



NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT ROFFEY MILLENNIUM HALL, CRAWLEY ROAD, HORSHAM ON THURSDAY 10th MARCH 2022 COMMENCING AT 7.30pm

Present: Cllr. P. Burgess, Cllr. Mrs. J. Gough, Cllr. J. Smithurst (Vice Chairman),
Cllr. S. Torn (Chairman), Cllr. R. Turner and Cllr. Mrs. S. Wilton*

* denotes absence

In attendance: Sarah Norman - Clerk

FA/485/22 Public Forum

There was one member of the public present online.

FA/486/22 Apologies

The Committee received apologies for absence from Cllr. Mrs. Wilton.

FA/487/22 Minutes

The Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee Meeting held on 9th December 2021 were agreed and were signed by the Chairman as being a correct record.

FA/488/22 Declarations of Interest

Cllr. Turner declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 15 as a family member was a member of the Earles Meadow Conservation Group.

Cllr. Gough declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 15 due to her involvement with the Friendship Club.

FA/489/22 Members **RESOLVED** to vary the order of business in accordance with S.O.10a(vi) and take Agenda item 15, Grant applications next.

FA/490/22 Grant applications

The Committee **NOTED** that a sum of £4,220 remained available in the Grant Budget and copies of the applications had been circulated by email.

Following discussion, Members **AGREED** to the following :-

- i. Earles Meadow Conservation Group - Grant Awarded £525
- ii. Horsham District Scouts - Grant Awarded £180
- iii. Friendship Club - Grant Awarded £300

Cllr. Smithurst arrived during the above item

FA/491/22 Chairman's Announcements

Members were advised that it had been necessary to instruct two suppliers to proceed with the following works :-

- Repair to UPVC fascia at North Heath Hall following storm (requiring tower) £1,570 plus VAT - funded by Repairs and Renewals Reserve.
- PET of floodlights at MUGA £2,000 plus VAT (estimated) - funded by Play Area & Multicourt Maintenance Budget (as referred to under the following Agenda item)

Members **NOTED** the above and that the expenditure would be ratified at the next Property Committee Meeting in April.

The Chairman also reported that whilst CIL expenditure of £17,000 for replacement fencing at the Birches Play Area had been agreed at Council, the contractor had now advised that since the quote had been obtained, the cost had increased by £700. It was **NOTED** that there would be sufficient funds within the CIL Budget and the additional expenditure would need to be ratified at the next Council Meeting.

FA/492/22 Review of Finances to 31st January 2022

1. Finance Report to show income, expenditure and reserves to 31st January 2022

Period covering 1st April 2021 to 31st January 2022

Funding at 31st January 2022

Precept (full year)	338,600
Environmental Grant (full year).	10,356
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Payment	26,163
Total	375,119

Income to 31st January 2022

Cost Centre	Actual income	Annual Budget	Estimated income to 31st January 2022*
Admin	138	100	83
Allotments**	948	875	875
North Heath Hall	42,343	50,000	41,667
Holbrook Tythe Barn	18,580	30,000	25,000
Multi Court Lettings	15,244	20,000	16,667
Roffey Millennium Hall	43,514	60,000	50,000
Total	120,767	160,975	134,292

Expenditure to 31st January 2022

Cost Centre	Actual Expenditure	Annual Budget	Estimated expenditure to 31st January 2022*
Admin***	35,897	50,120	43,350

Grants	5,780	10,000	8,333
Burial	5,596	6,750	5,625
Personnel	228,217	315,450	262,875
Planning, Env, Trans	0	2,250	1,875
Allotments	653	1,575	1,313
Amenity, Recs & Open Spaces	28,401	52,995	44,163
North Heath Hall	13,164	28,421	23,684
Holbrook Tythe Barn	12,067	22,196	18,497
Roffey Millennium Hall	19,718	37,888	31,573
Total	349,493	527,645	441,288

Net expenditure	-228,726	-366,670	-306,996
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*Total cost centre budget for 2021/22 divided by 10/12ths.

**Allotment invoices are sent out annually. The full income is expected by the end of April.

***includes insurance estimate of £9,500 paid in one instalment.

Income

Income continues to remain lower than that which would be expected for this time of the year, with a difference of £13,525. The gap between anticipated and actual income has continued to decrease slightly from 13% of expected income at the end of December to 10% at the end of January. Income has been boosted by the receipts from the NHS for the vaccination centre but with their use of the building finishing at the end of February, there will be no further income from this source.

