

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** (here in F&GP) held on **THURSDAY 5 SEPTEMBER 2024** at King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 20.00 hours.

Present:

Committee Members:	Mr. W. Blunden	Mr. R. Pickett
	Mrs. A. Beecroft (Committee Chair)	Mrs. V. Upton*
	Mrs. L. Grace	Mr. T. Webster

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

*Denotes absence.

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

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

189.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Upton and their reason was accepted.

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

190.1 There were no declarations of interest from members regarding any items on the agenda.

191. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

191.1 There were no members of the public present.

192. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE F&GP COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 JULY 2024.

192.1 The Chair called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the F&GP Committee held on Tuesday 2 July 2024. These were **AGREED** and the Chair **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

193. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

193.1 The Chair made no announcements.

194. ACTION LIST.

194.1 The Chair referred to the Action List which had been circulated with the agenda and this was **NOTED**.

195. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

195.1 Grants budget. It was **NOTED** that funds of £2,000 were available to spend from a budget of £2,500.

195.2 To Consider Grant Requests. No grant requests had been received.

195.3 Letters of Thanks and Correspondence Received.

i) It was **NOTED** that no letters of thanks had been received.

ii) Lindfield History Project Group: A letter had been received regarding a grant award of £250.00 that was paid in the financial year 2022/23. These funds were earmarked to contribute towards the cost of printing copies of a document relating to their "Owners and Occupiers of Lindfield High Street 1910. The project had been delayed and an offer made to return the money.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** that Lindfield Parish Council would request a refund of the grant award.

196. BUDGET 2024/25: TO NOTE THE LATEST BUDGET PROGRESS REPORTS.

196.1 Members had been presented with copies of the RFO summary and detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading Report and Expenditure from Earmarked Reserves Report to 31 July 2024. These had been circulated with the agenda. Budget progress was **NOTED** as follows:

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- i) F&GP Committee: A total of £53,525 had been spent from a budget of £192,390.
- ii) Overall Council Budget: A total of £66,419 had been spent from the budget of £262,215 of which £12,336 had been spent from the Environment & Amenities (E&A) Committee budget of £64,425. £557 had been spent from the Allotments budget of £2,500. £nil had been spent from the Planning & Traffic Committee budget of £2,900. A total of £2,309 had been spent from Earmarked Reserves.
- iii) The Insurance budget (nominal code 4160) had been overspent by 20.1%, reflecting the cost of an additional ill health liability insurance policy that was agreed to. This item of expenditure had not been planned for at the time of setting the budget.
- iv) General Reserves Expenditure: There had been no expenditure from General Reserves.
- v) Income: Income of £133,716 had been received in total, represented mainly by payment one (of two) in respect of the precept £128,500 and £3,232 CTH rental. Other income relating to bank and building society interest had been received totalling £1,207 and allotment rental income of £1,197. Income totalling £420 remained outstanding for 2023/24.

197. FINANCIAL MONITORING: TO NOTE THE ACCOUNT RECORDS.

197.1 Members had been presented with account records to 31 July 2024 with the agenda.

- i) Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation and To Note Deposits and Investments Held.
It was **NOTED** that the total bank cash and investment reconciliation to 31 July 2024 was £236,841.57.
- ii) Payment Analysis.
It was **NOTED** that a total of £15,780.25 net of VAT had been paid from the Barclays Bank Current Account in July 2024. £18.00 had been paid from the Unity Trust Current Account to the end of July 2024.
- iii) To Approve/Ratify any required Payments.
 - a. Lindfield Parish Council had been invited to renew its annual membership with Campaign to Protect Rural England. The option to pay by Direct Debit had been provided.

