

FORTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting Held at 7:20 pm, Wednesday 11th May 2022

At Forton Parish Rooms

PRESENT: Cllrs: S Spencer (Chair), D Carver RFO, P Hammond, L Baynton, A Hawkins.

Borough Cllrs: M Smith and P Farrington

No members of the public were present.

Clerk: C Little

1. Apologies for absence:

Cllr Winnington.

Proposed Cllr Udall.

Proposed Cllr Downing did not attend.

2. Declaration of Councillors' Personal Interests – None declared.

3. Minutes of Meeting 9th March 2022 – The Council agreed the minutes as a true record and they were signed by the Chairman. As a matter arising, the Chairman observed that the planning application for Meretown Cottage had subsequently been withdrawn.

4. Councillor Vacancies – The Chairman officially welcomed Angus Hawkins to the Parish Council. In the absence of Rachael Udall and Simon Downing we were unable to conclude their appointments. The Clerk agreed to contact both.

ACTION CLERK

5. Financial report and authority for payments

5.1 2021/2022 Year-End – 31st March

The financial statement for the year ended 31st March 2022 was presented. It balanced to the bank statements covering the year-end with a closing balance of £714.88 and was accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5.2 2022/2023 Quarter One

The financial statement dated 4th May 2022 was presented. It balanced to the latest bank statements received with a closing balance of £1,274.08, the first tranche of £660.46, Precept, Council Tax Grant and Concurrent monies having been received from Stafford Borough Council on 12th April. This was accepted as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

5.3 Insured Risks

There have been some very recent changes in the provision of insurance. The specialist broker, Came & Co that has offered the council its cover for many years has now been absorbed into Arthur J. Gallagher, a very large international broker. This year Gallagher is only offering cover from Hiscox Insurance for £384.80 whereas we only have £339.57 budgeted. The RFO has tried to contact Ecclesiastical (the present insurer) but it will not deal direct with the council, we have to go through a broker. He has also contacted Henshalls, a broker based in Newport. Henshalls has so far been unable to help but will have a final answer within a week. Cllr Smith suggested the RFO speaks with the clerk of Gnosall and Norbury, Jayne Cooper, to discover how they insure and to see if this offers any options for Forton. The RFO agreed to do this.

Councillors nevertheless used the Pre-Renewal Questionnaire provided by Gallagher to determine whether the package on offer would meet the council's needs. After some discussion it was determined that we need cover for: -

- Employee Dishonesty £150k
- Employers' Liability £10m
- Legal Expenses £250k
- Libel & Slander £500k
- Money in Transit £1,000
- Officials & Trustees Liability £500k
- Personal Accident £100k/£500 per week
- Public and Products liability £10m

and endeavour to obtain the above with a further Long Term Agreement (minimum of 3 years) for stability.

The RFO undertook to obtain such insurance before the renewal date of 1st June but would report back to councillors with a firm quotation before committing to it.

As a backstop, the council sanctioned the taking out of the insurance already on offer from Gallagher/Hiscox at the cost of £384.80, should it not prove possible to find a better alternative within the time available.

ACTION: RFO

5.3 Payments Approved

Precept Payments	Budget £.p	Agreed to Pay £.p
Clerk's Salary (gross) – 1st quarter	113.75	91.15
PAYE	nil	22.60
Clerk's expenses	15.00	nil
SPCA subscription 2022/23 (already paid)	101.87	101.30
Insurance premium 2022/23 (not to exceed)	339.57	384.80

The above payments were approved and the RFO authorised to make them.

ACTION: RFO

5.4 Annual Audit 2021/2022

The audit papers need to be submitted before 30th June this year. The necessary notices for the exercise of electors' right to inspect accounts and records will be posted with the period allowing examination from 13th June 2022 to 22nd July 2022 (30 working days).

The council then proceeded to: -

ACTION: 5.4.1

Note the receipt of the Internal Audit Report (Page 4 of the AGAR).

ACTION: 5.4.2

Address the Governance Questions Nos 1 – 8 (Page 5 of the AGAR) which the Chairman & Clerk each signed.

ACTION: 5.4.3

Approve the Accounting Statements 2021/22 (Page 6 of the AGAR) which had already been signed by the RFO.

ACTION: 5.4.4

Approve the Certificate of Exemption (Page 3 of the AGAR) which the Chairman signed. It having already been signed by the RFO.

ACTION: 5.4.5

Record a vote of thanks to Andrew Smith for conducting the internal audit, without charge.

- 6. Update on A519 safer road campaign** – The clerk confirmed that she had contacted County Councillor Winnington for the outcome of his site visit and meeting with Diane Firkin. Unfortunately, Councillor Winnington is on leave. The Clerk agreed to contact him on his return and report back to councillors.

ACTION CLERK

- 7. Red Lion Sutton update** – It was reported that following an appeal the Red Lion Pub had retained Asset of Community Value status. Borough Councillor Smith reported he had attended the appeal. He advised that the planning application decision was still outstanding. He confirmed that has asked planners for this to be expedited. He observed that regardless of the outcome renovation costs would be increasing as it is deteriorating by the day, and, whilst the building remains empty there would be a premium on the rates of up to 300%. Cllr Smith also advised that if the planning decision is not favourable to the owner there is likely to be an appeal.
- 8. Matters requiring attention in the Parish** – No new items.
- 9. Correspondence** – Stafford Borough Council has distributed “memory books” for those residents unable to record their Covid memories online. Councillors agreed to place these in public buildings to make them available for the community.

Councillor Hammond thanked the Clerk for regularly distributing correspondence to councillors by email, including the recent press release praising Stafford Borough Council following the peer review which commenced in 2018. He further proposed that a letter be sent to the Chief Executive of Stafford Borough Council to acknowledge how fortunate Forton is in having the support of the council leader, Cllr Farrington and deputy leader, Cllr Smith who both regularly attend our meetings. The letter should also pass on our grateful thanks for their invaluable advice in our parish. Cllr Farrington advised that it had been gratifying to hear from the independent review that the one criticism was perhaps that the council was not doing enough to sing its own praises and that they should look for more opportunities to ‘publicise its numerable successes’

ACTION CLERK

- 10. Any other business** – None

Meeting closed 8:10pm

Date of next meeting 20th July 2022 at 7:00pm.