

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD AT HARTLEY LIBRARY, ASH ROAD
ON WEDNESDAY 17th MAY 2023 AT 10.31 a.m.**

Present: Cllr Larry Abraham
Cllr Jim Colwell
Cllr Anne Oxtoby
Cllr Brian Ramsay – (*Chairman*)
Cllr Vincent Sewell

In attendance: Mrs H Boden – *Clerk*

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED: That,
Cllr Brian Ramsay be elected Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2024.

2. Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED: That,
Cllr Jim Colwell be elected Vice Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee until the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2024.

3. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED: That,
the minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 22nd February 2023, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

6. Terms of Reference

At the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 10th May 2023, it was agreed that the Finance Committee and the General Purposes Committee be amalgamated to form the Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Committee reviewed the Terms of Reference of both the Finance

Committee and the General Purposes Committee, as approved by the Council at its Annual Meeting held on 10th May 2023.

RECOMMENDED: That,
the Terms of Reference of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes, be approved.

7. Review of Income and Expenditure

The Clerk reported that the Council accounts for 2023/24 were in the process of being set up following year end and that a Council detail report setting out income and expenditure since 1st April 2023 against budget estimates was not available.

8. Financial Regulations

The Committee reviewed the Financial Regulations as approved by the Council on 11th November 2019.

The Clerk suggested a number of amendments relating to internet banking, petty cash and the use of credit cards.

RECOMMENDED: That,
the Financial Regulations, as amended and as set out in **Appendix 2** attached to these minutes, be approved and adopted by the Council.

9. Insurance

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council's insurance policy falls due for renewal on 1st June 2023.

The Committee was advised that quotations had been invited and had been received from three insurers; Zurich, BHIB and Hiscox.

The quotation received from Hiscox was obtained through the Council's insurance Broker Gallagher.

The Council examined the quotations, taking into account the extent of cover provided by each insurer.

The Clerk reported that both Zurich and BHIB were unable to insure the Parish Council and the Hartley Village Hall Trust under one policy. Two separate policies would be required.

The quotation received from Hiscox covered the Parish Council, Village Hall Trust and Village Hall Management Committee.

The Committee agreed that in view of the above and the fact that the level of service and advice received from Gallagher, the insurance brokers, throughout the current insurance period ending on 30th May 2023, had been excellent, Hiscox offered the best value for money.

A question was raised regarding the sum insured under the personal assault section, as the overall limits appeared to be lower than in previous years.

The Clerk confirmed that she had contacted the insurance broker regarding this and was awaiting a response.

The Clerk reported that the quotation was subject to a tree maintenance programme being in place.

Members noted that the Clerk had contacted the broker to ascertain the exact requirements regarding this.

The Clerk highlighted the fact that there was a minimum security condition relating to the locks on the doors and windows at the Pavilion and Village Hall.

Members noted that the Clerk had made arrangements for a survey to be carried out to ascertain whether any alterations/additions to the current locks would be required in order to comply with the insurer's requirements.

The Committee noted that at the meeting of the full Council held on 10th May 2023, it had been resolved that:

“authority be delegated to the Finance & General Purposes Committee to consider any quotations received at its next meeting to be held on 17th May 2023 and to accept the quotation considered the most suitable.

In the event that insufficient quotations have been received by that date, authority be delegated to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee to accept a quotation”.

The Clerk reported that the quotation received for a 1 year agreement would be the same for a 3 year agreement.

Cllr Colwell raised a question regarding the tiered staging that the Hartley Village Hall Trust had recently agreed to purchase for use by the theatre groups using the village hall.

Cllr Colwell expressed concern that the staging would be the property of the Trust, but would be erected and used by the theatre groups.

This could lead to issues regarding liability, should an accident occur.

The Committee agreed that a risk assessment and method statement for use, would also need to be put in place, should the purchase go ahead.

In addition to this, the Committee expressed concern regarding the storage arrangements for the staging, as it was currently being stored in the committee room in the village hall, which was accessible to all hall users.

RESOLVED: That, (1) once a satisfactory response has been received from Gallagher regarding the questions raised above, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee be authorised to accept the most appropriate quotation, as agreed by the full Council at its meeting held on 10th May 2023 and,

(2) the issue of insuring/storing and risk assessing the use of the tiered staging at the village hall, be referred to the Hartley Village Hall Trust for consideration, prior to its purchase.

