

Abbots Langley Parish Council

Council Offices
Langley Road
Abbots Langley
Herts
WD5 0EJ

Parish Council: 01923 265139
clerk@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

20th July 2021.

To Members of the Finance & Administration Committee

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

The next meeting of the Finance & Administration Committee will be held at Tanners Wood Hall, School Mead, Abbots Langley WD5 0LA Monday 26th July 2021 at 6:00 pm, when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

The press and public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Tim Perkins
Chief Officer & Clerk to the Council

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**
26th April 2021. (previously circulated)
5. **Election of Vice Chairman**
To elect a Vice Chairman of this committee for the year 2021-2022.
6. **Internal Audit Report - First Interim 2021-2022**
To consider the report from the Internal Auditors. (Clerks' report item 1 and enclosed ^[1] report.)
7. **Budget Monitoring Report**
To consider the budget monitoring report for Q1 2021-2022. (See monitoring ^[1] and tracking reports enclosed.)
8. **Risk Assessment**
To consider the Financial and Business Risk Assessment. (Enclosed risk assessment ^[1].)
9. **Website**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 2.)
10. **Financial Grant 2021-2022**
To consider the enclosed application from AIM's. (Clerk's report item 3 and application ^[1].)
11. **Vehicles**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 4.)
12. **Lloyds Bank Mandate**
To agree by resolution changes to the above. (Clerk's report item 5.)

13. IT Equipment Disposal

To note the report from the Clerk (Clerk's report item 6.)

^[1] *Committee members only, other members on request.*

z:\alpc meetings 2021-2022\finance and admin committee\alpc-finance-&-admin-agenda-2021-07.docx

Abbots Langley Parish Council
Clerk's Report - F&A - July 2021

1. Internal Audit Report - First Interim 2021-2022

Only one item to draw members attention to on Precept Determination and Budgetary Control (p6-p7).

The second bullet comment (p7) about the General Reserves and the General Fund Balance total is numerically correct, £569,175.

However, I would argue that as last year was a year like no other, it is difficult to draw any reasonable comparisons, when you look at the actual year end outturn in isolation.

If you made the same comparison to the budget for 2020-2021, which was agreed pre-pandemic, the outturn of the General Fund and General Reserve would have been just over six months.

I do not disagree with the auditor's comments, they are correct. However, they need to be taken in the context of a financial year, which turned out somewhat different to what we all expected, in more than a few ways.

Whichever way you look at it, prudent financial management and the approach taken by this committee over a number of years, has meant this council is not in the dreadful hole in which some find themselves. Some local councils for too many years were "sailing close to the wind", taking on liabilities and costs which were underwritten by income that evaporated overnight.

There is also £120k sitting in the General Fund from the unspent £60,000/pa budgeted for the Depot Project. On reflection that probably would have been better allocated to an earmarked reserve, but that is with hindsight turned up to full volume.

2. Website - Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

I refer members to the Website section, page 10, of the Business Risk Assessment.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are specific to public body websites, a general web designer will not have experience of the guidelines, or the requirements of how the WCAG can be coded into websites.

Aubergine is a web designer, based in Leighton Buzzard, who specialise in WCAG compliant websites, they have formed a partnership with SLCC. Aubergine have conducted a number of virtual workshops for Parish and Town Councils and looking at websites they have designed, they appear to know what they are doing.

I have spoken to Mark Tomkins, one of their directors and he has put together a proposal. The costs are in my view reasonable for this type of work. rather than suggest going ahead I think this is a project that should be taken on by the new Chief Officer, probably with the support of the Facilities Manager who has good IT skills.

Aubergine can also install payment gateways and other applications that cannot be supported on our current website.

There is currently an earmarked reserve of £20,000 for IT and website costs.

3. Financial Grant Application 2021-2022

Enclosed application from AIMS is detailed and comprehensive.

The application is for £500 grant funding for this and the following two financial years.

