

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2023** at King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 20.00 hours.

Parish Councillors: Mr. S. Henton (Chairman) Mr. R. Pickett*
Mr. W. Blunden Mrs. V. Upton
Mrs. L. Grace
Mrs. M. Hersey*

(*) Denotes absence.

In attendance: Mr. A. Funnell (Parish Clerk)
Mrs T. Ely (RFO)

The Chairman opened the meeting, welcomed those present and announced the emergency procedure for the King Edward Hall.

444. TO RECEIVE AND ACCEPT APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

444.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs. M. Hersey and their reason was accepted.

445. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.

445.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members in respect of items on the agenda.

446. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

446.1 There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

446. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2023.

446.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 5 January 2023. These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

447. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

447.1 The Chairman had offered sincere condolences to Cllr. M. Hersey following the sad loss of her husband.

448. ACTION LIST.

448.1 The Chairman referred to the Action List, which had been circulated with the agenda and this was **NOTED**.

449. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

449.1 i) To Note Available Funds.

It was **NOTED** that £2,000 had been spent from a budget of £2,500.

ii) To Consider Grant Requests Received.

Councillor Blunden reported on behalf of the Grants Panel and advised that no grant requests had been received.

iii) To Note Letters of Thanks Received.

Letters of thanks had been received from:

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- i) Fairer World Lindfield.
- ii) Lindfield History Project Group.

450. BUDGET 2022/23: TO NOTE BUDGET PROGRESS REPORTS TO 31 JANUARY 2023.

450.1 A detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading Report and Expenditure from Earmarked Reserves Report to 31 January 2023 had been circulated by the RFO prior to the meeting. A summary had been circulated with the agenda. Budget progress was **NOTED** as follows:

- i) Finance and General Purposes Committee, a total of £119,184 had been spent from the budget of £164,633.
- ii) Overall Council Budget, a total of £174,385 had been spent from the budget of £228,033 of which £43,291 had been spent from the Environment and Amenities Committee's budget of £55,900. £2,647 had been spent from the Allotments budget of £2,500 and income of £880 received. There had been £7,744 spent from the Planning & Traffic Committee budget of £5,000. £8,832.88 had been spent from Earmarked Reserves.

Income of £199,805 had been received in total, comprising mainly the full precept payment of £189,000 and £8,080 CTH rental. Other income relating to bank and building society interest, CTH Service Charge, Licence Fee and Christmas Festival Night had also been received.

- iii) General Reserve Expenditure, a total of £1,520 had been spent from General Reserves.

451. FINANCIAL MONITORING: TO NOTE THE ACCOUNT RECORDS TO 31 JANUARY 2023.

451.1 i) Cash and Investment Reconciliation and To Note Deposits and Investment Held.

It was **NOTED** that the total bank cash and investment reconciliation to 31 January 2023 was £217,863.56.

ii) Payment Analysis.

It was **NOTED** that a total of £11,104.66 net of VAT had been paid from the Barclays Bank Current Account in January 2023.

452. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM: TO CONSIDER REPORT.

452.1 Councillor R. Pickett had completed his review of the effectiveness of the Internal Control System and Internal Audit System for the financial year 2022/23. Copies of his reports had been presented to members dated 14 March 2023 for consideration.

The reports were **NOTED**, and it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council that these be approved in support of the current financial year.

453. INTERNAL AUDITOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2023/24: UPDATE ON APPOINTMENT.

453.1 The RFO confirmed that a report had been presented to the Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman for consideration dated 17 January 2023, with a recommendation that Mulberry & Company be appointed as Internal Auditor for the financial year 2023/24.

It was **NOTED** that the Clerk in conjunction with the Committee Chair and Vice-Chairman had approved the recommendation. Mulberry and Company were delighted to carry out Internal Audit services and a letter of engagement would be circulated during April and May.

It was **AGREED** that appointment of Mulberry and Company as Internal Auditors for 2023/24 would be confirmed to Full Council for ratification at a future meeting.

454. NATWEST BANK ACCOUNT: TO CONSIDER REPORT REGARDING NEW ACCOUNT.

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- 454.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the RFO and circulated with the agenda. To assist with the application process, approval had been sought relating to the set up and general management of the account. Personal information would also need to be shared by members to assist with this.

The above was **NOTED**.

It was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to **FULL COUNCIL** approval for the new bank account to be set up on the following basis:

- a. Authorised Signatories – Chairman of Council, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee and Vice Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- b. Scheme Administrator to the Account & Main Point of Contact – RFO.
- c. Key Individuals to be noted with NatWest Bank – Clerk and Vice Chairman of Council.
- d. Signatories per Transaction – Two, reflecting the Barclays Bank online banking authorisation arrangement. RFO to set up the payment and one member.
- e. Initial Deposit - £1,000 transferred from Barclays Bank Current Account. £8,000 would subsequently be transferred from the Nationwide Building Society.
- f. Cap on Spending Limit per Transaction – Nil.
- g. Use of Debit Card, Cheque Book, and Paying-In Book – Not required.
- h. The RFO would liaise with members regarding information required as appropriate.

