

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 7TH DECEMBER 2022 IN THE PARISH ROOM, FELIXSTOWE ROAD

PRESENT: Mr D Boswell (Committee), Mr L Burrows (Chairman), Mrs J Hall (Committee), Mr M Irwin (Committee), Mr M I O'Brien Baker (Committee), Mr M Williamson (ex officio).

Members of the public: None.

In attendance: Mrs D Linsley (Clerk).

1. Apologies: None.

2. Interests

2.1 Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI): None declared.

2.2 Local non-pecuniary interests (LNPI): None declared.

3. Actions from last Meeting: Ongoing or completed.

4. PUBLIC FORUM

4.1 To allow members of the public to address business on the agenda

There were no issues raised.

4.2 Any issues raised by the public

There were no issues raised.

5. Financial Matters

5.1 Payments authorised between meetings CP circulated via email and filed in the office together with these minutes.

DECISION F2022/12a: To ratify the list of payments made & signed between meetings (report filed in the office together with minutes). **Agreed.**

5.2 Any pending expenditure transactions CP circulated via email and filed in the office together with these minutes.

DECISION F2022/12b: To pay all pending expenditure transactions (report filed in the office together with minutes). **Agreed.**

The Chairman and the Clerk signed the pending expenditure transaction report.

5.3 December Admin Income & Expenditure Report CP circulated via email and filed in the office together with these minutes. Noted.

The Chairman highlighted that 61% of the budget had been spent.

5.4 Internet banking proposals, debit card & draft internet banking policy FOR1 & CP Draft Policy filed in the office together with these minutes.

The Chairman raised the potential dangers for recipients of internet banking transactions.

Mr Irwin noted that cheques were becoming a less secure method of payment and recalled that several payments made by cheque had been mislaid during the last couple of years. There was also the ongoing inconvenience for staff when banking their salary cheques.

After some discussion it was agreed that £500 was an appropriate maximum value when using a Debit Card.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12a: That the Parish Council:

1. Proceeds with an internet banking trial with Barclays Bank, appointing the RFO and Clerk as signatories for the purpose of internet banking only.

2. That at no time should the RFO and Clerk authorise a payment together and that they will not be authorised to sign cheques.

3. To apply for a debit card(s) with a recommendation on who should be the cardholder(s) noting that only approved signatories can be debit card holders. Any Debit Card issued for use will be

restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by the Parish Council or the F&GPC in writing before any order is placed. **Agreed.**

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12b: To approve the Draft Internet Banking Policy. **Agreed.**

5.5 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2022/23 financial year

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12c: That Mr Hunt is appointed as internal auditor for 2022/23 with fee held as for 2021/22. **Agreed.**

5.6 External auditor appointment FOR2 Noted.

5.7 Barclays Bank's response to a complaint FOR3 Noted.

5.8 Energy Bill Relief Scheme FOR4 Noted.

The following 2 items were considered together.

5.9 St Elizabeth Hospice Grant Request FOR5

5.10 Citizens Advice (CA) Ipswich & CA East Suffolk Grant Requests FOR6

Possible ways to fund the grant requests were explored.

Both charities were considered worthy causes, however, their requests for grants had come outside the PC's grant cycle. It was noted that CA East Suffolk will be using the Parish Room from mid-January 2023 free of charge.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12d: That the Parish Council does not award a grant to St Elizabeth Hospice or Citizens Advice Ipswich & Citizens Advice East Suffolk at this time but suggests to them that they consider applying for a grant in next year's grant scheme for the financial year 2024/25. That the Parish Council considers increasing the grant budget for 2024/25. **Agreed.**

5.11 Estimated Election Costs FOR7 & CPs filed in the office together with these minutes. Noted.

5.12 Revised CIL Report CP Noted.

6. Draft F&GPC Budget & Earmarked Reserves for 2023/24

6.1 Review draft Admin budget CPs filed in the office together with these minutes.

Reducing the draft Admin budget to reflect the saving to be made when the solar panels have been installed on the office building was briefly discussed. Due to uncertainties over when the solar panels would be installed the consensus was not to make any changes to the budget with regard the effect of solar panels.

