

**CROXLEY GREEN PARISH COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER  
ON THURSDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2008 at 8.00pm

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

Cllrs Bains, Jefford, Seeley, Shafe

Voting Members 5

In Attendance: Cllr Birch

No members of the public present

FA382/08 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Wynne-Jones

FA383/08 Declaration of Interests

The Chairman declared an interest in FA396/08 and then stated that Members make any declarations of interest throughout the meeting if necessary.

FA384/08 Representations from the Public

There were no public present.

FA385/08 Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Seeley and seconded by Cllr Shafe that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2007 be approved as correct and the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2007 which were not signed due to the cancellation of the meeting of 8 November 2007 being inquorate be approved as correct. The proposal was agreed and the Chairman signed the Minutes.

FA386/08 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

FA387/08 External Audit Report 2006/07

This item was introduced by the Chairman and the Clerk referred Members to page 4 of the audit certificate which is currently up to date and has been signed by the auditor. Issues highlighted by the auditor included risk assessments and Standing Orders. The Clerk pointed out that the risk assessments have now all been completed (summary included with the Minutes) and that the full document is available to Councillors at the Parish Council office. The Chairman asked if risk assessments will be updated as and when necessary and the Clerk confirmed this. With regard to the Standing Orders, the Clerk said that he hoped to complete their update by July 2008. The Clerk also confirmed that in line with the auditor's recommendation, the Parish Council will be increasing the fidelity guarantee insurance cover to £330,000.

One Member queried item 5 of Section 2 of the Annual governance statement which states 'NO' to:

“we have carried out an assessment of the risks facing the council and taken appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.”

The Clerk confirmed that the next report will show this as 'YES' because the risk assessments have since all been completed.

FA388/08 Internal Audit Reports 2007/08

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk recommended that the Internal Audit Report dated 30 January 2008 should be looked at as some of the recommendations from the 10 October 2007 report had since been taken into account.

R1 and R2 – The Clerk pointed out that the errors have now been corrected.

R3 – The Clerk reported that this has been noted.

R4 – The Clerk stated that as the month-end procedures have only been carried out 12-14 times, problems have occurred. However, he has produced a step by step guide to ease these problems.

R5 – The Clerk advised that this related to potential S137 payments as it is only for a minority of the Parish who are benefiting. This was queried in relation to other activities, and the Clerk confirmed that this rule would probably apply.

R6 and R7 – The Clerk informed Members that the audit report has recognised that action has now been taken to rectify this.

R8 – The Clerk stated that the VAT return has now been submitted and that the Parish Council is waiting for the Inland Revenue to send a remittance.

R10 – The Clerk has checked that what was paid was correct.

R11- The Clerk has duly noted this comment.

From the Internal Audit Report dated 10 October 2007, a Member asked the Clerk why there was a £43,000 “out of balance” figure. The Clerk reported that the accounting system is unforgiving and all entries for April and May 2007 had to be removed by a journal entry in order to close down the end of year, and this figure relates to the April and May 2007 entries. The Clerk reported that until the closedown of the previous years’ accounts, entries for the following year cannot be entered, hence the difficulty here.

FA389/08 Appointment of new External Auditor 2007/08

The Clerk informed Members that the Audit Commission has appointed BDO Stoy Hayward LLP as the new external auditor for the next five years.

FA390/08 Monthly Accounts (including payments)

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk referred Members to the Monthly Management Accounts Report for month 10 (January 2008). The Clerk explained the format of the report to Members, and pointed out that it is a more helpful and constructive method of presenting the monthly accounts to Members. The Clerk clarified that at times an expenditure may be allocated to an account code with a zero budget, (as it is good accounting practice to be specific about allocating to correct account codes) but so long as the overall expenditure is within the limits of that department, this is not an issue.

An update of the installation of the wind turbine was sought and the Clerk clarified that one Councillor had said that he would prepare a paper for Committee recommending this item should not be progressed, as apparently these wind turbines had been proven to be ineffective. The Clerk was waiting for this paper to be submitted. The Clerk was asked to inform another Councillor if the report was not forthcoming in order that that Councillor could put forward this recommendation to Council.

The multi-sports court was a joint initiative with Three Rivers District Council and the Clerk reported that the Parish Council had to put aside £1,000 per year for any possible structural damage.

The Chairman asked if the Parish Council needed larger reserves for national emergencies, to which the Clerk confirmed that if guidance was received from auditors or accountants etc to this effect, then reserves would be increased accordingly.

The Clerk pointed out that under the Cost Centre Ground Works, it could be seen that the account code 4008 for training was 221.3% over budget. The Clerk advised Members that this was specific training for the Rangers, needed to comply with Health and Safety regulations. The Clerk recognised however, that it was important to identify training needs and budget accordingly.

Following these discussions, this report, including current payments, was adopted and signed by the Chairman.

FA391/08 Budget 2008/09

The Clerk had previously circulated the agreed final budget (v8 dated 31 January 2008). The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk highlighted to Members the need for forward planning and the importance of drawing up action plans. Cllr Bains proposed that this item not be discussed in detail at this meeting and that appropriate papers are brought forward. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Seeley and agreed.

FA392/08 External Sourcing of Grants

This was introduced by the Chairman and the Clerk informed Members that he had done some internet research and there was a huge amount of websites offering possible grants. The Chairman suggested that the Parish begins building up a register of websites where grants may be available.

FA393/08 Provision of Flowers around Croxley Green

The Chairman introduced this item and Members discussed the subject. It was generally agreed that funds were available for planters which is a start, and this can be increased next year and in years to come. The Clerk stated that a mini sub-group of the Village of the Year Steering Committee needs to be organised and the Chairman recommended that the Chairman of the Environment and Amenity Committee selects the members. This group is to include the initiator of this project, the Rangers and the Chairman of the Garden Society and possibly the owner of the local plant Nursery.

FA394/08 Parish Council Profile/Staff Salaries

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk recommended that this item should go straight to full Council because it would need explaining to new Members, and this would reduce the need to explain it twice. The Clerk stressed that this item will be dealt with in a Part 2 session, and will be strictly private and confidential.

FA395/08 Village of the Year Competition

The Chairman informed Members that a start had been made; he had gone through the questionnaire and jotted down some ideas for answers. He recommended that as Councillors had had a copy of the questionnaire, that they do the same, and then ideas can be shared to compile a comprehensive, detailed reply to the questionnaire. The Chairman informed Members that he had written to local community organisations (a copy of which was circulated with the Planning and Development agenda) but this list was by no means comprehensive. It was suggested that this item be placed on the agendas of all Committees and anyone who wishes to become involved can do so.

FA396/08 Grass Cutting – Barton Way Allotment Association

The Chairman introduced this item and then as he had earlier declared an interest, he handed over to the Vice-Chair, Cllr Shafe. The Chairman asked Members for their views on this subject. The Clerk referred Members to a letter from Barton Way Allotments Association, requesting that the Parish Council undertake the grass cutting and then gave them a brief update. One Councillor, prior to the meeting, had found out from the Allotment Association that this would involve a formal contract with the Allotment Association and a payment by them to the Parish Council. Members discussed this proposal and the Clerk confirmed that the Rangers would be able to

undertake this work and the Parish Council had the necessary equipment. Cllr Bains proposed that an immediate feasibility study be conducted, and this was seconded by Cllr Seeley and the proposal was agreed. The Chairman confirmed that this would go straight to full Council as a recommendation from the Finance and Administration Committee to decide if this is feasible.

FA397/08 Web Site Development

The Chairman introduced this item and the Clerk advised Members that no further progress has been made on this subject. The Chairman stated that it was important for the Parish Council to have a website in order to raise our profile and improve communications with residents. The Clerk was asked about timescales to which he replied that he wanted to contact a particular website designer as well as two others.

FA398/08 Closure

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.21pm.