



FINANCE COMMITTEE

Met at Marshalswick Community Centre on Wednesday 5th June 2024 at 7.30pm

PRESENT:

Councillors John Hale (Chair), James Lambert, Graham Leonard, Jenny Roberts and Julie Oakley

OFFICERS:

Simon Thwaites, Parish Clerk, Emma Hostler, Deputy Clerk

ABSENT:

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IN ATTENDANCE:

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753 To elect a Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Leonard, seconded by Councillor Roberts and unanimously;

Resolved

To elect Councillor Hale as Chair of the Finance Committee for the coming year.
(please note, he will also therefore be a member of the HR Committee by default).

754 To elect a Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hale, seconded by Councillor Leonard and unanimously;

Resolved

To elect Councillor Lambert as Vice Chair of the Finance Committee for the coming year.

755 Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Luke Sieger.

756 Disclosures of Interest and Dispensations

There was none.

757 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th February 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th February 2024, having been previously circulated, were reviewed. It was unanimously:

Resolved

That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair.

758 Terms of Reference.

Members reviewed the Terms of Reference for this committee. Two minor amendments were agreed before it was unanimously;

Resolved

To approve the Terms of Reference for the coming year.

759 2023/24 Budgetary Control (outturn)

Members noted the 2023/24 outturn, being a reduction on budgeted expenditure of £50,658. Material variations as below were reviewed and noted.

- Additional Centres Cleaning Expenditure £3,468
- Reduced Community Centres Heating Costs (£3,199)
- Reduced Tree/Hedge Maintenance (£5,491)
- Reduced Grounds Maintenance (£3,712)
- Cancelled Summer Event (£7,119)
- Additional Interest Received (£7,528)
- Additional Grant Income (£3,000)
- Increased Centres Income (£13,238)

760 Reserves

The position on earmarked and general reserves at the close of 2023/24 was reviewed and formally approved. It was noted that there are general reserves of £192,000 at 31/03/2024 but that there is a potential additional set-aside for a replacement vehicle and also for major works to community centres.

761 Internal audit 2023/24

Members considered the 2023/24 year-end audit report and accompanying papers completed by Internal Audit Services (IAS Ltd). These consisted of;

- The Internal Audit Analysis
- The Auditor's observations and the Clerk's responses
- The Auditor's covering letter

Also reviewed was the signed Internal Audit report (part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return) in which no items have been raised as requiring The Council's attention.

The Clerk pointed out item J1 in the schedule of observations in which three uncorrected errors between Sage and the Financial Statements were raised. It was accepted that these have yet to be corrected but that they were not sufficiently material in value to merit the committee not approving the report. The Clerk informed the meeting that the accountant was to return in late June to correct the mispostings. It was unanimously;

Resolved

To formally note the audit report and to recommend that Full Council does the same at its meeting on June 12th

762 2023/24 Final Accounts and Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

A set of Supporting Statements compiled by George Street Accountants, together with a copy of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31st March 2024 were reviewed. Also circulated was a table of variations of outturn between 2022/23 and 2023/24 as required by the external auditor. Following discussion it was unanimously;

Resolved

That members of the committee recommend to Full Council on June 12th that Council acknowledges responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of internal control, including the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, and to confirm that to the best of its knowledge and belief, with respect to the Council's Statement of Accounts for year ended 31st March 2024, the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement should be approved and that the Chair and the Parish Clerk (as RFO) should sign Section 1 of the AGAR. It was further;

Resolved

That members of the committee recommend to Full Council to confirm that to the best of its knowledge, the 2023/24 Accounting Statements contained within the Annual Return, plus the

explanation of variances represent the financial position of the Council for the year ended 31st March 2024 and that the Parish Council Chair should sign Section 2 of the AGAR.

763 The Exercise of Public Rights 2023/24

Members noted that the Exercise of Public Rights, during which members of the parish are able to inspect the annual supporting statements (and Annual Return) and raise any issues of concern with the external auditor will run from the 14th June 2024 to 26th July 2024 in accordance with regulations. Full Council will be asked to formally note and approve this at the June meeting.

764 Asset Register

It is an audit requirement for The Council to review any disposals or acquisitions from/to the asset register at year end and the Clerk circulated a copy of the register for this purpose. Full Council will be asked to approve the register on 12th June 2024.

Note: The Parish Office, in liaison with committees, will carry out an audit of all items over the coming year.

765 S.137 expenditure in 2024/25 – to note

The following was noted by Members. Section 137 expenditure is permitted when no other spending power exists (for example S.112 Local Government Act - Power to employ staff). This Parish Council will use S.137 when no other spending power exists because it no longer holds the General Power of Competence. The maximum expenditure allowed under S.137 is calculated by the number of electors multiplied by the Government's published figure for 2024/25, i.e. 9,483 x £10.81 = £102,511. The Clerk will monitor expenditure to ensure the maximum under section 137 of the Local Government Act is not exceeded. Expenditure of this type is likely to originate from grant applications for activities outside those normally associated with local councils.

766 New Financial Regulations

It was noted that an updated version of the NALC Model Financial Regulations has been produced and the Clerk will set time aside at the first opportunity to review and report on these to this committee.

767 The Future of Parish Council Community Centres

The Committee considered a report by Councillor Wells in respect of future development/adaptation of the two community centres. Central to the report was the proposal to set money aside over a period of years in order to carry out significant works.

It was accepted in principle that the centres will require significant works at some point in the future and that it would be prudent to build a fund annually. It was noted that this matter will appear on the Full Council agenda in June but that it may be necessary to wait until the 2025/26 budget process begins in the Autumn before proposing what amounts could be earmarked. Councillor Leonard meanwhile undertook to obtain from a colleague an estimated costing for a full structural survey to be carried out on Marshalswick Community Centre.

768 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.
- 50% of the parish precept was received on 19th April with the balance payable on 27th September 2024.
- County Court proceedings have been taken against a community centre hirer following non payment of fees. Judgement for the Plaintiff was requested on 10th May 2024.
- Exploratory works to the drains in the Parish Office car park are underway and it may be necessary to carry out excavations. Flooding is resulting in some clothes in the clothing banks becoming soiled, threatening the future of the project.
- The Clerk asked the Committee to note two items, one being that the office is in discussion with a resident regarding railings between St Leonard's Churchyard and the resident's garden and that the Diocese, County Association and the Council's insurers had been approached for their views on where responsibility lies. Secondly that the office was being

- challenged by a resident regarding the general scale of trees on an open space in the proximity of their garden.

769 Items for Inclusion on the Next Agenda

- There was none.

Date of Next Meeting – Monday 23rd September 2024 at 7.30pm, Marshalswick Community Centre.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Chair **Date**