

CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
ON THURSDAY 8 APRIL 2010

Present: Cllr Birch – In the Chair
David Allison – Clerk to the Council
Amanda Taft – Minute Taker

Cllrs Bennett, Norman and Shafe

Voting Members: 4

In Attendance: Cllrs Brand and Vassiliou

FA596/10 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Bains and Martin.

FA597/10 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

FA598/10 Representations from the Public

There were no public present.

FA599/10 Minutes

It was requested that the words 'for the third consecutive month' regarding the fireworks expenditure be deleted from FA587/10 (Matters Arising: FA580/10 Monthly Accounts).

Resolved:

- that the amended Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2010 be approved and be signed by the Chairman.

FA600/10 Matters Arising

FA588/10 (Monthly Accounts). The Clerk advised that of the three matters he had been asked to clarify; the fireworks and PCSO expenditure had been dealt with but that he had not had the time to deal with the insurance claim. The Chairman requested that the insurance claim for equipment purchased to replace that stolen from the depot be placed on the next Finance and Administration Agenda.

Regarding 4046/103 (equipment purchased to replace that stolen from the depot), the Clerk was asked by a Cllr to provide a list of the equipment purchased and to detail the supplier of this equipment. The Chairman reiterated that this would be discussed at the next meeting.

FA590/10 (Application for a S137 Grant from Croxley Green Society). The Clerk was asked if it was permissible for more than one grant to be applied for and awarded as the Croxley Green Society had received a £1000 grant last year. The Clerk confirmed that there could be one application per financial year per applicant and added that the £1000 grant was in the 2009/10 year whilst the recently awarded grant was in the 2010/11 year. The Clerk was then asked why Cllr Saxon had not been asked to leave the room after he had declared an interest in this matter as had happened in the past. The Clerk stated that he had advised at the time that any Cllrs who had an interest in this grant application should indeed have left the room. The Chairman apologised for the inconsistency and agreed that the matter should be clarified. The Clerk stated that he would prepare a short document after seeking guidance and advice.

During this discussion Cllr Bennett stated that he was sure that he had declared an interest in this item and asked that this be amended in the Minutes. The Clerk stated that as the Minutes had already been agreed and signed by the Chairman, his comments would be recorded in these Minutes.

FA592/10 (Working Alone Policy) and FA593/10 (Working from Home Policy). The Chairman informed Members that she had received some comments from Cllrs and would like the matters placed on the next Agenda.

FA601/10 Monthly Accounts

The Chairman introduced this item and referred Members to the Monthly Management Accounts Report for month 12 (March 2010) which was circulated at the meeting. The Clerk gave Members an overview of the monthly expenditure. Some items noted included:

4027/101 (Computer Software & IT) £500 – annual support of website.

4963/101 (F&A Project – PCSO) £21,375 – the Clerk explained that this sum was part of the recoding from 4936/299 (School Flower Beds) -£7,050.

4017/103 (Health & Safety) £80 – to update all first aid kits and the purchase of a new portable first aid kit.

4037/103 (Grounds Maintenance) £359 – primarily for wood stain for the furniture and posts on the Green.

1061/103 (Agency Income HCC Mtce) £3,744 – maintenance of the library beds for the past three years. The Clerk added, that as reported at Tuesday's Environment and Amenity meeting that only very basic work would be currently undertaken at the library beds and environs given that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have told the Parish Council that they do not wish us to undertake further work there. HCC's decision was based on the fact that their contractor has advised them that they could do all necessary work at a cost less than that charged by this Council. The Clerk reported that he had spoken with HCC and they have advised that if the Council wished to submit a 'bid' for the works then they may re-consider but thought it would be unlikely this Council would retain the work.

4049/203 (Dog Hygiene) £686 – the monthly cost for the dog waste collections service.

4610/211 (Events – Fireworks on Green) £4,000 – the Clerk advised that he had been in contact with the accountants who recommended that this sum be included in the 2009-10 accounts and even though it will show as an over expenditure it will regularise the position for the 2010-11 accounts. A Cllr replied that this was acceptable as there will be an annotation in the accounts to say that this figure includes a previous year's expenditure.

It was pointed out by a Cllr that the actual year to date sum for the Finance and Administration total budget was £117,202 yet the current budget figure was £115,170 and therefore the agreed budget had been exceeded. The Clerk noted this and said that he had tried not to exceed the budget but that it was not always possible particularly given exceptional, unexpected items that had arisen during the year.

The Clerk stated that a new system for purchasing had been implemented and although it meant extra administration, he was certain this would help towards even tighter control over expenditure. He added that expenditure for the F & A Cost Centre, excluding any end of year adjustments, was 96.0% of its budget whilst the income was 100.2%. Also, the Parish Council's overall expenditure (for the three Committees) was 85.3% of the budget and the income was 100.2% and this was to be commended.

One Cllr considered this to be merely luck, to which the Clerk took exception, adding that it was not the Clerk's place to curtail expenditure on one item to pay for an overspend elsewhere. Other Cllrs believed that certain items in the budget are estimates and cannot be calculated accurately due to price increases and other extraneous factors. The Chairman believed that the variance was acceptable considering the budget was a quarter of a million pounds and that the accounts are very clear with lots of information for the public to see. The Clerk reminded Cllrs that although these accounts were for month 12 and thus the end of the financial year, the accounts may be amended during the end of year closedown.

Resolved:

- that the Management Accounts for Month 12 (March 2010) be approved and be signed by the Chairman.

FA602/10

Community Village Hall Flood Prevention Measures

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk reminded Members that this matter had been delegated to him in consultation with members of the F&A Committee. He added that as requested, he had written to the Guild of Sport regarding the aeration of their field, and had given Croxley Green Community Association (CGCA) a draft indemnity for them to sign. The indemnity was to protect the Parish Council against any potential claims as the Parish Council would be providing labour only, to the specification drawn up by the contractor. The Clerk had been advised that CGCA had been in contact with their insurers and had been advised not to sign the indemnity. The Clerk said that therefore, as per his email to F&A Members, he could not implement the Council's decision. The Clerk recommended to Members that CGCA make their own arrangements for the flood prevention works and that they invoice the Parish Council for the cost of the works or the sum in the budget (whichever is the lesser amount).

A long discussion ensued with differing views; that there was a distinct lack of communication and that the Parish Council could not hand over public money to CGCA to spend and also that a Cllr is co-opted onto the CGCA Committee.

The Chairman proposed that the Parish Council recognises its commitment to CGCA to contribute to the flood prevention works and that CGCA contract to get the work satisfactorily completed to meet the requirements of their insurance company. Once the work is completed to specification, the Parish Council will then make a payment of that invoiced by CGCA or up to £6000 and the Parish Council will ensure there is no liability for this work; it is the full responsibility of CGCA.

The proposal was not seconded nor was a counter proposal put forward.

The Clerk left the meeting at this point and did not return.

After further discussion it was

Resolved:

- that that a formal meeting of a minimum of two and a maximum of four members from CGCA and the Parish Council is arranged as soon as possible.

FA603/10

Replacement Village Signs

This item was introduced by the Chairman and as this matter had been discussed as part of the Active Works List at Tuesday's Environment and Amenity meeting, the Chairman of that meeting gave a verbal update. Members were informed that one of the 'Welcome to Croxley Green' signs was missing (Watford Road, west bound). It was advised that the sign was stolen on St Patrick's Day night and had been reported to the Police and a crime number had been issued. Also, the 'Welcome' sign on

Scots Hill needed to be repaired as there was some 'bubbling' on part of the raised image.

Cllrs discussed this matter and also that of obtaining a plain welcome sign to be kept for substitution (if necessary) in the future.

Resolved:

- That the stolen welcome sign be replaced immediately with funds being vired from reserves.

FA604/10

Closure

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.43pm.