

Abbots Langley Parish Council

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19th April 2021.

To Members of the Finance & Administration Committee

Councillors Sara Bedford, Liz Burns (Chairman), Ruth Clark, Fran Deschampsneufs, Jane Lay, Owen Roe & John Swallow.

The next meeting of the Finance & Administration Committee will be held virtually ^[1] on Monday 26th April 2021 at 6:00 pm when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

The meeting will be held on the Zoom platform. Login details are available from the Clerk to the Council.

The press and public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Tim Perkins
Clerk to the Council

^[1] *Permitting legislation - The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.*

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.
3. **Public Participation**
To note if any members of the public have requested to speak at this meeting, in accordance with the Parish Council's Public Speaking Arrangements.
4. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on**
25th January 2021 (previously circulated).
5. **Budget 2020-2021**
To consider the budget monitoring report for Q4 2020-2021. (See monitoring ^[2] and tracking reports enclosed).
6. **Financial Grants**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 1.)
7. **Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Public Sector Deposit Fund**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 2.)
8. **Final Internal Audit 2020-2021**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 3.)

9. Vehicles

- i. Kubota Tractor
- ii. Community Warden's Van
- iii. Tipper
- iv. Finances

(Clerk's report item 4i - 4iv))

10. IT Equipment

To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 5.)

^[2] *Committee members only, other members on request.*

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Clerk's Report - F&A - April 2021

1. Financial Grants

Abbots Langley Festival

At the January 2020 meeting of this committee a £2,000 grant was approved to support the staging of the 2020 festival. The 2020 festival was cancelled and it has been decided that the 2021 festival will now also be cancelled.

I have agreed with the organisers that the grant will be rolled over to hopefully support the 2022 festival. Payment will be made when the 2022 festival is confirmed.

2. Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Public Sector Deposit Fund

The Parish Council holds a deposit account with CCLA. It is useful as it is a "call" account, with funds returned same day if CCLA are instructed by 11:30.

CCLA have been carrying out briefings on the possible impact of negative interest rates. This is not unique to CCLA, all deposit fund providers have been required to do the same by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Although the Treasury are hoping to avoid negative interest rates and the economic impact they would bring, it is appropriate for fund providers to brief customers.

In simple terms, if we did move into a period of negative interest rates, CCLA would levy a charge on the funds invested, on a monthly basis. This would essentially be the cost of the fund looking after deposits.

All other institutions would be in the same position, so it would not be a case of switching funds to a provider that offers a positive interest rate.

If members are interested in the wider economic impact of negative interest rates, Japan has had negative interest rates for a number of years. Your favourite search engine will find loads of background information.

3. Final Internal Audit 2020-2021

Auditing Solutions are scheduled to carry out the above on 25th May 2021.

Assuming there are no major problems the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) will be available for approval at the brief Parish Council meeting on 16th June at 7:00 pm prior to the Leisure Committee meeting.

4. Vehicles

i. Kubota Tractor

The Parish Council purchased the above in 2005, prior to my watch. The tractor is underpowered, does not have the "grunt" or interfaces for modern grounds maintenance equipment. We have not used it for a number of years and have instead hired in equipment when needed.

We have had expressions of interest in purchasing the tractor and I recommend we proceed to sell on a "sold as seen", "buyer collects" basis.

Bids would be sealed and opened at an agreed time.

ii. Community Warden's Van (VW Caddy)

The above was due for replacement last year, but our usual suppliers had very low stock, as they work on a high throughput, low margin model.

We are looking to replace the vehicle within the next few months as it is starting to have reliability issues. Current mileage is 99,975.

The Facilities Manager is looking at hybrid and electric options. Initially it is clear hybrid option is not appropriate for the "stop start" journeys for which this vehicle is used. Electric vehicles are still very expensive and there is the additional cost of charging infrastructure. We are looking at a couple of vehicle options and trying to do some research on vehicle battery life when the usage will be "stop-start".

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For this replacement, a low emissions vehicle may be the most practical and cost-effective solution. Ford offer an appropriate sized van with a low emission 1.0L EcoBoost engine, which is in the lowest tax bracket for emissions.

iii. Tipper

Based on our normal replacement cycle the Tipper should be due for replacement this year. The Community Warden's van is the priority, but in looking to replace that vehicle we will also get a view on the market for a replacement tipper. Current mileage is 49,111.

iv. Finances

We are holding a £40,000 earmarked reserve for vehicle replacement.

5. IT Equipment

Update

When we went into lockdown the Finance Officer and Council Administration Officer used legacy laptops we had in the office, both were around eight years old. The Bookings Officer used a personal laptop, which was not ideal from a GDPR and confidentiality perspective.

I purchased a Dell Latitude laptop for the Bookings Officer and when the legacy laptops started playing up two additional laptops. These are in use by staff, they have the full suite of MS Office 365 programs installed, at no additional cost as the licences are covered by our subscription. They also have the remote phone system and access to shared cloud drives.

The cost of the laptops was apx £500/ea. under the Government Purchasing Scheme, retail they would have been apx. £1,000/ea.

My PC is now nearly four years old, the plan is when I retire this PC will become an office standby and a new PC purchased for the incoming Clerk.

Over the past couple of months upgrades were carried out to the Manor House network, improving public and office WiFi and enabling the card payment machine to run over the internet, rather than on a dial out line which was slow and unreliable. A new network switch was required (£85) and some re-cabling. All the work was carried out by Nixuss.

The above along with the other upgrades reported to the January meeting of this committee, has improved the overall IT set-up across both sites and has also given Nixuss the detailed knowledge they need to support the Parish Council's IT infrastructure.

Equipment Disposal

I have not been particularly diligent in disposing of old IT equipment after we have refreshed equipment. In the loft are a number of legacy desktops and screens, including a couple we found that pre-date my time here.

Given GDPR and information governance requirements we cannot just donate or resell this equipment. We have a couple of choices; we can remove the hard drives and physical destroy them or hand over to an IT disposal company that will wipe the data and recycle the equipment.

I have asked Nixuss to come up with cost for the secure disposal and recycling of the equipment. The disposal to be evidenced with a Certificate of Destruction. I hope to have further details at the meeting.

Tim Perkins
Clerk to the Council
19th April 2021