The application makes a good case for this extended funding and given the very positive impact AIMS have on the parish environment I would support this application.

4. Vehicles

Based on our usual cycle of vehicle replacements the Community Warden's vehicle should have been replaced in early 2020.

The vehicle is a VW Caddy van, diesel, first registered 2009, mileage 102,500, MoT to end Jan 2022. The vehicle's clutch failed in 2020 and was replaced, it is otherwise in good condition given the age and mileage.

Replacement Options:

Second Hand

Our usual strategy which has worked well is to replace our vehicles with fairly new second hand vehicles, which may have slightly higher than average mileage. The average mileage then falls as most of our vehicles only carry out short local journeys. When the vehicles come up for replacement there is usually some trade-in value.

The commercial van dealers were closed for six months last year and whilst they have reopened shortages in vehicles supply chains and fleets not changing vehicles, has meant there is a short supply of good quality second hand vans and prices are rising, almost daily.

If members want to try and source an appropriate vehicle the Facilities Manager, who looks after vehicle sourcing, will need to move quickly, so any purchase would have to be carried out under delegated authority. What stock there is moves so quickly, there would not be time for committee approval.

Hybrid Petrol/Electric

Whilst popular on retail cars this is not a practical option for a commercial vehicle that does lots of short "stop-start" journeys. A plug-in hybrid may be an option, but there is a very limited number of commercial vehicles with this option.

Full Electric

Probably the way to go, but at the moment there are few manufacturers offering full electric vans and what supplies there are going to big fleets.

Price point is probably min. £25k, excluding infrastructure such as charging points.

Nissan offer a five year vehicle warranty and an eight year battery warranty, other manufacturers are starting to introduce battery lease arrangements for electric commercial vans and battery lease arrangements.

Current lead time on the Nissan E-NV200 is at least six months and extending due to issues with semi-conductor supply severely impacting delivery dates.

If members want to go full electric then most of the major manufacturers have plans for electric fleet vehicles and there will be much wider choice in 2022.

Replace with High Efficiency Diesel

Nissan NV 250 Tekna, eco-diesel. OTR £13,500. This may be the most pragmatic short term solution and mitigates being bounced into a quick decision in case the VW van has a major failure.

Recommendation

Full electric is probably the way to go.

The Facilities Manager can look at options and costs in detail and come back to the next meeting of this committee. But given current lead times it is unlikely that any delivery would take place until late Spring 2022, so there is a risk if the current van suffered a major failure and became uneconomic to repair.

If that was the case a short term six month rental/lease may be the easiest mitigation.

Abbots Langley Parish Council
Clerk's Report - F&A - July 2021

5. Lloyds Bank Mandate

The following changes need to be made to the bank mandate:

- Isabel Montesdeoca - Add as approved cheque signatory, authorised to set up and approve online payments. Two authorisations still required for all payments.
- David Abbott - Add as approved cheque signatory, authorised to approve online payments. Principally for fall back and absence cover.
- Tim Perkins - Remove from bank mandate effective 30th September 2021.
- Any other administrative changes to the mandate as required, such as removal of now past members from the mandate.

6. IT Equipment Disposal

As agreed by this committee (min. 395) the disposal of legacy IT Equipment was organised through Nixuss and Tech Recycle.

All the equipment was collected and I have received a comprehensive report confirming all the data on the hard drives had been destroyed.

The relevant asset tracking reports have been updated. The disposal records and updates to the formal asset values have been reviewed by the internal auditor and agreed.

The only items that presented a problem was a box of about two hundred floppy disks, found buried under some old equipment in the loft. The disks were variously labelled "payroll", "bookings", etc.

The cost of disposal of these was quite high and although the data would have been around twenty years old, it still comes under the scope of GDPR and Information Management requirements.

The problem was solved by the Works Manager with a vice and an angle grinder, with my very best wishes to anyone who wants to try and recover any of that data.

Tim Perkins

Clerk to the Council

20th July 2021