10. Risk Assessments

The Committee considered that the Cash Handling Risk Assessment as reviewed by the Finance Committee at its meeting held on 27th April 2022 and subsequently approved by the Council at its meeting held on 9th May 2022 and agreed that it was satisfactory.

RECOMMENDED: That,

the Cash Handling Risk Assessment as approved by the Council at its meeting held on 9th May 2022, be confirmed and approved.

11. Grants/Donations

The Committee considered a letter received from the Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance Charity, requesting a donation of £300 towards their work.

RECOMMENDED: That,

a donation for the sum of £300, be made to the Kent Surrey Sussex Air Ambulance Charity.

12. Sevenoaks District Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Committee considered a letter dated 21st April 2023 received from Sevenoaks District Council advising that the sum of £250.02 would be paid to the Parish Council by 28th April 2023 in respect of CIL contributions collected from development within the parish.

RESOLVED: That, the letter dated 21st April 2023, received from Sevenoaks District Council advising that the sum of £250.02, would be paid to the Parish Council by 28th April 2023 in respect of CIL contributions collected from development within the parish, be noted.

13. Parish Office – Contactless Payments

The Committee considered a suggestion to obtain a system to enable card payments to be taken by the Clerk and Assistant Clerk in the Parish Office.

Members noted that there would be a percentage charge per transaction and that there would also be an initial cost for the required equipment.

The Committee agreed that as more and more people are relying on card payments rather than using cash, this may be something that would be useful to consider at a later date, but was not required at the present time.

RESOLVED: That, no further action be taken with regard to the purchase of a system to enable card payments to be taken by the Clerk and Assistant Clerk in the Parish Office, at the present time.

14. HM Revenue & Customs

The Committee considered a letter dated 30th April 2023, received from HM Revenue & Customs, regarding a change from quarterly to monthly payments for PAYE.

The Clerk reported that as the Parish Council already makes monthly payments, no additional action was required. RESOLVED: That, the letter dated 30th April 2023, received from HM Revenue & Customs, regarding a change from quarterly to monthly payments for PAYE, be noted.

15. Banking

The Committee considered a letter dated 30th March 2023, received from Barclays Bank, in response to the Parish Council's recent complaint.

The Clerk reported that on 29th November 2022, a letter had been received from Barclays Bank, requesting information about the Parish Council's business.

The required information was sent by email (as requested) on 30/12, 17/1, 24/1, 25/1, 26/1 and 27/1, but no confirmation was ever received.

Despite numerous telephone calls made to both the recipient of the emails and the customer service team (5 in total), letters were still being received by the Council requesting that the information be sent.

In view of this, a complaint was lodged with the bank on 20th February 2023.

During the time that the complaint was being looked in to, another letter was received (dated 23rd March), requesting that the information be emailed and this was sent by the Clerk on 28th March and 12th April.

Both emails sent by the Clerk, requested confirmation of receipt and that no further information was required.

To date, despite receiving "read receipts" for the two emails, no official response has been received.

The Committee noted that the complaint response letter apologised that the Council had had cause to complain, but the complaint handler "*can't see that the bank has made any errors in requesting further information from the Council*"

Members noted that the Council now has the opportunity to refer the complaint to the Ombudsman should it so wish.

The Clerk reported that no further letters have been received requesting additional information so it is assumed that Barclays now have all of the details that they require.

RESOLVED: That, (1) the letter dated 30th March 2023 received from Barclays Bank, in response to the Parish Council's recent complaint, be noted and, (2) no further action be taken regarding the matter.

16. GDPR

The Committee considered the Satswana Council Update – Spring 2023.

RESOLVED: That, the Satswana Council Update – Spring 2023, be noted.

17. Newsletter

The Committee had been requested to review arrangements for the production and delivery of the Parish Council's newsletter.

Several Members commented on the fact that they did not receive their copy of the March newsletter until mid April.

Cllr Sewell offered to make enquiries with an acquaintance that may be able to assist with deliveries.

The Clerk reported that at the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 27th February 2023, it was agreed that the current format (A4 folded) should

be changed to A3 folded, or double sided A4, depending on the amount of content and that a column layout should be used.

It was resolved that the Assistant Clerk be requested to produce a draft newsletter based on the above template for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

The Clerk reported that the Assistant Clerk had not yet had an opportunity to produce a draft, so the June newsletter would remain in its existing format.