The above was **NOTED** and it was agreed that payments would be made on an annual basis by Direct Debit. The Clerk would make the necessary arrangements.
 - b. It was **NOTED** that the Parish Council vehicle would soon require servicing and an MOT. As previously agreed, payment would be made by Debit Card.
- iv) To Note the Internal Control Check (Invoice Period April to June 2024).
Members had been presented with a copy summary in respect of an internal control check that had been carried out by Cllr Beecroft on 22 August 2024. Monthly bank reconciliations had agreed with bank statements and the cash book. Spot checks on entries made in the cash book against invoices agreed and there were no issues raised relating to the general review of book-keeping.

The above was **NOTED**.

198. BUDGET 2025/26: PROPOSED TIMETABLE AND SKELETON BUDGET.

198.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the Clerk dated 5 September 2024 and were asked to consider the local and national context and guidelines to assist with developing the council budget for 2025/26. This had included a skeleton budget drafted by the Chair. It was hoped that the draft budget would be presented to members for consideration in December 2024 and January 2025.

After further consideration, it was **AGREED** to:

- a) Endorse the guidelines set out in the report, and
- b) To use the principles to assist with preparing the 2025/26 budget.

199. IT EQUIPMENT: TO CONSIDER EXISTING PROVISION AND UPGRADE OPTIONS.

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199.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the Clerk dated 5 September 2024 considering the future use of the Council's existing office IT equipment. Microsoft had confirmed that it would no longer be supporting Windows 10 after October 2025. The office desktops used by members of staff were running with Windows 10 PRO, and could not be updated to support Windows 11 PRO. Neither could the processors/integrated graphics be upgraded. The Council's IT provider had advised that Windows 11 would offer benefits in the following areas:

- i) Built-in Security Features
- ii) Malware Protection
- iii) Phishing Prevention
- iv) Secure Wi-Fi and Bluetooth
- v) Stability & Reliability

Upgrade options had been detailed in the report and a recommendation made to members to consider replacing the three existing office desktop PCs.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Clerk to purchase three new office desktop PCs with Windows 11 PRO for a total maximum cost of £1,500 net of VAT. Payment would be made by Debit Card.

It was further **AGREED** that the cost would be met from a combination of the F&GP budgets 4200 IT & Website and 4210 Office Equipment, subject to the balance of unspent funds remaining.

199.2 Members had been asked to approve the disposal of a redundant HP PC, which had historically been used by staff to support the office screen during meetings. This was no longer used due to its slow performance and preference towards connecting laptops to the office screen.

It was **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Clerk to dispose of the redundant HP PC.

200. TOILETS ON THE COMMON: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS.

200.1 The Chair had invited Cllr Pickett and the Clerk to provide an update.

It was **NOTED** that a response was awaited from Mid Sussex District Council.

201. RISK MANAGEMENT: TO CONSIDER ANY RISK ASSESSMENTS.

201. The chair reported that the financial risk assessment was currently being reviewed and would be presented to members at a future meeting. The van risk assessment will in addition be presented.

The above was **NOTED**.

202. PLAN 23-27: TO CONSIDER ANY UPDATES.

202.1 It was **NOTED** that enquiries and discussions were ongoing.

203. COMMUNICATIONS: TO CONSIDER ANY REPORTS OR UPDATES FROM THE WORKING GROUP.

203.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by Cllr Webster dated 5 September 2024. The report provided some ideas on matters to be researched by the working group. The working group would meet again and make suggestions for formal consideration at a future meeting.

The above was **NOTED**.

204. POLICY DOCUMENTS: TO CONSIDER ANY PROPOSED OR UPDATED DOCUMENTS.

204.1 Members had been asked to review draft copies of the updated and tailored Financial Regulations and the Pensions Discretions Policy. The Chair made the following comments:

Financial Regulations.

The proposed financial regulations had been adapted from the National Association of Local Councils template. The Clerk and RFO had considered and tailored the wording to reflect the Council's needs, and the document had then subsequently been reviewed by the Policies Working Group.

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Whilst a recommendation had been made to approve the draft Financial Regulations, after having scrutinised the proposed wording, the need to review the Council's existing online banking arrangements and provider was considered necessary.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to delegate authority to the RFO, Clerk, Chair and Deputy Chair of the F&GP committee to carry out a review of the Council's online banking arrangements and provider. Their recommendations would be presented to members in a report for consideration at a future meeting.

