

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 1ST DECEMBER 2021 IN ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH CENTRE**

PRESENT: Mr L Burrows (Chairman), Mr M Irwin (Committee), Mr M I O'Brien Baker (Committee), Mr M Williamson (ex officio).

There were no members of the public.

In attendance: Mrs S Robertson (Finance Officer)

1. Apologies: Mr D Boswell. Noted that Ms R Jones has resigned from the Council.

2. Interests

2.1 Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI): None declared.

2.2 Local non-pecuniary interests (LNPI): None declared.

3. Actions from last Meeting: Ongoing or on the agenda.

4. PUBLIC FORUM

4.1 To allow members of the public to address business on the agenda

There were no issues raised.

4.2 Any issues raised by the public

There were no issues raised.

5. Financial Matters

5.1 Cheques signed between meetings CP circulated via email

DECISION F2021/12a: To ratify payment of cheques signed between meetings (report filed in the office together with minutes). **Agreed.**

5.2 Any pending expenditure transactions

DECISION F2021/12b: To pay all pending expenditure transactions (report filed in the office together with minutes). **Agreed.**

The Chairman and the Finance Officer signed the pending expenditure transaction report.

5.3 December Admin Income & Expenditure Report CP circulated via email and filed in the office together with these minutes. Noted.

5.4 Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2021/22 financial year

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12a: That Mr David Hunt is appointed as internal auditor for financial year 2021/22 with the fee held as for 2020/21. **Agreed.**

5.5 Mandate change form/internet banking FOR1

The mandate changes are in progress.

The Finance Officer reported her conversation with Barclays and the experience of other Clerks regarding internet banking. Barclays require the Clerk or Finance Officer to become a signatory in order to administer internet banking. **The Finance Officer** to undertake further research.

5.6 Operation London Bridge – event cancellation insurance FOR2

The advice from our insurers was noted; stall holders at events should hold their own cancellation insurance where necessary. No further action.

5.7 Coronation events & costs

Noted that the Chairman may be required to attend events but no change to budgets to be made.

5.8 Grant requests from Headway & Citizens Advice Bureau FOR3

Noted that the grant budget for this year has been fully allocated. There remains £1,153.00 potentially unallocated in the 2022/23 grant budget, although the possibility of awarding small grants to assist suitable ecological or environmental projects had been raised for consideration by Martlesham Climate Action (MCA). A talk on water quality to MCA by a Woodbridge town councillor was reported by Mr Williamson. Kesgrave High School would be interested in funding field trips for A level students to study water quality and might be looking for a grant of £250. It was noted that, if agreed, this could possibly be funded out of the Council's earmarked reserve for Youth Projects. The committee therefore moved on to consider the two grant requests received.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12b: To award a grant of £400 each to Headway & Ipswich Citizens Advice Bureau in the financial year 2022/23, noting that this is being granted outside of the Council's normal timetable for grants and explaining the grant application process. Carried.

5.9 Wildflower Project Working Group – Request for funds for the purchase of signs FOR4 & CP

DECISION F2021/12c: That £220 is allocated from the Martlesham Climate Action budget for the purchase of 20 signs to go on Wildflower Project sites. Agreed.

It was noted that this should not prevent any MCA work going ahead this financial year & £220 can be reallocated if necessary. The Working Group can proceed and order the signs.

6. Finance Officer's Report

6.1 Repair Hub update FOR5

The report on the Repair Hub was noted and that donations of £30 had been received from the first one. The Finance Officer considered it necessary to keep a separate record of income & expenditure for the Hub.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12c: To set up an EMR (earmarked reserve) Repair Hub in the accounts. Agreed.

6.2 Cycle to Work Scheme FOR6

Comments from the Council Officer and Clerk were noted – no further action to be taken.

6.3 Bench & tree in memory of John Forbes Make a recommendation to full Council FOR7

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12d: To plant a native tree, with a plaque in memory of John Forbes, outside the Richards/Parish Room. Agreed.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12e: To install a bench in memory of John Forbes; location still to be decided. Agreed.

