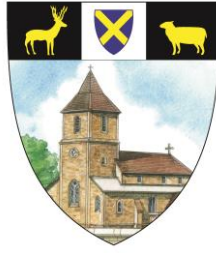


Sandridge Parish Council



Marshalswick Community Centre,
The Ridgeway, St.Albans,
Herts, AL4 9TU

Tel: 01727 831871

Email: clerk@sandridge-pc.gov.uk

16th September 2025

TO: Members of the Finance Committee

Councillors Graham Leonard, John Hale (Chair), Julie Oakley, James Lambert, Anne Thomas

You are summoned to attend a meeting of Sandridge Parish Council's Finance Committee, to be held at Marshalswick Community Centre on Monday 22nd September 2025 at 7.30pm

Simon Thwaites
Parish Clerk

To assist in the prompt dispatch of business, members requiring further information or clarification on items included on the agenda are requested to enquire prior to the meeting.

A G E N D A

- 1. To receive and accept apologies for absence**
- 2. Disclosures of interest and dispensations**
 - a)** To receive declarations of interest from councillors on items on the agenda
 - b)** To receive written requests for dispensations for declarable interests; and
 - c)** To grant any requests for dispensation as appropriate
- 3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd June 2025**

4. **2025/26 Budgetary Control**

Attached is a budgetary control report showing projected outturn for 2025/26 (Appendix 1). Projected net expenditure is £343,838 against an approved budget of £377,832. This projection shows a reduction on budgeted net expenditure of £33,994 or £27,494 if the Sports and Recreation Committee decides to install football/rugby goals at the Jersey Farm Open Space. Material variations in summary are shown in the right hand column but may be summarised as;

- New doors at Marshalswick Community Centre
- New tables at Marshalswick Community Centre
- No Parish Event
- Storage Container at the Woodland Park
- Increased Community Centre income/court hire

Note: There are requests pending for a heating system at MCC and funding toward the Woodland Park pond. These total between £21,000 to £23,000 in 2025/26. These are not shown in the above figures.

5. **Review of Banking Standing Orders and Direct Debits**

Financial Regulations require this committee to review these annually. Enclosed is a schedule of current standing orders and direct debits paid through the Treasurer's Account.

6. **External audit 2024/25**

The Parish Council's External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn, has now finalised the 2024/25 external audit. A query raised by them in August was subsequently found to be an error on their part. The auditor's report is attached with one reference to an unchecked box on Section 1 (box 8) of the return. Other than this there are no matters arising. The Notice of Conclusion of Audit notices will be published in accordance with legislation.

7. **Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS)**

On the 23rd July The Clerk received an email from Unity Bank asking for confirmation of this Council's eligibility within the FSCS. The email stated that local councils with a budget of £431,749 or less would qualify. The Clerk queried with the bank what was meant by 'budget', i.e. gross or net of income. The significance of this was that gross, this council exceeds the limit and net, it doesn't. The Clerk requested an explanation and after several further conversations the definition was given as 'expenditure'. Budgeted income was not therefore to form part of the calculation. The Clerk raised the matter with the County Association who raised it with the Head of the Regulatory reporting Team at Unity. A decision was eventually reached that, provided the **annual precept** doesn't exceed £431,749 (0.5 million Euros), cover remains in place. The Parish Council's precept for 2025/26 is £351,303

8. **Asset Register**

At the June meeting it was asked to have an agenda item reviewing the minimum value of assets to be recorded on the register. NALC does not specify a minimum value – it is for local councils to decide. The minimum must, however, be consistently applied. There are a small number of items on the register with values around £200 - £250 and some of the assets where only a cumulative total exists will be similar in value. For information, the Clerk is in the process of auditing the register's contents and this will be reported in due course. It is;

Recommended

That a minimum asset value of £500 is maintained on the register in future.

9. Earmarked Reserves

(a) Traffic Calming Reserve

Earmarked reserves will normally be allocated when there is a fund required to accumulate over two or more years or where there is a probability of material expenditure throughout a period of two or more years but where the timing and level of funding is uncertain. Any other expenditure can simply be allocated a budget through the normal annual budget setting process.

The Traffic Calming Reserve (£22,450) has been earmarked for a period of at least eleven years without being called on, even when works were carried out on the St Albans Road last year.

The cost of playground equipment has increased significantly in recent years and the Sports and Recreation Committee request that this reserve be released into General Reserves to support an enhanced Committee budget in 2026/27. It is;

Recommended

That The Committee considers this request before putting the draft budget to Full Council in December.

(b) Community Centres Reserve

Reserves earmarked for community centre refurbishment/urgent repairs are £7,500 (Jersey Farm) and £22,500 (Marshalswick). There are no specific enhancements or repairs planned at either centre and it may therefore simplify the reserves table if the two are combined to form a single Community Centres Reserve of £30,000. The most likely use of a reserve in future would be the uninsured failure of the flat roof at Marshalswick Community Centre through wear and tear. It is;

Recommended

To action the above with a combined figure presented to Full Council with the draft 2026/27 budget in December.

10. Funding Air Source Heat Pumps at Marshalswick Community Centre

At Full Council on 10th September it was resolved to install heat pumps in the Marshalswick Community Centre including the Parish Office. This was subject to approval being given by this Committee for the £12,734 expenditure in 2025/26. It is;

Recommended

That Members decide in light of the budgetary position reported at item 4 whether funds can be released for this purpose.

11. Neighbourhood News

The annual cost of the neighbourhood News is £15,000 in 2025/26. Members are asked to review this cost in the context of the annual budget and take a view on whether it represents value for money before making recommendations to Full Council if necessary. The position is that, in the absence of regular contributions from Council Members over several years, the magazine has ceased to be The Council's voice in the community, becoming instead a vehicle for local schools, churches and businesses to receive free or subsidised exposure. The latest edition contained only 6 pages relating directly to the Parish Council from a total of approximately 48. The previous edition was 6.5 of 47 pages (excluding community centre schedules). The current annual cost of the magazine is equivalent to;

- A part time staff member's salary
- A playground enhancement similar to that recently carried out at Harness Way
- Resurfacing four existing games courts
- The entire budget of the Committee for Sustainability or the Jersey Farm Woodland Park Committee

It may, for example, be preferred to issue only two editions annually (Spring – Summer and Autumn – Winter) which would reduce costs by 50% (£7,500) as well as resulting in a more

relevant, Council related publication.

12. Matters of note

- Quarterly bank reconciliations have been signed off as required. It is a requirement of the Financial Regulations that this is noted by the committee.
- IAC Audit and Consultancy Limited will carry out an interim internal audit of the Parish Council on 10th November 2025.
- A salary award of 3.2% for 2025/26 has been agreed between the unions and the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. This was paid with the August salary. The award is in line with that budgeted.
- The balance of this year's precept (50%) will be received on September 26th.

13. Items for inclusion on the next agenda

DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday October 27th 2025 at 7.30pm at Marshalswick Community Centre