

## GREAT WALTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

### Report of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011 at The Old Fire Station

#### 1. Record of Members present

Chairman: Mr Braisby

Councillors: Mr Jackson, Mr Blaber and Mr Steel.

#### 2. Apologies for Absence

Were received from Mr Micklem.

#### 3. Declarations of interests (existence and nature) with regard to items on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

#### 4. Public Participation session with respect to items on the agenda.

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

#### 5. Parish Council Accounts as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

Following consideration of the year-end accounts these were discussed and agreed. It was noted that the balance carried forward was £6543.26 which was considerably higher than was anticipated. This was mainly due to under-spending on the Parish Handyman who had not been in post for part of the year and the delay in appointment of a replacement handyman whose hours had then been reduced. Significant savings had also been achieved in the construction of the pathway to the children's play area at Great Waltham Recreation Ground. There were also unspent contingency sums. It is recommended that these year-end accounts be adopted by the Parish Council.

The clerk reported that the costs associated with a pre-paid envelope response to the Public Transport Survey had increased since the report given at the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011 meeting. The clerk now reported that the cost of a license from Royal Mail was £70 plus envelope printing costs of £125 plus the cost of returned envelopes via the postal service at 36p per envelope returned. Following discussion it was agreed that if the license fee could be avoided by using RCCE then approval was given to pre-paid envelopes. Should RCCE not permit use of their license then the Parish Council should rely on collection points only.

#### 6. Outstanding Accounts.

Outstanding account was reported as follows:

Invoice Number	Name and nature of Debt	Amount
546	United Churches FC – Changing Room Rent – January	£40.00
547	United Churches FC – Changing Room Rent – February	£40.00
577	Vaughn – Allotment Rent	£5.75

It was agreed to chase the debts and to review the situation at the next meeting.

#### 7. To review Capital Works Provision, and the funding of the programme

The Capital Programme was reviewed and approved as follows:

Project Description	Estimated Cost.	Anticipated Grant	Parish Council Funds	Year for work	Funding Method
<b>Additional Play Equipment- Great Waltham</b>	£8672	£8430	£242	2011/2012	Application for Funding from Community Initiatives Fund allocated a

					100% grant.
<b>Additional Play Equipment – Howe Street</b>	£1112	0	£1112	2011/12	Application to Essex Environmental Trust rejected.
<b>Additional Play Equipment Ford End</b>	£6000	£4000	£2000	(assume 2012/13)	
<b>Parish Office</b>	£4000	£2000	£2000	2011/12	Programme of works to be determined
<b>Total</b>	<b>£19784</b>	<b>£14430</b>	<b>£5344</b>		

Estimated Balance as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 £11613.69.

Mention was made of the application for £2600 made to Chelmsford Borough Council – Planning Contributions to local amenities on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2011 for part funding towards the children’s play equipment – Great Waltham Recreation Ground project. The clerk indicated that this had not been included in the report until the contribution and the mechanics of payment were confirmed.

### **8. Report on outstanding loans**

There were no outstanding loans to or from the Parish Council

### **9. To review the Council’s Standing Orders**

In accordance with Standing Order 31c the Standing Orders of the Parish Council were reviewed. Consideration was given to the legal and operational aspects of the standing orders. The Committee found the standing orders to remain current and felt that there was no requirement to make any changes at this time.

### **10. To review the effectiveness of the Council’s internal audit arrangements and the accounting records and control systems. (Note – this is required as part of the Annual Governance Statement which will be signed at the 9th May meeting.**

As required by the declaration to be made by the Parish Council on the Annual Return to be submitted to the Audit Commission the Committee reviewed the arrangements made for internal audit, accounting records and control systems. It was agreed that the present auditor Mr Maurice Howard was independent of the Parish Council and held a qualification of Chartered Public Finance Accountant. Mr Howard checks the records of the Parish Council on two occasions during the year and issues an annual report. Following consideration the Finance and General Purposes Committee agreed that the Council’s internal arrangements and the accounting records and control systems, were effective and that the Annual Governance Statement could be signed to this effect.

### **11. To assess and discuss the Risks facing the Parish Council.**

As required by the declaration to be made by the Parish Council on the Annual Return to be submitted to the Audit Commission the Annual Risk Assessment Review took place and the schedule of risks was reviewed.

The following items were raised in discussion:

- (a) That the column of the schedule entitled ‘Risks Identified’ should be changed to ‘Risks arising from’.
- (b) That the Security of the Parish Office should be added to the schedule.
- (c) That a quotation should be obtained from the Council’s insurers for an increase of £16K in the Fidelity Guarantee Cover based on the recommendation of the Internal Auditor that the cover should represent the year-end balance carried forward plus a half year’s precept.
- (d) The Schedule indicated that at item 9 column 4 that contracts of employment for all staff should be annually reviewed by the Council. It was agreed that an item to

this effect would be added to the next agenda for the Finance and General Purposes Committee and annually thereafter.

(e) That an item should be added relating to data protection and to the annual registration of the Parish Council with the information Commissioner. It was also agreed that all Parish Council computers should be password protected.

(f) Item 16 – 5<sup>th</sup> column should read ‘No elector has exercised their rights in the last 39 years’.

(g) Item 21 Computer Security – 4<sup>th</sup> Column to read ‘Daily saves to on-line storage’ and 5<sup>th</sup> column to read ‘Computer data saved daily to independent website’. Also anti-virus protection to be shown as ‘Norton Anti-Virus’.

(h) Item 33 Use of Clerk’s home as office – risk to be deleted.

(i) Item 35 Retirement Policy – changes in legislation have resulted in the Parish Council’s retirement policy being no longer applicable. The risk is therefore deleted.

## **12. Review of Insurance Policy**

The new schedule for the year 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011 was not available. The clerk gave a report on the current situation adding that the Asset Register required to be updated to include the contents of the Parish Office. It was agreed that the review would be deferred to the next meeting.

## **13. To receive and consider the interim internal audit report 2010/11**

The recommendation made within the interim audit report were considered as follows:

- *Financial Regulations following the publication of the new model Financial Regulations early in 2011.* – the publication was not available and would be considered when available.
- *The Council Minutes for the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2010.* – a correction to the minutes would be made to correct the record of the payment which had been made to the clerk.
- *Investment of surplus funds such as the Clerk’s Gratuity Account so as to obtain a better return.* Further enquiries would be made.
- *The need to operate 4 bank accounts with 3 banks.* The account with the bank of Scotland would be closed.
- *The level of fidelity guarantee cover should be revised in the light of the level of reserves held.* A quotation for a higher level of fidelity guarantee would be obtained (see item 11c above).
- *The Council include in its annual review of risks the need for a business continuity plan including the regular backup of systems and data with one copy stored remotely.* The committee considered the systems used for back-up of computer information which was felt to be adequate.

## **14. To check and confirm the latest Bank Reconciliation**

The bank reconciliation was checked, confirmed, and signed.