

GREAT WYRLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MID-YEAR MEETING OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE held at Great Wyrley Community Centre, Landywood Lane, Great Wyrley which commenced at 11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 11TH October, 2022 and recommendations to Council on Wednesday 2nd November, 2022.

PRESENT:

(Chairman)
Cllr. A. J. Kelsey

Cllr. J. C. Jones Cllr. Mrs. K. M. Perry MBE	Cllr. R. J. Perry Cllr. Mrs. S. M. Wood
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Also in attendance were Mr. P. A. Cooper (Internal Auditor) Ms. D. May (Parish Administrator) and Mrs. S. McGlue (Clerk).

There was one member of the public present on this occasion.

6/2022 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies on this occasion.

7/2022 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

In accordance with agreed procedure which dictated that a new Chairman would be elected by alphabetical order to chair each meeting Cllr. A. J. Kelsey took the Chair.

8/2022 INTERIM SIGN OFF – PARISH COUNCIL ACCOUNTS 2022/23

The Parish Administrator advised the Committee that the interim figures for the period 1st April, to 1st September 2022 were now available for scrutiny and the documents along with the relevant working papers was circulated to all Members. Following scrutiny by all Members present the Committee **RESOLVED** to accept and approve the interim figures for the first half year of the 2022/23 Parish Council Accounts.

9/2022 ALLOCATION OF EARMARKED FUNDS

In accordance with agreed procedure the Annual Governance and Audit Committee reviewed the previously earmarked funds with a view to reporting back to the next meeting of full Council with proposals for ratification by the Council should there be any changes to the original document.

Please see items highlighted below. Any observations or alterations are shown in bold italic beneath the issue it concerns.

ONGOING PROJECTS		
Memorial Wall at Great Wyrley Cemetery	<p>The Parish Council still holds in its reserves an amount of £5,000 to provide a brick built Memorial Wall for Great Wyrley Cemetery. The wall is to be constructed with the purpose of providing an area for reflection for the bereaved along with a dedicated structure to which plaques can be attached commemorating a person whose ashes have been scattered in the Cemetery. This project is now expected to be commenced in the near future as a master builder has now offered to quote for the works required and the Parish Council should be in a position to move forward quite soon. This project is also planned to provide an additional income stream via the sale of commemorative plaques.</p> <p>THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WERE ADVISED BY CLLR. MRS. K. M. PERRY MBE THAT THIS PROJECT WAS NOW WELL UNDER WAY AND THAT THE FOOTINGS HAD NOW BEEN PREPARED. THE CONCRETE WHICH HAD BEEN LAID IN THE FOOTINGS HAD BEEN DONATED IN ITS ENTIRETY BY TREEWAY FENCING LIMITED. TO DATE EVEN THOUGH THE MEMORIAL WALL WAS WELL UNDERWAY THERE HAD NOT BEEN ANY IMPACT ON THE £5,000 EARMARKED FOR THE PROJECT.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION THAT: AMOUNT REMAIN EARMARKED.</p>	£5,000.00
Olympic Torch Commemoration	<p>The Parish Council still has in its reserves an amount of funding set aside to provide a feature to commemorate the fact that the Olympic Torch came through the village in 2012.</p> <p>CLLR. MRS. K. M. PERRY MBE ADVISED THE MEETING THAT THIS PROJECT WAS VERY CLOSE TO FRUITION AND ON THIS BASIS THE £2000 ALLOCATED FOR THIS PURPOSE SHOULD REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION THAT: AMOUNT REMAIN EARMARKED.</p>	£2,000.00