Given the impending review and members' agreement that the proposed draft Financial Regulations met the needs to the Council, it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the draft Financial Regulations be adopted, subject to the wording in section 5.20 being amended to the following:

'An official order shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £250 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared, or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.'

204.2 Pensions Discretions Policy.

The Chair reminded members that the Pension Discretions Policy was a legal requirement. The Council's pension administrator had recommended that the existing policy be updated. The proposed policy had been drafted reflecting a template used by a town council. The draft had been shared with the Policies Working Group for review.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND to FULL COUNCIL** that the draft Pensions Discretions Policy be adopted as presented.

205. **CLERK AND RFO REPORT.**

205.1 Clerk's Report.

The Clerk had no items to report.

205.2 RFO's Report.

The RFO reported on the following items:

a) HMRC Claim for Refund of VAT: Invoice Period April to June 2024.

A claim for a refund of VAT paid for the invoice period April to June 2024 had been submitted to HMRC on 25 July 24 totalling £3,144.66. Payment was received on 12 Aug 2024 and paid into the Barclays Business Premium Account.

b) AGAR 2023/24: Update.

The signed External Audit Report and Certificate, including an invoice, had been received on 30 August 2024. A copy of the Certificate had been circulated to members by the Clerk and the following comment made:

'On review of Council's Notice of Public Rights for 2023 posted on the website, we have noted that the start and end dates have been incorrectly dated 2022. We believe this is a human error on completion and that the requirements to the notice of public rights were met correctly.'

c) Unity Trust Bank: Annual FSCS Review.

Lindfield Parish Council had been asked to assist with an annual FSCS review on 29 July 2024. A questionnaire had been completed confirming the annual precept of £257,000.

d) Unity Trust Bank: Online Banking Update:

Email notification had been received regarding revised arrangements for authorised signatories to log in to online banking. Members will in future be asked to enter a one-time passcode.

e) Unity Trust Bank: Current Account Charges Update.

With effect from 22 September 2024, charges would be paid monthly instead of the current quarterly basis. This would help to:

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Prevent inactive accounts from incurring overdraft fees and charges when not in use.
Assist with improved tracking and management of expenses.

f) Sse Energy Final Bill: 6 November to 31 December 2023.

An unexpected bill had been received dated 26 July 2024 regarding the Parish Office energy supply for the period 6 November to 31 December 2023, £638.41 net of VAT. The meter had been changed in November 2023 and a bill raised at the time, which was understood to be the final bill from this supplier. This had coincided with a subsequent change in energy supplier. On checking the Council's records however, it had been confirmed by the RFO that the information was correct, and that the authority was obliged to settle the account. This would bring the total spend to £3,550 against an annual budget of £3,100 in the financial year 2023/24.

g) Nationwide Building Society (NBS): Update.

Written confirmation had been received from the NBS that monthly interest would be paid directly into the account.

h) Precept Payment 2 (of 2) £128,500.

Members had been reminded that the precept payment 2 (of 2) for £128,500 was due to be received at the end of September 2024. Mindful that a review of total funds held will need to be carried out to assist with the spreading of risk and to maximise FSCS protection, the RFO would submit a recommendation to Full Council at their next meeting when due.

The above was **NOTED**.

206. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING, CONFERENCE AND ASSOCIATION EVENTS, AND RECEIVE ANY ATTENDANCE REPORTS.

206.1 Members had been presented with a Summary of Training and Meeting Attendance for the period 2023 to 2027, which was **NOTED**.

206.2 It was **NOTED** that the Clerk would be circulating a template form to members to assist with reporting on attendance and sharing comments at future meetings.

The meeting concluded at 20.50 hours.

DISCLAIMER

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, statements and decisions recorded in these minutes, their status will remain that of a draft until they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting.