approach towards the achievement of common goals  
to consider and evaluate more major projects requiring funding*

The Clerk presented the Business Plan (Appendix A). Particular mention was made of the following: -

- The Madeley Partnership is working on Funding applications for three regeneration projects – hanging baskets, replacement pedestrian safety railings and commissioning of a consultant to develop a Strategy and Action Plan. There is a level of frustration due to the constantly changing criteria to access the funding.

### **58.1 Groundwork Proposal**

Following a presentation by Graham Bould to the Finance & General Purposes meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2007, the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk of the Council had met with Groundwork to discuss ideas for joint working and development. This meeting had coincided with the public concerns raised at Sutton Hill and subsequent public meetings and Groundwork had been directed to consider how Groundwork and Madeley Parish Council could work in partnership, focussing on Sutton Hill. Groundwork had provided a proposal (Appendix D) with outline suggestions, a suggested timetable and costs.

Some members felt that the focus on Sutton Hill was too narrow; they acknowledged that there are issues at Sutton Hill as there are in other areas throughout the parish. There was a view that the parish should be working to break down barriers within and between the three wards.

The Chair felt that the ongoing regeneration work in Woodside and Borough Towns Initiative work developing in Madeley had directed attention towards Cuckoo Oak. He acknowledged that Hills Lane would not benefit from the proposal on the table but explained that this was a pilot and if successful could be rolled out to other areas.

The meeting was unable to reach agreement and therefore: -

### **Referred**

The proposal from Groundwork Black Country for partnership working in Sutton Hill to Full Council for consideration.

*7.30 Cllr D Edwards left the meeting.*

### **58.2 Madeley Partnership**

Madeley Partnership is not yet a constituted body and has no financial regulations and is therefore not in a position to contract work. On behalf of the partnership Madeley Parish Council is preparing documentation to contract a consultant to develop a Strategy and produce an Action Plan for the group. Funding for the consultant is yet to be approved but the Partnership has been informed that it is likely to be forthcoming.

In preparation for the commissioning of a consultant the Clerk requested nominated members to receive the tender documents and if necessary, interview prospective candidates.

**Resolved**

That the tenders be examined by the Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk and an invited member of the Partnership.

**F07/59**    **Correspondence**  
There was none

**F07/60**    **Information**  
**60.1 Notification of the closure of St Michael's churchyard.**  
Noted

**60.2 SGCT Volunteering project, year 2 report**  
Noted

**F07/61**    **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes committee is scheduled to take place on Monday July 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, commencing at 6.30pm.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7.40pm.

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