<p>Replacement of children's play area at Landywood Lane</p>	<p><i>Following discussion the Committee resolved to remove the earmarked amount for this project from allocated funds. This decision had been made on the basis that at the present time there were virtually no funding opportunities for any purpose other than Covid Recovery and support for small businesses trying to survive the pandemic.</i></p> <p><i>RECOMMENDATION THAT EARMARKED FUNDS FOR THIS PROJECT BE HELD IN ABEYANCE IN THE CAPITAL ACCOUNT UNTIL SUCH TIME THAT MATCH FUNDING WOULD BECOME MORE READILY AVAILABLE.</i></p>	
<p>Portable CCTV Camera</p>	<p>Members had included in last year's budget funding for portable CCTV cameras to highlight crime hotspots within the Parish. The cost involved in this project is a great deal more than was originally envisaged. Accordingly, the Parish Council contacted the District Council and is now on a list of Parish Councils waiting to borrow the portable CCTV cameras in the ownership of South Staffordshire Council.</p> <p>Following discussion Members agreed to remain on the list of applicants to use the portable CCTV unit in the ownership of South Staffordshire Council.</p> <p><i>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT: THIS AMOUNT BE REMOVED FROM EARMARKED FUNDS</i></p>	<p>£1000.00</p>
<p>Roof to the Community Centre</p>	<p>The roof to the Community Centre was still not presenting a problem at the moment, however, the Clerk had felt it prudent to continue to earmark an amount of £2,000 per year towards its eventual replacement in the future. The £4,000 represents two years of earmarking.</p> <p><i>FOLLOWING DISCUSSION MEMBERS AGREED THAT THE CLERK SHOULD ARRANGE TO HAVE THE CONDITION OF THE FLAT ROOF OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE ASSESSED BY AN INDEPENDENT ROOFING CONTRACTOR.</i></p> <p><i>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT: EARMARKED AMOUNT SHOULD REMAIN IN FUNDS.</i></p>	<p>£4000.00</p>

<p>Changes to the configuration of the Community Centre garage.</p>	<p>This project was already in the pipeline and was not expected to be overly costly on the basis that the main expense would have been a new door. A door has now been procured by the builder who has agreed to carry out the works on behalf of the Parish Council. This amount has been estimated at £2000.00</p> <p>ON THE BASIS THAT THESE WORKS WERE EXPECTED TO BE CARRIED OUT IN THE NEAR FUTURE</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT: THIS ITEM REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS</p>	<p>£2000.00</p>
<p>Flood defences on Landywood Lane Playing Field</p>	<p>These works were originally expected to be part funded by DEFRA under a joint working project with Staffordshire County Council. At the time the Parish Council was unsure of the exact amount the Parish Council would need to contribute towards this project, however, it would now appear that a contribution from the Parish Council is no longer required on the basis that the project is now far larger than was originally thought and will be funded by the agencies responsible.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT:</p> <p>THE £5000 ALLOCATED FOR THIS PROJECT NOW BE ADDED TO THE EARMARKED FUND FOR GREAT WYRLEY BROOK PROJECT REFERRED TO BELOW</p>	<p>£5000.00</p>
<p>Great Wyrley Brook Project</p>	<p>The Parish Council agreed in 2019/20 that it would provide funding towards the Great Wyrley Brook Project in conjunction with Severn Trent Water, Staffordshire County Council and various other agencies.</p> <p>As the main project will now be funded by the agencies with the responsibility for protection from flooding the sum of £5000 originally earmarked for the main project will be added to this project increasing the earmarked sum.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT:</p> <p>THE SUM OF £7,000 BE NOW EARMARKED FOR THIS PROJECT</p>	<p>£7,000.00</p>

