



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OFFICE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE OF MAWNAN PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 22ND JANUARY 2024 AT 7.00PM IN IN THE MAWNAN BOWLING CLUB.

PRESENT: Cllrs Potter (Chair), Moyle, Reid & Sadler

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs L Clements, clerk

472.24F **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** – none noted

473.24F **MEMBERS TO DECLARE ANY INTERESTS IN THE ITEMS ON THE AGENDA, REQUEST DISPENSATIONS OR NOTE ANY GIFTS OVER £50** - none noted

474.24F **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA** - none noted

475.24F **TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THIS COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 24TH JULY 2023, 23RD OCTOBER 2023 & 6TH DECEMBER 2023 AND THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THEM**

It was proposed by Cllr Sadler, seconded by Cllr Potter and

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 24th July & 23rd October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair

on a vote being taken the matter was approved unanimously

It was proposed by Cllr Reid, seconded by Cllr Sadler and

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2023 (with the clarification that £3000 of the £8000 funding of for the Playing Field Trusts is for legal advice) be approved, subject to the above amendment, and signed by the Chair

on a vote being taken the matter was approved unanimously

476.24F **TO BE ADVISED OF ANY INFORMATION PERTAINING TO PREVIOUS MINUTES, AMENDMENTS AND ACTIONS AGREED THEREIN.**

None noted by clerk

477.24F **REVIEW OF CURRENT BUDGET POSITION 2023/24 (3rd quarter) AND DISCUSSION OF ANY SIGNIFICANT ISSUES (including signing off on Q2 & Q3 bank statements)**

The clerk was asked when they next precept payment was due in (5th April approx.) by Cllr Potter.

The overspend on the PC websites line was due to the ending of the free hosting for the community website – she has amalgamated relevant into the PC website but was reviewing its usage numbers before considering renewing again.

She explained why the Publications line showed a minus – as the footpath leaflet was nearing completion, with the majority of advertiser having paid or about to pay at the end

of the month. The final proof were expected this week for review from the printer and should be available for February half –term.

478.24F INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW & UPDATE

The clerk went through the minor items listed on the last Internal Audit report. She did note that there was mention of *Adequacy of Reserves* which would likely be an issue again in the 23/24 report since we are using money for the PC office but our Internal Auditor's advice has been sought about recognising the need to 'liquidate reserves as necessary'.

479.24F TO REVIEW CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR 2023. (Annual review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Safeguarding & Reserves Policy). Changes required to the Financial Regulations were limited to the limits for tenders/ contracts. There is a review of Financial Regulations underway at the moment. Both Standing Orders & the Safeguarding Policy remained the same.

The Reserves & Investment Policy was discussed, especially in light of the predicted EoY figure and the potential need to liquidate existing Earmarked Reserves that may be necessary due to financial needs of the new offices. Replenishment of reserves through a significant increase to the precept for 24/25 had already been agreed, although tight rein on expenses needed to be ensured. The clerk had also raised a request for training on 3 year budget planning with SCRIBE, or software suppliers

It was proposed by Cllr Potter, seconded by Cllr Reid and

RESOLVED that the amendments and updates to the 4 listed policies either made by the clerk during review or as discussed this evening be accepted

on a vote being taken the matter was approved unanimously

480.24F ANNUAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROLS, FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT & HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE (this has had to be done by the clerk without named cllr support)

The clerk explained the minor changes (in yellow) to the Financial Risk Assessment, once again asking that a named councillor be put in place to help go through these documents as it was not really suitable that the person doing the tasks was the one reviewing their effectiveness. She had added a section about responsibilities as Sole Trustee & reclaiming VAT along with the email from our internal auditor on this subject.

As part of the review of Financial Internal Controls, also needing a named councillor to assist, she noted that main number of high risk items related to the verification and management of contracts & tenders once awarded. We needed to have something more robust in place when contracts had been awarded to review how they are being actioned – currently ad hoc measures for review during the contract/ after works was being done with no consistency by random councillors.

It was proposed by Cllr Potter, seconded by Cllr Sadler and

RESOLVED that the Internal Financial Controls & Risk Assessments be adopted with regular in year review to be undertaken

on a vote being taken the matter was approved unanimously

The clerk explained that although there were some items of H&S concern many were in the process of being addressed.

Cllr Reid expressed his concern with the policies in general, feeling that there was a 'system flaw' in how the parish council was managed and that we were creating policies for no reason. He felt that legal advice needed to be sought.

481.24F TO DISCUSS UPDATING THE CLERK'S CONTRACT IN LINE WITH THE NEW MODEL EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT ISSUED BY SLCC/NALC (to be implemented in April 2024) AND TO DISCUSS DATE FOR THE CLERK'S ANNUAL REVIEW

The clerk explained that there was no need to completely review here contract but that certain statutory point needed to be discussed (holiday; mileage, duties). After some discussion where Cllr Reid felt that his should be left entirely up to a HR committee (which we don't have) he requested that this be sent to the Staffing Committee ad a meeting of them called to review it.

A date for the clerk's annual review was to be agreed by Cllrs Potter & Whibley, hopefully before 1st April. Documentation would be sent out to them by the clerk.

482.24F INFORMATION ON SIGNING UP TO THE CIVILITY & RESPECT PLEDGE INITIATIVE.

Cllr Reid felt that this was not appropriate to do as there had been no training or information sent round and there were no viable sanctions should the pledge not be adhered to. He felt that 'the system had failed' and that signing up to another pledge without true commitment was just a paper exercise. Cllr Sadler felt that most issues rested on the shoulders of the clerk.

It was proposed by Cllr Reid, seconded by Cllr Sadler and

RESOLVED that it was decided to agree in principle to the civility & respect pledge but not to agree to sign up to it at the moment

on a vote being taken the matter was approved unanimously

483.24F TO CONSIDER ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES TO AGENDAS & MINUTES AS PER RECENT CLERK'S TRAINING (the change to numbering has already been actioned as of 1.1.24)

Cllr Reid felt that the renumbering taking place was useless and that all agenda and minutes should be numbered from 1 for each agenda published, with no differentiation made of committee minutes (such as the F for O&F minutes). The clerk explained that this would make the minutes almost impossible to follow over the year as there would be no differentiation between one month (or year) and the next. This would be picked up at audit as there had to be a recognised & specific number for our annual statements and would cause issues in the event of any legal action based on minutes being entered into.

He continued that he felt that the public would have no understanding of what or why the numbering system being used was there and would not be able to track or understand items raised. The clerk & Cllr Moyle disagreed, feeling that the public never took notice of item numbers anyway and were more likely to be looking at the subject under discussion.

CLlr Sadler put forward that agenda & minutes should start at the beginning of each Parish Council year (May) and be suffixed by the year (so .24), with the O&F committee retaining the .24F suffix. However this did not find a seconder.

Continued discussion on this was undertaken and eventually

It was proposed by Cllr Potter, seconded by Cllr Reid and

RESOLVED that it was felt that the O&F committee, although tasked with agreeing parish council protocols for recommendation would, in this instance, defer all decision on this back to the full council.

on a vote being taken the matter was approved unanimously

The clerk was to include this as a separate item on the next PC agenda immediately following the O&F recommendations.

Meeting finished at 8.10pm

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