Spending on Software Support includes the cost of annual licenses and advice sought throughout the year.

The F&GPC made no change to its recommended budget of **£129,278** for 2023/24, to be included in proposals to full Council. **Agreed.**

6.2 Draft F&GPC Earmarked reserves CPs filed in the office together with these minutes.

Mr Irwin drew the Committee's attention to the potential use of EMRs when recommending a budget figure for full Council, item 7.7 on the agenda.

The F&GPC agreed a figure of **£131,220** for recommendation to the PC, noting this is subject to change depending on expenditure. **Agreed.**

7. Budget & Precept for 2023/24

7.1 Draft Recreation & Amenities budget & Earmarked Reserves CPs Noted.

It was noted that the figure under 9019 EMR PWCG is altered to reflect estimated expenditure of £150 provided by PWCG Chairman.

7.2 Draft Total Budget 2023/24 of £167,573 and Summary of Income to 24/11/22 CPs Noted.

7.3 Financial Summary & Account Balances CPs Noted – for information.

7.4 Martlesham Parish Council Precept 2023/24: ESC Letter CP filed in the office together with these

minutes & FOR8 Noted.

The Chairman explained the information in the letter. It was pointed out that the Clerk's name had been misspelt twice on the letter.

7.5 Risk Assessment of General Reserves FOR9

DECISION F2022/12c: To amend item (g) of the Risk Assessment of General Reserves by replacing the text crossed out with the wording highlighted in red as follows:

1. Risks related to uncertain income

- a) Potential capping of precepts by central government
- b) Low and possibly diminishing returns on investment income for the foreseeable future
- c) Unavailability of short-term loan finance to cover extraordinary or emergency expenditure
- d) Potential unavailability of grants

2. Risks related to uncertain expenditure

- a) New developments in the parish requiring provision of more facilities and services without a matching increase in income
- b) Possible need to plug gaps arising from decreasing central government, county and district councils' and village organisations' provision
- c) Increasing frequency of extreme weather events
- d) The small scale of parish council activities means that extraordinary or emergency expenditure in any one year may be unpredictably large in comparison with budgeted income
- e) The growth of the parish may result in the need for additional councillors
- f) Changes in legislation and potential increase in the need for professional advice and services
- g) ~~Changeover in staff in 2022~~ Potential changes of staff.
- h) Low recruitment of new councillors leading to increase in 'paid for' work
- i) Risk of becoming the sole trustee for the Martlesham Community Hall and Village Hall charities if the charities cannot continue to recruit and manage the buildings & bookings

Agreed.

7.6 Earmarked Reserves: proposals for 2023/2024 FOR10 & CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12e: That the Parish Council sets earmarked reserves for 2023/24 for the Finance and General Purposes Committee of **£131,220.00**, the Recreation and Amenities Committee of **£29,071.00** and the Development, Transport & Environment Committee of **£1000**, totalling **£161,291.00**, noting that the DETC figure of £1k is provisional & to be discussed at its meeting on 14/12/22; there may also be a request for an increase in EMR Legal & Professional. **Agreed.**

7.7 Setting the budget & precept for 2023/24 CP filed in the office together with these minutes. Example 2 in the Finance Officer's report was considered too high an increase for residents. Dipping into EMRs was considered noting the effect of the ward boundary changes i.e. fewer households contributing to the precept for Martlesham. It was noted that the installation of solar panels should reduce the PC expenditure on electricity in the future.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12f: That the Parish Council considers using Example 3 of the Finance Officer's report "Draft Budget & Precept proposals for 2023/24" and as well, takes £7K from budget code 9008 EMR Strategy and Infrastructure and moves it to general reserves when deciding the budget and precept for 2023/24, noting that using ear marked reserves is due to changes to the ward boundaries and that CIL subsidises projects that would otherwise be paid out of EMR 9008.

