

**Minutes of The Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting**  
**held on Wednesday 19 January 2022 at 6.30 P.M**  
**at The Council Office, The Clanfield Centre.**

**Present:** Cllr P. Hurst – Chair; Cllr M. White; Cllr S. Williams; Cllr B Foster;  
Cllr John Bannell (ex-officio) and Cllr Dave Harris for item 5 (minute reference FGP05/22).

**In attendance:** Katie Knowles, Parish Clerk

FGP01/22 **To receive Apologies for Absence**  
Apologies were received from Cllr L. Coffre.

FGP02/22 **Declarations of Interest**  
No interests were declared.

FGP03/22 **Minutes of the previous meeting**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

FGP04/22 **Review of Income & Expenditure**  
Members reviewed an income against expenditure report dated 17 January 2022.

The Clerk had also provided Members with a detailed breakdown of the Property Maintenance expenditure code (2102). The report highlighted that whilst the annual budget was overspent (157%) there was corresponding income that offset the expenditure.

Members considered that it would be useful if the expenditure descriptions were consistent, e.g. Peel Park Pavilion.

Members also considered it would be useful if a code was used in the description e.g. a letter or number that would indicate where there were areas of expenditure that were offset by corresponding income.

Members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of a contingency budget. The current year's contingency budget (3110) had been used to pay business rates relating to The Clanfield Centre.

FGP05/22 **IT Upgrade**

**IT Upgrade Proposal**

Cllr Harris's report had previously circulated together with corresponding quotations and presentation slides from Cloudy IT.

The report explained that until mid-2021, Clanfield Parish Council had no office and the administration was undertaken by the clerk in their own home. Technology was limited and much of the Council's business was conducted via email and/or hard copy.

Clanfield Parish Council currently run their IT systems on a static PC for accounting and 2 laptops running MS applications. All files and documents are held on the hard drives of these machines – there is no capability for file sharing.

There is no network file storage available and much of the council's documents only exist in hard copy.

Most communication is via email leading to very large mailboxes making specific information very hard to find. The lack of file shares mean version control is compromised and very inefficient. Much information is held on members' personal computers.

Officers use Microsoft applications including Word, Excel and Powerpoint. There is no messaging service available and Zoom is used on occasions for virtual meetings.

The quotations did not include hardware at this moment in time.

Three suppliers had been approached and were asked to provide the following:

- Modern cloud-based, hosted, secure environment removing need for on-premise applications & data management
- Secure, shared file repository for Council documents
- Secure, integrated video conferencing, email and messaging
- Microsoft business applications (Word, Excel, Powerpoint)
- Access applicable for Officers (office based) and Councillors (remote)
- Compliance to GDPR and data stored on servers based in the UK
- Encrypted data backups to secure cloud
- Anti-virus protection
- Multi-factor authentication
- Can be administrated by Officers of the Council
- Training & Education available for Officers of the Council
- Support services
- Migration services

The recommendation was that the Council's IT systems are moved to a Microsoft 365 hosted cloud solution.

Quotations provided by Cloudy IT were previously circulated as the preferred supplier. Local government is their prime business focus and they are endorsed and used by NALC, the SLCC and have a client base of over 90 local councils. The company has also developed a number of applications specific to the sector.

The cost summary set out the annual and one off costs of £126.60 - £174.60 monthly costs and between £1,660 and £1,750 one off/project costs (depending on whether the Council's accounts package is hosted on the cloud). It was noted that Microsoft would be increasing their costs in March.

Cllr Williams had prepared a paper setting out a proposal using alternative systems. He was supportive of the Microsoft 365 Business Premium licenses for the office and considered the proposed anti-virus solution would be adequate. He was less inspired by the business basic license for Members and considered a corporate OneDrive offered a comparable solution. It could be configured to provide off-site back up with encryption. Cllr Williams also proposed the implementation was phased. Phase one would be the Business Premium 365 licenses for Officers and phase two for Members from April.

