

**Minutes of a meeting of the  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
held on  
Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009 in the Committee Room  
Freight House, Bradley Way, Rochford**

**Councillors Present:** Chairman R Mitchell, Mrs T Bateman, Mrs E Chippette, J Dickson, Mrs M Dorrell, Mrs H Glynn, K Holmes, V Leach, D Weir and Mrs M Weir.

**1. To receive apologies for non-attendance at meeting:**

There were none.

**2. Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 and to approve the destruction of the manuscript notes in respect of that meeting:**

Members accepted the Minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 as a true record and agreed to the destruction of the manuscript notes.

**4. Action Points:**

The Clerk went through the Action list.

**Donation request for repairs to roof – Ashingdon Hall (referred from Full Council)** – Cllr Mrs Chippette reported that the Committee had begun fund raising with a variety of events and an advertisement had been provided to the office to display on the notice board. She went onto say the Committee had applied for 7 different grants and they were looking to raise £50K for repairs to the roof. Cllr Leach thought the figure was £30K for the repair. Cllr Holmes reminded that Members had previously decided to remove the item from the action list, therefore the discussion should cease. The Chairman agreed and moved on.

**5. Financial Report:**

The Clerk went through the report. He highlighted expenditure 4033/newsletter, it had been budgeted to print the newsletter in-house but this had not been possible thus creating the variance. He raised some areas of overspend but he was content that overall it was on course. Cllr Holmes queried 4014/utilities, showing 90.9% deficit. The Clerk clarified it was an accrual from the previous year where provisions were made for the office and it was the office electric bill that had not yet been paid. Cllr Holmes was content with the response. There were no further questions and Members accepted the financial report.

**6. Ratification of expenditure decisions taken by Parks & General Purposes Committee (meetings held prior to Finance Committee):**

Cllr Leach gave an account of the action taken as Chair of Council to secure Magnolia Park when the height barrier was stolen and the gate damaged. The Chairman of Council had taken it upon himself, in view of the extreme urgency, to go ahead with the one quote for £1600 previously provided to the Clerk and seek approval retrospectively. Cllr Mrs Glynn expressed her support for the action taken by the Chair of Council, she felt the work that had been done was excellent and had been well received by the people using the park. The Chairman asked Members to endorse the item and Members unanimously agreed.

## 7. Financial Planning – 2010/11:

Cllr Dickson referred Members to the Statement of accounts for 2008/09 that was submitted to and passed by the external auditor and he drew attention to the fact that the precept was quite high and the closing balances comparatively low. **Cllr Dickson moved that the Finance Committee recommends that Council adopt a fiscal policy for 2010/11 based on prudence whereby there be no increase in precept and no significant withdrawal from reserves.** Cllr Mrs Glynn asked if, under this policy, an amount would be included for a project by a Standing Committee in their budget ideas. Cllr Leach clarified once the Standing Committees had made their bids the Finance Committee would determine whether they were affordable. Cllr Holmes said that his understanding was that bids were made by Standing Committees and Finance would look at the whole budget once that had been drawn up. Cllr Dickson called point of order and reminded his motion required a decision, there was a policy for Council to adopt and he required a ruling from the Chairman. The Clerk then clarified the motion and Members discussed the wording of which they felt 'no increase in precept' would be difficult to promise due to large projects being undertaken and without knowledge of what the Standing Committees would be outlining in their budgets. Members sympathised with the proposal of prudence due to the recession, they discussed whether it would impose restrictions on committees but it was felt that by adopting the policy it would remind of the need to be careful. Cllr Holmes proposed an amendment to the motion That the Finance Committee recommends that Council adopt a fiscal policy for 2010/11 based on prudence whereby **there be minimal increase** in precept and no significant withdrawal from reserves. Members were asked to vote on the amendment to the motion and the amendment was carried unanimously. Members then voted on the substantive motion **'That the Finance Committee recommends that Council adopts a fiscal policy for 2010/11 based on prudence whereby there be minimal increase in precept and no significant withdrawal from reserves'** This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Weir and approved unanimously.

## 8. Acceptance of Annual Return 2008/9:

The Clerk referred to the letter from the audit commission dated 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009 re Completion of the annual audit. He advised Members of the actions that needed to be considered in response to the audit certificate and report, and to ensure that HPC comply with the accounts and audit regulations. Members noted and approved the actions and instructed the Clerk to act accordingly.

## 9. Summary of decisions:

- Ratification of expenditure, retrospective approval was given for the works undertaken to secure Magnolia Park.
- Members approved the motion that the Finance Committee recommends that Council adopts a fiscal policy for 2010/11 based on prudence whereby there be minimal increase in precept and no significant withdrawal from reserves.
- Members noted and approved the actions to be taken as instructed by the Audit Commission on completion of the annual audit 2008/9 and instructed the Clerk to act accordingly.