**Minutes of the Saddleworth Parish Council Finance Committee held on Thursday 25th July 2024 at 7pm at the Civic Hall, Uppermill.**

**Present**: Councillors: S Al-Hamdani (Chairman)

Cllr G Sheldon (Vice Chairman)

Cllr K Dawson, Cllr L Dawson

Cllr R Blackmore, Cllr K. Phillips

RFO: Mr J Price, Clerk: Mrs K Allott

**645. Apologies for Absence:** Cllr K Barton

**646. Declarations of Interest:** None declared.

**647. Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 16th May 2024**

These minutes were accepted as correct and signed at the meeting by the Chairman. Proposed Cllr Al-Hamdani, seconded Cllr Blackmore.

**648. Minutes from the extraordinary meeting held 20th June 2024**

These minutes were accepted as correct and signed at the meeting by the Chairman. Proposed Cllr Phillips, seconded Cllr Al-Hamdani.

**649. VAT Advice Quotes**

The RFO advised he had approached three bodies for advice; the LALC Helpline, a VAT Specialist at Rochdale Council, who had been very helpful but was unable to quote for specialist advice, and Sefton’s, our current payroll provider. Who are also accountants. Cllr Al-Hamdani asked if we had yet received any specific quotes for the advice, and the RFO replied he would have that in time for the next meeting.

It was discussed that Cllr Thompson is a retired lead finance and performance councillor and previously worked for Revenue and Customs as a VAT Officer. It was agreed she would be a great addition to the Finance Committee. In order to facilitate this, Cllr K Dawson agreed to step down from the Committee, and Cllr Al-Hamdani will invite Cllr Thompson to join the Committee.

There was some discussion around what we may be able to claim back but the RFO advised Councillors they may need to manage their expectations, as it may not be a large amount. It was agreed this would be added to the next agenda for further discussion.

**650. Bank Account Progress**

The RFO advised he was half way through the application with Unity Bank and that we were taking a partial switch, a staged approach, which is what Unity had recommended. He confirmed he would have the mandate ready for signing by the end of August.

**651. Updated Financial Regulations (defer to next meeting due to time pressures).**

The Clerk advised that she had prepared the updated regulations, based on the NALC newly released model but due to time pressures and other priorities she was yet to sit down with the RFO for his input. But hopefully these regulations will be ready to share before the next meeting.

**652. First quarter budget update**

The RFO shared his report of spend against budget for the first quarter and it was discussed. The committee went through it line by line, the majority of budget codes were on track, but the Assets Management budget was overspent. The RFO had prepared a spreadsheet of the AM spend since April, and Cllr Sheldon advised the reason for the overspend on this budget code was mainly due to essential health & safety work being identified over the last few months. Cllr Garner suggested that the spend be looked at again at the 6 month period update and budget setting meeting, and a discussion would then be needed whether we need to take some money from the reserves to cover any predicted overspend this year.

Cllr Sheldon also advised that our insurers had offered a settlement figure for the rebuild of the carpark wall which was well short of the actual cost to rebuild based on the three quotes submitted. He advised that the Assets Management Committee had requested the Clerk to respond to the insurers and ask them to reconsider their offer.

Cllr Phillips noted the income for the Civic Hall was down on predicted budget. It was agreed the initial budget prediction was on the high side, but the income is still lower. Cllr Sheldon advised the Clerk and the Assets Management Committee were looking into ways of generating more income. The large overspend on repairs should balance out next year once all the Health & Safety catch up is complete.

Cllr Bishop requested that a simple summary of income versus expenditure was prepared for the Civic Hall only. Cllr Al-Hamdani noted that the figures are already in the budget, but it should not be an onerous task to extract these figures for a simple comparison. The RFO invited Cllr Bishop to outline a suggested format at the next meeting.

**653. Report on Councillor Expenses when deputising for Chairman**

None to report

**654. Feasibility of purchasing land on Stockport Rd Lydgate (Cllr Bishop motion to full council 24th June).**

Cllr Bishop had prepared a Motion at the last meeting of the Council and it was agreed to delegate this to the Finance Committee. Cllr Al-Hamdani asked how the Parish Council could facilitate this. Cllr Bishop responded there was not an expectation we would fund it. Cllr Phillips suggested a feasibility study be prepared. Cllr Bishop advised there was a meeting about it early August and she would get more information.

Cllr Sheldon expressed concern as the Parish Council does have the remit to buy a plot of land but would be happy to support any advice given to Lydgate Community. Cllr Phillips agreed with this.

Cllr Sheldon suggested that St Anne’s Church may be interested in buying this land to expand their graveyard?

Cllr Al-Hamdani didn’t believe the Parish Council would not be able to support financially, but suggested we could offer help and advice to the Community in their bid to attract grant funding. It was agreed to add to the agenda of the next meeting once Cllr Bishop has more information.

**655. Items for the next agenda**

VAT advice quotes

Bank Account Progress

Financial Regulations

Report on Councillor expenses when deputising for Chairman

Support to Lydgate Community Group regarding land on Stockport Rd

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 26th September @ 19.00hrs**