

Meeting of the Finance Working Group - Tuesday 24th August 2021 in the Woolwell Centre

Present: Councillors Spencer, Haymes and Tamsett-White

The main purpose of the meeting was to review the additional comments from the internal auditor for the financial year 2020/21 and to make recommendations to Council as needed.

The report was discussed as follows:

1. It was agreed that the financial regulations and Standing Orders should be reviewed during the course of this financial year.
2. Numbering of minutes – it is not obligatory to number minutes consecutively provided that they are marked in a way that makes the minutes transparent and easy to follow. Councillors agreed that they would prefer to leave the numbering of minutes as it is done now.
3. The lease between BPC and SHDC can now be progressed. The lease between BPC and WCRT can then be dealt with and it was previously agreed by councillors to use the same solicitors for both pieces of work. Discussion was had about whether or not BPC and WCRT could then use the same firm for both parties in drawing up the lease and it was considered that this might work well, although any potential conflicts would need to be discussed because there has been a long period of time now without any formal agreement between the parties and this may cause disagreements. Councillor Spencer is awaiting details from a local law firm who could carry out all of the work and she will chase this up.
4. The auditor highlighted the high percentage of precept that is spent on the Woolwell Centre. Councillors acknowledged this but wanted to make it clear that the money is not exclusively grant funding. The majority is being spent on long-overdue maintenance to fund a backlog of repairs and renovation. Once the building has been brought up to an agreed standard, the cost will change considerably.
Recommendation Points 3 and 4 above highlight the urgent need to draw up a lease between BPC and WCRT and it was recommended that councillors contract a solicitor and make this a priority.
5. HMRC payments – problems in the last financial year were caused by the previous payroll agent and they have now been rectified. A large lump sum payment was made in this financial year which will affect the budgeted figure for salary.
6. Employers' Allowance – this was applied in error by the last payroll provider (it does not apply to councils) and the mistake has been rectified and no money is owed.
7. Councillor Spencer agreed to look into the P60 issue and why the pay statements did not tally with the total.
8. Pension contributions for a previous member of staff were considered to be correct.
9. Councillors discussed the recommendation to pass the payroll function to the Clerk instead of running it alongside the WCRT staff payroll. They considered that, at present, the relationship between BPC and WCRT made it sensible to continue with current arrangements because this offered an authorisation check. If this relationship changes in due course then this will be reviewed.