Agreed.

8. Finance Officer's Report

8.1 Capacity of Parish Room for fire risk CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

Mr Irwin had been concerned about the inaccessibility of the fire exit for some who attended the thank you event for volunteers in particular those with limited mobility and those blind attendees. Before the event Mr Irwin had consulted guidance on calculating safe occupancy figures and had established that 60 participants were the limit. Although the event was within the recommended capacity limit, tables for refreshments, the need for a projector etc might have made a straightforward exit not possible for some.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12g: That seated, 'café style' events for more than 40 people should take place in rooms larger than the Parish Room. Part of the Risk Assessment for events to include an

explanation of the fire evacuation procedure to attendees. **Agreed.**

9. Annual Review

9.1 Annual Review Programme CP filed in the office together with the minutes.

DECISION F2022/12d: To accept the Annual Review Programme without change (filed in the office together with the minutes). **Agreed.**

9.2 Review of the system of internal audit CP filed in the office together with the minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12h: To accept the Review of the system of internal audit. **Agreed.**

9.3 Review of Risk Management, including Fire Risk Assessment CPs filed in the office together with the minutes. Recommend to full Council?

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12i: To accept the Review of Risk Management, including Fire Risk Assessment. **Agreed.**

9.4 Review of Investments and Investment Policy CP filed in the office together with the minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2022/12j: To accept the Review of Investments and Investment Policy without change. **Agreed.**

9.5 Review of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policies CPs filed in the office together with these minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12k: To approve the following General Data Protection Regulation policies without change: Data Protection Policy, Document Retention and Disposal Policy, Subject Access Request Policy & Procedure, Personal Data Breach Notification Procedure, General Privacy Notice and Privacy Notice for staff and councillors. **Agreed.**

9.6 Review Best Value Policy & Mission Statement CP filed in the office together with these minutes & verbal update from Mr Irwin

Mr Irwin suggested that ideally, councillors should fully 'buy in' to the process and outcome of reviewing the Best Value Policy and Mission Statement and that this should be done by the new Council after the elections in May 2023.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12l: That the new Council, established after the May elections, in June or July, review the Best Value Policy & Mission Statement ensuring that councillors fully 'buy in' to the review process. **Agreed.**

9.7 Equal Opportunities Policy & Procedure - review re amendments to the Equality Act 2010 CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

At 9.30pm the following decision was taken:

DECISION F2022/12e: To suspend Standing Order 3w to complete all business on the agenda. **Agreed.**

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12m: To accept the Equal Opportunities Policy & Procedure and review in February. **Agreed.**

The Finance Officer to review the Equal Opportunities Policy & Procedure with Mrs Hall who offered to assist. **Agreed.**

9.8 Draft Volunteer Policy CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12n: To accept the Draft Volunteer Policy. **Agreed.**

DECISION F2022/12f: To ask volunteers on the volunteer list for permission to use their contact details to inform them of PC projects, events and relevant useful information. **Agreed.**

9.9 August Workshop: an informal meeting which replaces a full Council meeting

The following topics for the August Workshop 2023 were suggested for consideration by the PC:

- Parish Online training
- Biodiversity projects
- The Climate Summit if MCA decide to go ahead with one in 2023

10. Any items for the next agenda None.

11. Martlesham Newsletters/Website/Facebook

11.1 May election.

The following items were taken in camera.

DECISION F2022/12g: Finance & General Purposes Committee resolves that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw. **Agreed.**

The Clerk accepted the invitation to stay in the meeting.

12. Staff Matters

12.1 2022-23 National Salary Award FOR11 & CP filed in the office.

DECISION F2022/12h: To agree the new National Salary Award with staff pay increases back dated to 01 April 2022. **Agreed.**

12.2 Annual Leave Entitlement from 01 April 2023 FOR12

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12o: To agree to an increase of one day, pro rata for part-timers, to staff's annual leave entitlement as set out by the National Joint Council (NJC). **Agreed.**

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.44pm.


Chairman, 11 January 2023