455. **WEST SUSSEX PENSION FUND: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT REGARDING CHANGES AND ILL HEALTH INSURANCE.**

- 455.1 Lindfield Parish Council had been advised that as a result of the 2022 Valuation, a review of the current Small Scheduled Bodies Agreement had taken place. The West Sussex Pension Fund had forwarded a letter with a request to review the proposed changes together with a request to complete and return a Letter of Variation.

Changes due to Ill Health Early Retirement.

Early retirement due to ill health was undermining the value of the fund giving rise to a potential shortfall. Employers were being asked to contribute towards additional costs to mitigate liability. For the period 2020-2023 the average contribution paid on behalf of bodies such as Parish Councils was £16,000. Insurance cover was being offered to protect the Council's interest. For example, £950 to protect three members of staff currently contributing towards the pension scheme. Concern had been raised regarding a clause in the insurance policy stating that a claim would not be considered if a member of staff had been off sick for five consecutive days.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** the Clerk would make further enquiries regarding the insurance policy terms and conditions.

Letter of Variation to the West Sussex Pension Fund Pooling Agreement.

The Letter of Variation was considered and **NOTED**.

It was **AGREED** to sign and return the Letter of Variation.

456. **VAT RECLAIM: UPDATE.**

- 456.1 It was **NOTED** that a claim for VAT refund totalling £5,221.63 had been submitted to HMRC for the invoice period October to December 2022, and that payment had been received on 9 February 2023.

457. **UTILITY CONTRACTS: TO CONSIDER REPORT.**

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457.1 It was **NOTED** that the Clerk was currently awaiting a report from a utility broker.

458. PROPOSED PUBLIC TOILETS ON THE COMMON: UPDATE.

458.1 The Clerk had provided the following update:

- i) MSDC were considering the planning application at their meeting due 9 March 2023. A recommendation had been made for approval.
- ii) The Planning Portal had registered support in favour of the application.

The above was **NOTED**.

459. CLERK AND RFO REPORTS.

459.1 Clerk's Report.

The Clerk advised as follows:

- a. The new telephone system had been installed by BT. This had resulted in an unsuitable power socket having to be replaced.
- b. Holt Security had carried out a six-month maintenance check on the parish office intruder alarm system on 20 February 2023, without any concerns having been reported.

The above was **NOTED**.

459.2 RFO's Report.

The RFO advised as follows:

- a. MSDC were currently undertaking a Small Business Rate Relief Review to ensure that eligibility criteria remained. An application had been submitted on 2 February 2023.
- b. Barclays Bank Online Signatories: Progress was in hand to include the Vice Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The above was **NOTED**.

- c. Arrangements to Pay Invoices whilst the RFO was on Holiday Leave: A recommendation had been made for invoices to be paid by cheque or by Debit Card subject to terms of payment.

The above was **NOTED** and **AGREED**.

460. POLICY & STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS.

460.1 The Clerk reported on the following:

- i) Update on the Plan 2022-27 Publication.
Feedback had been received, which was currently being correlated. A report would be presented to members for consideration at a future Full Council meeting.

The above was **NOTED**.

461. RISK MANAGEMENT: TO CONSIDER ANY RISK ASSESSMENTS.

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461. The Clerk had confirmed that a comprehensive schedule would be presented to members for consideration at a future Full Council meeting.

The above was **NOTED**.

462. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING/CONFERENCE EVENTS AND RECEIVE ANY ATTENDANCE REPORTS.

- 462.1 The Clerk advised on the following attendance:

a. The Clerk had attended a training session on pensions 15 February 2023.

463. MATTERS ARISING AFTER THE PREPARATION OF THIS AGENDA, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT. SUCH MATTERS WILL BE FOR NOTING OR DEFERRAL TO A FUTURE MEETING ONLY.

- 463.1 There were no matters arising.

The public part of the meeting ended at 20.36 hours.

464. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [AND PRESS]: TO CONSIDER WHETHER A RESOLUTION SHOULD BE MOVED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 3(D) AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PUBLIC BODIES ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT 1960 SECTION 1(2), TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND PRESS FROM THE FOLLOWING PART OF THE MEETING, BY REASON OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED OR FOR OTHER SPECIAL REASONS (STAFFING MATTERS).

- 464.1 It was **RESOLVED** in accordance with the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960 Section 1(2) and the Parish Council's Standing Order 3 (d) that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it as desirable in the public interest that the public [and press] be excluded.

465. TO CONSIDER MATERS RELATING TO THE CLOCK TOWER HOUSE LEASE.

- 465.1 Copies of email correspondence exchanged between our Deputy Clerk and tenant dated 22 February 2023 had been presented to members for consideration. The following was **AGREED**:

- a. To retain and continue with a five-year lease.
- b. A solicitor would be appointed to assist with renewal of the lease.

The meeting concluded at 20.41 hours.