

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 6th DECEMBER IN THE PARISH ROOM, FELIXSTOWE ROAD

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

There were no members of the public.

In attendance: Mrs Diane Linsley (Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer [RFO])

1. Apologies: None.

2. Interests

2.1 Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI): Mr I O'Brien Baker – item 6. Grants – supplier of goods to Martlesham in Bloom (MiB) and relation of several members of MiB.

2.2 Local non-pecuniary interests (LNPI): Mr L Burrows – item 6. Grants – relative of some members of MiB.

Mr M Irwin - item 5.4 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2023/24 Financial Year – friend of Internal Auditor & item 5.6 Headway Suffolk request for a donation – user of Headway Suffolk services.

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 filed in the office together with these minutes.

DECISION F2023/12a: To ratify the list of payments made & signed between meetings (report filed in the office together with minutes). **Agreed.**

5.2 Any pending expenditure CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

DECISION F2023/12b: To pay all pending expenditure transactions (report filed in the office together with minutes). **Agreed.**

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

The electricity bill to be monitored.

5.3 Admin Income & Expenditure Report CPs filed in the office together with these minutes.

The report was noted. Reports on F&GPC earmarked reserves and income were also noted.

5.4 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2023/24 Financial Year

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12a: To appoint Mr Hunt as the internal auditor 2023/24. **Agreed.**

The **Clerk** to consult with SALC re the current rate for employing an Internal Auditor and offer a similar rate when making appointment. **Agreed.**

5.5 Bank Reconciliation Verifications

The Clerk informed the Committee via email that the last bank reconciliation had been done by the previous RFO in September and covers the month of August. Due to a lack of time the Clerk has not been able to undertake any further bank reconciliations. She is keen to avoid making mistakes and not rush through the process. Mrs Hall is aware of the situation.

5.6 Headway Suffolk request for a donation

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12b: To award a donation of **£500** in financial year 2024/25 to Headway Suffolk from the grants budget. **Agreed.**

5.7 CIL Report Noted.

5.8 Which budget to use for the Community Speed Watch Scheme and expenditure request

DECISION F2023/12c: To use CIL funds for the purchase of 11 winter jackets for Community Speed Watch volunteers. **Agreed.**

5.9 Appointment of RFO

The Clerk reported that Kreon Wynn, would be starting in her role as RFO on 2nd January 2024.

6. Grants

6.1 Grant Applications for 2024/25 – Outstanding Application CR3

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12c: To award Martlesham Bowls Club a grant of £600.00 for 2024/25 to replace the disabled access to the bowls club. **Agreed.**

7. Draft F&GPC Budget & Earmarked Reserves for 2024/25

7.1 Review draft Admin budget CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

The F&GPC recommend a budget of £134,370 for 2024/25, to be included in proposals to full Council. **Agreed.**

7.2 Draft F&GPC Earmarked reserves CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

The F&GPC agreed a figure of £134,947 for recommendation to the PC, noting this is subject to change depending on expenditure. **Agreed.**

8. Budget & Precept for 2023/24

8.1 Draft Recreation & Amenities budget & Earmarked Reserves CPs for information filed in the office together with these minutes - Noted.

To amend the PWCG EMR amount for 2024/25 from £3000 to £2,827. This reflects any PWCG funds from this financial year being carried forward to 2024/25 and a budget request from PWCG for £100 similar to previous years. **Agreed.**

8.2 Request for a second Speed Indicator Device and battery CR4

DECISION F2023/12d: To agree in principle to a request for a second Speed Indicator Device (SID) from the Speed Reduction Working Group. **Agreed.**

The Speed Reduction Working Group to be asked to explore funding for a second SID from both District Councillors, Mr Thompson and Mr Packard, in particular Community Partnership funding and County Councillor, Mrs Mulcahy. **Agreed.**

8.3 Draft Total Budget 2024/25 of £170,505 and Summary of Income to 01/12/23 CPs filed in the office together with these minutes. Noted.

8.4 Financial Summary & Account Balances CPs for information Noted.

8.5 Martlesham Parish Council Precept 2024/25: ESC Letter CR5 & CP filed in the office together with these minutes. Noted.

8.6 Risk Assessment of General Reserves CR6

DECISION F2023/12e: To agree the following Risk Assessment of General Reserves:

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) 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.

8.7 Earmarked Reserves: proposals for 2024/2025 CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12d: That the Parish Council sets earmarked reserves for 2024/25 for the Finance and General Purposes Committee of **£134,947.00**, the Recreation and Amenities Committee of **£12,312.00** and the Development, Transport & Environment Committee of **£500**, totalling **£147,759.00**, noting that the DETC figure of £500 is provisional & to be discussed at its meeting on 13/12/23. **Agreed.**

8.8 Setting the budget & precept for 2024/25 CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

Three examples were considered.

Example 2, provided by the Chairman, was chosen by the Committee as a recommendation to Full Council and would result in a 2.5% increase to the council tax. General reserves would be £92,204 which is 54% of the proposed budget.

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12e: That the Parish Council sets a **budget** for 2024/25 of **£170,505**.

Agreed.

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12f: That the Parish Council sets a **precept** for 2024/25 of **£150,000.00**.

Agreed.

9. Finance Officer's Report

9.1 Battery for solar panels CR7 & CPs filed in the office together with these minutes.

DECISION F2023/12e: To accept the quote to supply and install a 90 minute fire safe cabinet on the outside wall off the office/Richards Room building for **£2,221.00** (the cost of the cabinet is £1,736.00 + carriage £155.00 = £1891.00. The remaining £330.00 covers labour, fixings and materials) subject to checking whether the Parish Council is required to supply a forklift. **Agreed.**

DECISION F2023/12f: To accept the quote of **£575.00** for the construction and installation of a wooden enclosure for the solar panel battery and fire safe cabinet to provide protection against the elements and reduce its visibility. **Agreed.**

9.2 IT – roll out of council emails and Sharepoint CR8

The Clerk reported that the Council's IT support will honour its quote for the work on managing the new council emails and overseeing the installation of Sharepoint despite the process taking longer than anticipated.

Most councillors have and are using their new council emails. Work to ensure all councillors have a new email council address and access to Sharepoint is ongoing.

10. Consultations

10.1 Any consultations?

There were no consultations to consider.

11. Annual Review

11.1 Annual Review CP (for reference) filed in the office together with these minutes. Noted.

11.2 Review Risk Management CP filed in the office together with these minutes.

RECOMMENDATION F2023/12g: To accept the Review of Risk Management. **Agreed.**

The F&GPC to review the Parish Room Policy at its February meeting noting queries about checking users' insurance. **Agreed.**

11.3 Topic(s) for August workshop 2024 - an informal meeting which replaces a full Council meeting
Suggestions include:

- Mr Staines to complete his talk on 'Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration'.
- Following the success of last year's remote access training on Parish Online to ask ESC to provide training on their Public Access planning tool and CIL.
- IT training - use of electronic shared council calendar.

12. Any items for the next agenda

12.1 List items

Parish Room Policy.

DECISION F2023/12g: To suspend Standing Order 3w to complete all business on the agenda. **Agreed.**

13. Martlesham Newsletters/Website/Facebook

13.1 Contributions/what has this meeting achieved?

Precept recommendation. Solar panel battery installation.

The following items were taken in camera.

DECISION F2023/12h: 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/RFO accepted the invitation to stay in the meeting.

14. Staff Matters

14.1 2023-24 National Salary Award CR9 & CP Confidential filed in the office.


DECISION F2023/12i: To agree the new National Salary Award 2023-24 with staff pay increases back dated to 01 April 2023. **Agreed.**

14.2 Support from retired Finance Officer

The Committee considered remuneration for support provided by retired Finance Officer.

DECISION F2023/12j: To pay a consultancy fee, equivalent to the retired Finance Officer's hourly rate when employed by the PC, to the retired Finance Officer for support given (one day) to the Clerk/RFO when she was preparing the budget and pay for up to 2 additional days if required in particular to help support the new RFO. **Agreed.**

The meeting was closed at 9.37pm.


Chairman, 10 January 2024
M. J. Irwin