

Appendix K

File note of telephone interview with Yvonne Goode Parish Clerk to Alvechurch

Parish Council on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

Firstly regarding the cheque to Rowney Green pre-school which was authorised at the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 08, Yvonne explaining that this was already in the budget as approved for payment. The system is that the grant is approved as part of the budget. The pre-school then send a letter in each year together with details of their accounts and to request the payment. Yvonne then writes the cheque. There is no set time for the request letter to be sent.

The procedure for the issuing of cheques is that Yvonne as Parish Clerk cannot sign them herself. They have to be signed by two members of the Parish Council. Yvonne therefore writes out the cheques that need to be paid on the day of the meeting. The Vice Chairman will then go through the cheques before the meeting to check them. A copy of the list of is produced by Yvonne on the day of the meeting and handed out to members when they arrive. There is an agenda item to approve the draft payments and the members will vote to approve. Sometimes the members will ask for clarification regarding what the cheques are for.

Re the history of the grant to Rowney Green Pre-school, Yvonne confirming that it has been paid for at least three years. She was not sure when it has first been approved but would be able to check the records. One other pre-school receives a grant as well. There are a number of standing grants. Sometimes the amounts will be increased. If the applicant asks for an increase this issue will be referred to the Parish Council for approval.

Discussing whether it is the practice of members to declare interests in relation to the agenda item for the draft payment list. Yvonne confirming that as a general rule they do not. The only exception to this is if she has had to incur a non-standard item of expenditure e.g. in an emergency. Such a payment would not have been approved as part of the budget. Yvonne giving the example of say having to get a jet wash to unblock some drains. The cheque payment resulting from this would be non-standard

and she would explain it at the next meeting of the Parish Council when the draft payments were authorised. If she thought that this would trigger a need for a member to declare an interest e.g. if the contractor used was a member of their family, she would advise the member concerned and flag up that they had an interest to declare.

Discussing the issue of whether the authorisation of the cheques at the meeting is a decision or essentially an administrative function to enable the cheques to be authorised. Yvonne being of the view that it is the latter. The financial regulations require cheques to be signed by 2 councillors. Only a few of them are authorised signatories. The details are set out in the financial regulations. The authorisation of the cheques is dealt with at the meeting as part of the finance report. The last point under the finance report will be to approve the cheques as shown on the draft payments list. The Chair will say "are all the cheques standard?" – in other words approved in the budget. The clerk will say yes. The chair will ask all the members to confirm that they agree. Yvonne describing it as an "over in one second" item on the agenda.

With reference specifically to the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 2008, Yvonne describing that there was a "bit of a row" about the budget. The atmosphere of the meeting was a bit "shirty" because people were trying to backtrack on the precept/budget.

With reference to the timescale for the budget, checking this again and Yvonne confirming that the payment in question was out of the 07/08 budget. This would actually have been approved in November 2006.

Asking for copies of further documents:-

- Letter from pre-school requesting grant
- Financial Regs / Standing Orders
- Minutes of relevant FGP Cttee in Nov 06
- History of when grant originated