Expenditure

Significant savings have been made on staff costs, general maintenance and Open spaces. All necessary Health & Safety work has been carried out and ongoing necessary inspections and servicing is continuing. As we approach the end of the financial year it has been necessary to undertake maintenance activities outside of the Health & Safety remit but remaining within the forecasted expenditure for the year, as restricting works to only those necessary under Health & Safety was unsustainable and could have led to higher costs in the longer term if repairs are put off until they reach the Health & Safety threshold.

The gap between actual and anticipated expenditure, has remained steady at 21% at the end of month 10.

Reserves

On 31st January 2022 the remaining funds including General Reserves stood at £332,134 and there were additional Ear Marked Reserves of £248,895.

Summary

As mentioned above, there is £13,525 less income than budgeted for in the year to date but this is offset by £91,795 less expenditure. The overall position is that expenditure after income is about £78,270 less than anticipated at this time of the financial year. There are adequate reserves to cover 6 months running costs.

The Finance Report, as detailed above and circulated prior to the Meeting, was **NOTED**.

2. Bank Reconciliation

The cashbook, bank reconciliation and bank statements for the Lloyds Bank Accounts as at 31st December 2021 and 31st January 2022 had been emailed to the Committee separately.

The Bank Reconciliations at 31st December 2021 and 31st January 2022 were **NOTED** and signed by the Chairman to confirm their agreement with the bank statements.

Members also received and **NOTED** the ledger reports for the other deposits held with Co-operative and Nationwide and confirmed their agreement to the statements as at 31st December 2021.

2. VAT Analysis

Members **NOTED** the VAT Analysis to 31st December 2021, as circulated with the Agenda, detailing the VAT across the different activities of the Council and that the De Minimus limit had not been exceeded.

FA/493/22 Earmarking at 31st March 2022

Before discussing the matter, the Clerk informed Members that the Council had been notified on 3rd March that the National Joint Council had agreed a pay award for 2021/22 of 1.75% with NALC recommending that the increase (backdated to 1st April 2021) be actioned as soon as possible, to avoid the higher rate National Insurance that will be payable by all employees and the employer from 1st April 2022. Therefore, no earmarking would be required for this as the matter would be settled before the year end was completed. The Chairman informed the meeting that had it been necessary, he suggested that this would be via accrual at year end rather than earmarking.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** that, should it not be possible to complete the identified actions, the following sums should be Earmarked at 31st March 2022 :-

302 4250	Bus Shelter Repairs	£1,000	Necessary repairs/redecoration of various shelters if unable to be completed before 31 st March 2022
302 4251	Play Area & Multicourt Maintenance	£2,000	PET testing of floodlight columns if not completed before 31 st March 2022
302 4255	Street Lighting - Maintenance & Supply	£1,000	Combined electrical and structure testing of the columns if not completed by 31 st March 2022
302 4302	Notice Board Maintenance	£500	For repainting/repairs to Roundel noticeboard if not completed by 31 st March 2022.
403 4500	Internal Decorations	£1,000	For redecoration as it is not been possible to get this work done until after the vaccination clinic had left and now has to wait until the Easter holidays in April

Members **NOTED** that as soon as the actions were completed any unrequired funds would be returned to General Reserves immediately.

FA/494/22 To Appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO)

Members **NOTED** the extracts from the NALC General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Toolkit for Local Councils regarding the appointment of DPOs by Parish Councils. The Clerk informed the meeting that it had in fact been necessary to liaise with the DPO since the Agenda and report had been issued, regarding a Freedom of Information Request that had been received.

Members discussed the legal position regarding the circumstances under which there is a requirement to appoint a DPO, the amount and type of data processed and held by the Council and the risks involved in not engaging a DPO. Following discussion, it was **AGREED** not to renew the annual DPO contract.

FA/495/22 Direct Debit Review

As per the Financial Regulations 6.6 and 6.7, it is necessary for the Council to review and approve the use of any and all Direct Debits and Standing Orders.