New Equipment for ground works	<p>Following discussion Members agreed that in view of the fact that the proposed purchase of new equipment was no longer to take place that this amount be removed from earmarked funds.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT:</p> <p>THIS ITEM BE REMOVED FROM EARMARKED FUNDS</p>	£18,957.00
Replacement Boiler to the Community Centre	<p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT:</p> <p>THIS ITEM REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS</p>	£12,900.00
Unforeseen Expenses	<p>Bearing in mind the percentage of the Parish Council's funds which have been expended on unforeseen legal expenses, insurance claims and increased level of staff working hours over the last two years I feel it prudent to ensure that a sum is earmarked for unforeseen circumstances.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT:</p> <p>THE AMOUNT OF £10,000 SHOULD REMAIN IN THE EARMARKED RESOURCES AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR.</p>	£10,000.00
Emergency Tree Works	<p>The Parish Council had now adopted a policy that all the trees in its ownership are subject to an annual inspection. This action is to ensure their stability and the safety of the public.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT:</p> <p>THE AMOUNT OF £7,000 SHOULD REMAIN IN THE EARMARKED FUNDS</p>	£7,000.00
<p>For Members information the Clerk had also set out earmarked funds for annual donations and expected expenditure other than normal running costs which have remained almost the same.</p>		
ANNUAL DONATIONS AND REGULAR EXPENDITURE		
Annual Bonfire Event	<p>Bonfire and Fireworks display including hiring of WC's, First Aid Provision etc. This is based on 2019 figures and should it go ahead this will need to be increased to include heightened health and safety and security measures.</p>	

	RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT: THIS AMOUNT REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS A DECISION IS MADE REGARDING A FIREWORKS EVENT FOR 2023.	£5500.00
Great Wyrley Scouts and Guide Movement	Contribution towards refreshment etc. for the New Year's Day Walk RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT: THIS AMOUNT REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS	£100.00
Great Wyrley Carnival Committee	Donation towards Great Wyrley Carnival Event RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT :THIS AMOUNT REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS	£400.00
Senior Citizens Welfare Committee	Annual donation towards to the running of the Senior Citizens Welfare organisation. RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT :THIS AMOUNT REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS	£1100.00
Annual Tree Assessment	Cemetery, Star Land and the Memorial Gardens RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL THAT: THIS AMOUNT REMAIN IN EARMARKED FUNDS	£1000.00

10/22 **REVISION OF CEMETERY CHARGE BANDING**

The Clerk had previously circulated a report on a proposal to include a third tier of banding into the criteria for Cemetery Charges.

For ease of reference the report circulated was as follows:-

"Members will recall that many years ago, the Parish Council **resolved** that the Non-Resident fee for Cemetery Services would be charged at 5 times the fee payable by residents. This decision was taken because at that time the standard fee was considerably lower than those levied by the surrounding parishes.

However, the set of circumstances described above no longer applies as Great Wyrley Cemetery Charges have now been brought into line with its sister parishes and are also reviewed each year.

Accordingly, now would seem to be the appropriate time to review the policy relating to non-resident fees.

Should the Parish Council see fit to adopt the following proposals it would have a very beneficial effect on the day to day administration of the Cemetery itself.

Please see proposals outlined below:

- (a) Parish Council agreement to retain the embargo on new graves for Non Residents, especially as there are no burial spaces left and still retain this embargo for the future should the Parish Council ever consider purchasing additional space
- (b) Parish Council agreement to retain the embargo on the interment of ashes (despite the fact that ashes plots are still available at the present time).
- (c) Parish Council agreement to the following changes in the banding of charges for the Cemetery. These proposals apply only to the re-opening of graves in Great Wyrley Cemetery and include the introduction of a third band of fees and the revision of the current multiplication of non-resident fees.

Band One – Resident of Parish

The standard resident fees are kept in line with surrounding areas and are revised each year. No change is recommended.

Band Two – Re-opening of a grave for a burial/interment for a person who has since left the area

The introduction of a new banding to apply to a situation where at the time of the purchase of the exclusive right of burial (e.g. at the time of the first burial, the deceased lived in the Parish, but their surviving Spouse/Partner etc has since moved away from the area for the remainder of their life (this category does not include people who have left the area to take up residence in a care/nursing home).

Would Members be in agreement, bearing in mind that there is no longer a massive disparity in the Parish Council's charges and that of others, that a multiplier of 1.5 – 2 times the standard amount would be more appropriate than

the current multiplier of 5 times the standard rate.

Band Three - Re-opening of a grave for a burial/interment

Would Members be in agreement with retaining the Non-Resident fee, but reducing the multiplier that this is calculated by to 3 times the standard fee instead of the 5 times the standard fee which is presently applied. This action would bring the Parish Council into line with other cemeteries. The Parish Council may also like to clarify the criteria used to identify a Non-Resident to be that of a person who at the time of purchase of the exclusive right of burial and since, has never lived in the parish.

The proposal to revise the banding of cemetery fees has arisen due to the fact that the Parish Council is being faced with ever increasing situations whereby the deceased has been a resident of the Parish in previous years but has left the Parish to be nearer to their families etc. These people are now finding themselves in the situation where their families simply cannot afford to pay the 5 times multiplier resulting in their final wishes to be buried with their loved ones becoming unachievable. This situation is completely understandable when you consider that the interment of ashes for a resident costs £168.00 and the fee for a non-resident's interment of ashes is now £840.00.

In conclusion on a purely selfish basis I believe that the introduction of the bandings proposed above would massively reduce the extreme distress caused to bereaved families at a time when they are least able to deal with such things. Moreover, it would certainly reduce the increasing incidences of what almost always turns into a very difficult conversation on both sides. Often the staff are faced with a look of pure disbelief that people are not going to be able to fulfil their loved ones final wish. As you can imagine this all too often leads to abusive behaviour towards the member of staff who has to deliver a very unwelcome message.

However, on a public perception basis this situation does not show the Parish Council in a favourable light either. The fact that these charges come on top of normal funeral expenses is now causing not only hardship to the bereaved but also severe distress in the present economic climate.

Please note should Members agree to the above proposals they would not come into operation until April 2023 in line with the annual review of Cemetery Charges."

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Following discussion the Annual Governance and Audit Committee **recommended** that the Parish Council should introduce an additional band to apply to a situation where at the time of the purchase of the exclusive right of burial (e.g. at the time of the first burial, the deceased lived in the Parish, but their surviving Spouse/Partner etc has since moved away from the area for the remainder of their life (this category does not include people who have left the area to take up residence in a care/nursing home). Bearing in mind that there was no longer a massive disparity in the Parish Council's charges, and that of others, the multiplier of 2 times the standard amount would be more appropriate than the current multiplier of 5 times the standard rate.

The Annual Governance and Audit Committee also **RECOMMEND** to Council that the multiplier for non-residents fees in general be reduced from 5 times the fee to 4 times the fee.

11/2022 CHUBB ALARM SYSTEM AND ANALOGUE TELEPHONE LINES

The Clerk had advised the Committee that by 2025, traditional landline phones, using 100-year-old technology, were set to be switched off in favour of a digital network fit for the modern era. This will apply to both home and business phone lines, so as we are still relying on analogue equipment, plans need to be made to upgrade.

These changes are going to affect the Parish Council's Alarm System and the Clerk requested support from the Committee to her request to Council to carry out research into the options which may now be available.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

The Annual Governance and Audit Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council that the Clerk be allowed to carry out in depth research into the optimum way forward with this matter.

12/2022 SUBSIDY FOR FRIDAY LUNCHES

As Members were aware it was not proving as easy as was thought to reinstate the Friday Lunches. Unfortunately, Plyvine are unable to offer us any service at all now not even on an alternative day.

However, there were a number of other irons in the fire, however, the Clerk believed that the Parish Council may find itself in the same position with regard to the increase in costs with an alternative supplier. More importantly, the Parish Council was now desperately in need of volunteers to assist on the Friday Lunch events. As over the last two years there had been a number changes in both personnel and indeed personal circumstances and a number of the original volunteers were now unable to give as much time to these events as they could in the past due to other commitments.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Following discussion the Annual Governance and Audit Committee **RECOMMEND** to Council that it retain its subsidy of £1,834.00 in the earmarked funds until such time as full research had been carried out with regard to a suitable way forward.

13/2022 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted that the public and press be excluded and that they are instructed to withdraw in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Section 12.

14/2022 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Following discussion the Parish Council unanimously **resolved to** support the recommendations included in the Clerk's Confidential Report.

Chairman **Date**.....