RESOLVED: That, (1) enquiries be made regarding alternative arrangements for the distribution of the Parish Council's newsletter and annual report, for consideration at the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee and, (2) consideration of a draft newsletter in an A3 folded or double sided A4 format, using a column layout, be deferred until the next meeting.

18. Youth

(a) The Committee considered a report from the Lead Youth Worker at West Kent Housing Association.

Members noted that the youth team had engaged with a total of 86 young people. The large increase in engagements had been mainly due to the Millwall football sessions that they had attended.

In response to the increase of paraphernalia around the park and youth shelter, the youth team delivered several detached sessions after the football ended.

The young people have engaged well and have a good understanding of how their actions affect others.

The young people have enjoyed the football provision provided by Sevenoaks District Council and Millwall Football Club and this has provided the youth team with an excellent opportunity to meet young people and parents, introducing many of them for the first time to youth workers and letting them know what they do.

The Committee agreed that the football sessions had been a huge success.

RESOLVED: That, the report received from the Lead Youth Worker at West Kent Housing Association be noted.

(b) At the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 27th February 2023, it was resolved that:

- 1) *the Clerk be requested to seek a quotation from Play Place to provide an additional Family Fun Day at the end of July, at Woodland Avenue Recreation Ground, including an additional activity of "Magic" and,*
- 2) *the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee be authorised to accept the quotation received from Play Place, provided that they consider it to be reasonable and to arrange a date for the Family Fun Day to take place.*

The Clerk reported that an additional Family Fun Day has been booked for Tuesday 25th July 2023 from 10a.m. – 2p.m. including an additional activity of “magic”, at a cost of £648.00 for the fun day and £175.00 for the additional activity. RESOLVED: That, the Clerk’s report be noted.

19. Website

The Clerk reported that the new website was now live, but that it still required updating.

It was suggested that members of the Committee look at the website and advise the Clerk of any required amendments/updates.

20. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed

The meeting closed at 11.49 a.m.

Signed:..... Date:..... Chairman of the Finance
Committee

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Terms of Reference

1. To make recommendations to the Council on the Budget for the ensuing year; such Budget shall be prepared having regard to the Council's statutory duties, obligations and such objectives that the Council wishes to undertake for the benefit of the Parish.
2. To undertake reviews of income and expenditure against the approved Budget and to report thereon to the Council highlighting any variations.
3. To consider applications for financial assistance including expenditure under the provisions of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, if appropriate.
4. To undertake the evaluation of tenders and quotations for work to be undertaken on the Council's behalf and to recommend to the Council the most appropriate tender(s) for acceptance where these do not already fall within another Committee.
5. To ensure proper arrangements for the conduct of the interim audit of the Council's accounts and statutory annual audit, including the appointment of the internal auditor.
6. To review the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal controls and internal audit, as required by the Audit Regulations.
7. To approve the Annual Statement of Accounts and submit them to the Council for adoption.
8. To undertake a regular review of the Council's banking arrangements, investments and insurance.
9. To review the Council's financial risk assessment.
10. To review donations to outside organisations.
11. To review the subscriptions/licences falling to be paid annually.
12. To review the assets and the land leased by the Council annually.

Communications

1. To inform residents about the Council's business and activities through the newsletter and website.
2. To publish a newsletter quarterly and an annual report.

3. To monitor and update the website at least monthly.
4. To undertake any initiatives thought necessary to inform and consult with residents.
5. To maintain and update the Councillors' handbook.
6. To monitor the Council's Quality Parish status.
7. To prepare and review the Parish Council's Emergency Plan.

Youth

1. To work on behalf of all of the Youth of Hartley to assist them in taking a full and active role in the life of the village.
2. To engage with any organisation involved with youth work and young people to work with the Council for the benefit of the Youth of Hartley.

General

1. To deal with any matters which do not fall within the Terms of Reference of any other committee.

Delegated powers

1. To authorise expenditure on Youth matters that fall within the sums contained in the annual Budget approved by the Council, provided that any new schemes shall be subject to prior approval, in principle, by the Council.
2. To authorise expenditure on those matters relating to the publication of the Council's quarterly regular newsletters, Annual Report and the Council's website up to the sums contained in the annual budget approved by the Council, provided that any new schemes shall be subject to prior approval, in principle, by the Council
3. To co-opt for such time as is necessary members, in a non voting capacity, to assist with specific items or who have expertise in a particular matter.