Following a review, Members are asked to note the following active Direct Debits :-

British Gas Business	Gas & Electricity supply to North Heath Hall, Holbrook Tythe Barn and Roffey Millennium Hall
Business Stream	Water supply to Allotments, North Heath Hall, Holbrook Tythe Barn and Roffey Millennium Hall
Carnah Events Ltd	Bimonthly editorial in Horsham Pages publication
Horsham District Council	National Non-Domestic Rates for North Heath Hall, Holbrook Tythe Barn and Roffey Millennium Hall
Horsham District Council	Refuse Collection, Dog and Litter Bin Emptying
Information Commissioners Office	Annual Registration
Public Works Loan Board	Loan repayments
SOS Systems	Photocopier/Printer contract
EDF Energy	Electricity for street lighting

It was also **NOTED** that there were no Standing Orders in operation.

It was subsequently **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council the approval of the Direct Debit Mandates as listed with the next review due in March 2024.

FA/496/22 Withdrawal of Retail Relief for National Non-Domestic Rates (NDDR)

The Committee **NOTED** that, despite HDC previously advising the Parish Council that they were entitled to Retail Rate Relief for North Heath Hall and Roffey Millennium Hall, notification had now been received from HDC advising that as a precepting authority, under Section 47 (8A) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Parish Council was not in fact entitled to receive this relief and they were clawing

back the unpaid rates via Direct Debit. The total relief that had to be repaid was £23,071.93.

The Clerk informed the meeting that she had spoken to the NDDR team at HDC as they had not yet collected the backdated payments, despite stating on the demand in February that this would be collected on the next Direct Debit date i.e. 1st March 2022. Whilst speaking to them, they had advised that it was the Parish Council's responsibility to check and confirm that they were entitled to receive any relief.

Members expressed their frustration and disappointment at this turn events. It was noted that that not only would the large back payment reduce the reserves at the end of the year but that the budgets and precepts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 had been calculated based on the erroneous information that the Parish Council was entitled to the relief. The Chairman did, however, state that the Parish Council reserves at the end of the year should still be above what had been predicted, despite this unexpected expenditure.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** that a letter to the Chairman and new CEO of HDC be drafted, to be signed by the Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee and the Chairman of the Council, to express the dissatisfaction with HDC's error.

FA/497/22 Microsoft 365 Annual subscription

Following the Clerk's report advising of the substantial increases to the costs for Microsoft 365, Members **RATIFIED** the change from monthly to annual payment for the Microsoft Annual subscription and furthermore, noted that whilst the budget would currently show on any reports as having been exceeded, this would be changed to a prepayment for the 2022/23 financial year as part of the year end process.

FA/498/22 Review of Authorisation of payments procedure

Members **NOTED** that, as a result of the COVID pandemic and to limit the need for face-to-face interactions during this time, the payment authorisation process has involved copies of all invoices being emailed to Cllrs. Mrs. Gough, Turner and Mrs. Wilton with the agreement to process the payments also being sent back via email. As per 6.8/6.9 of the Council's Financial Regulations, at least two of the Councillors contacted must reply to the office to confirm their agreement to the payments being made.

As business returns to a more "normal" basis, Members considered whether this process should continue or whether a return to face-to-face authorisations was necessary.

Following discussions, it was **AGREED** :-

- a) The number of Councillors contacted to approve payments remain at three, but this should be on a rotating basis of all members of the Finance and Administration Committee
- b) That members have the choice of whether they wish to respond by email or come to the office to sign the hard copy invoices, noting that any visit should be within 24 hours.

FA/499/22 Business Plan 2021-24

The updated Business Plan, as circulated prior to the Meeting, was **NOTED**.

Following discussion, including that any objectives need to have funding planned, it was **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the revised document noting that a visioning exercise would be undertaken at the Annual Parish Meeting in 2023 as had been agreed at the Council Meeting held 3rd March 2022 (Min. FC/681/22 refers).

FA/500/22 Switch to digital telephony services and rebroking of contracts for telephone/broadband services at all buildings

Members **NOTED** that with the country's analogue phone network to be retired at the end of 2025, the Parish Council will have to upgrade broadband and telephone connections, including the line for the lift emergency service at Roffey Millennium Hall together with the lines for the alarms at all buildings. It should be noted that as of April 2022, the Parish Council is out of contract for all telephony and broadband contracts at all buildings.

Following discussion, it was **AGREED** to seek professional assistance for this exercise. It was also **NOTED** that quotations will be obtained including Wi-Fi provision at North Heath Hall and Holbrook Tythe Barn.

FA/501/22 Internal Control Working Party

The Notes of the Meeting held on 28th February 2022, including confirmation that no issues were identified, were **NOTED**.

FA/502/22 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place in June with the exact date to be confirmed at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 5th May 2022.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.24pm.

Signed

Date