After a discussion about a phased implementation or not, it was agreed that Cllr Williams would review the proposal within the report prior to February Council meeting and liaise with Cllr Harris.

### **Council Website**

In respect of the website, the Clerk advised that she would like residents to be able to access and complete the Council's forms via the website. In order for the provider, Serenity Digital, to facilitate this, the Council's website needs to be updated. This would cost of £140.00 and she asked the Committee to approve the expenditure. Members of the Committee agreed to the expenditure and considered the project was a worthwhile addition to the website.

### **FGP06/22 Risk Assessment**

Members reviewed the Council's Risk Assessment. Cllr Bannell had prepared updates that were identified in red text throughout the document. Members agreed all the proposed changes and the document would be recommended to Council meeting in February for adoption.

### **FG07/22 Asset Register**

The Clerk circulated copies of the proposed Asset Register for 'Land' and 'Street Furniture'. The review is work in progress and may not be completed in time for the year end.

She advised that when a Council reviews its asset register resulting in an increase in the asset

value, but where no assets have been purchased, the external auditor is likely to request that the previous year's asset value is re-stated

FG08/22

### **Land Registry and Other Legal Issues**

Cllr Bannell highlighted a requirement to change of address of the Council's Title Deeds. Quotes would be obtained for this work.

Further, it was likely that additional legal costs would be incurred from Mackarness & Lunt Solicitors in respect the Council seeking clarification on the role of the South Lane Meadow Trust in respect of the proposed Lease with the Cricket Club, and their relationship with the Council. Again quotes were being obtained.

Cllr Bannell had previously circulated a report on the appointment of an Architect to undertake feasibility and initial design work in respect of The Clanfield Centre.

Part of the Resolution of the Council Minutes of 7th December concerning Down Farm Barn (Council Minute 158/2 1) states that:

*"IV. Design work for an extension at The Clanfield Centre should be put in hand as a prudent contingency;"*

Cllr Bannell had received fee quotations from two professional firms. In order that they could be viewed on a like with like basis, he had asked them to advise the Council how much they would charge:

- (a) to look at the options so that we will be able to consult with Community First and arrive at a preferred solution by April;
- (b) to produce drawings sufficient for us to submit an outline planning application (if we should choose not to go straight to a detailed planning application) and with the Parish Council undertaking its own planning consultancy work.

In this way, Cllr Bannell had been trying to contain the costs at the preliminary stages.

The quotations were:

Firm A - (a) £5,100 + (b) £4,500 = ££9,600 + approx. £1,200 for specialist design work. This quotation might include slightly more design work in (b) than would be required for outline planning.

Firm B - (a) £1,950 + (b) £1,750 = £3,700 + approx. £1,000 for an up-to-date topographical survey of the southern side of the Centre = Potentially £4,700 plus VAT.

Firm A are Chartered Surveyors who would need to have a designer working with them. It is not yet clear whether they would also need an external provider for a topographical survey.

Firm B is a Chartered Architect who would not need a separate designer but, as stated above, would need to employ surveyors for a topographical survey.

It was proposed to appoint Firm B. The costs could have to be met from Reserves. Members of the Committee agreed to recommend to Council that Firm B be appointed.

FG09/22

### **Staff Work Location Policy**

Members received and considered a draft Staff Work Location Policy. It was considered necessary to clarify the Council's position since the move to a Council Office.

Members agreed to recommend the Policy to Council for adoption subject to adding a provision for

requiring that Officers must not take planned leave at the same time.

FG10/22 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

- a. Members Resolved to exclude the public and the press by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed that concerned staffing matters.
- b. Members of the Committee received an update from the Staffing & Remuneration Sub-Committee that included an update on staff appraisals, contracts of employment, hours of work and the recruitment of the Ranger.

FGP11/22 **Date of the next meeting**

The date of next meeting will be held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.

Signed..... Dated.....