6.4 Use of Parish Room by local organisations FOR8 Noted.

7. Draft F&GPC Budget & Earmarked Reserves

7.1 Review draft Admin budget CP filed in the office together with the minutes

The F&GPC made no change to its recommended budget of **£123,790** for 2022/23, to be included in proposals to full Council. Agreed.

7.2 Draft F&GPC Earmarked reserves CP filed in the office together with the minutes

The Committee recommends a total of **£94,613** for the F&GPC Earmarked reserves 2022/23, which have been adjusted since the October meeting to reflect EMR CIL Reserve additional income & projected expenditure in 21/22. EMR Repair Hub to be included but showing £0 at present. Agreed.

8. Budget & Precept for 2022/23

8.1 Draft Recreation & Amenities budget, Earmarked Reserves & PWCG financial statement CPs filed in the office together with the minutes. Noted for information.

8.2 Draft Total Budget 2022/23 of £161,937 and Summary of Income to 25/11/21 CPs filed in the office together with the minutes. Noted.

8.3 Financial Summary & Account Balances CPs filed in the office together with the minutes. Noted for information.

8.4 Martlesham Parish Council Precept 2022/23: ESC Letter CP & FOR9

For consideration when setting the precept and earmarked reserves - noted.

8.5 Risk Assessment of General Reserves FOR10

DECISION F2021/12d: To accept the Risk Assessment of General Reserves with the following amendments (shown in red):

1. **Risks related to uncertain income**

- a) Potential capping of precepts by central government
- b) Low and possibly diminishing returns on investment income for the foreseeable future
- c) Unavailability of short-term loan finance to cover extraordinary or emergency expenditure
- d) Potential unavailability of grants

2. **Risks related to uncertain expenditure**

- a) New developments in the parish requiring provision of more facilities and services without a matching increase in income
- b) Possible need to plug gaps arising from decreasing central government, county and district councils' **and village organisations'** provision
- c) Increasing frequency of extreme weather events
- d) The small scale of parish council activities means that extraordinary or emergency expenditure in any one year may be unpredictably large in comparison with budgeted income
- e) The growth of the parish may result in the need for additional councillors
- f) Changes in legislation and potential increase in the need for professional advice and services
- g) **Changeover in staff in 2022**
- h) Low recruitment of new councillors leading to increase in 'paid for' work
- i) **Risk of becoming the sole trustee for the Martlesham Community Hall and Village Hall charities if the charities cannot continue to recruit and manage the buildings & bookings**

Agreed.

8.6 Earmarked Reserves: proposals for 2022/2023 CP filed in the office together with these minutes

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12f: That the Parish Council sets earmarked reserves for 2022/23 for the Finance and General Purposes Committee of **£94,613**, the Recreation and Amenities Committee of **£27,185** and the Development, Transport & Environment Committee of **£1000**, totalling **£122,798**, noting that this figure will be adjusted at the year-end according to how much money is left in 9003 EMR Locality Budget/Grants, 9010 EMR Bike Trails Project, 9019 EMR Portal Woodlands CG, 9020 EMR CIL Reserve, 9024 EMR S106 Reserve, where remaining balances are carried forward. **Agreed.**

8.7 Setting the budget & precept for 2022/23 CP filed in the office together with these minutes
The Finance Officer's report was considered.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12g: That the Parish Council sets a **budget** for 2022/23 of **£161,937**.

Agreed.

There was discussion about the 3 examples for the precept provided. The level of general reserves maintained by any of the examples would fall within government guidelines, however, there was general concern that to hold the precept at the current rate, considering the proposed budget, would cause general reserves to drop to the bottom end of that recommended by the Practitioners' Guide 2021. Yet it would be difficult to defend an increase in the precept of 11.68% if the Council wished to maintain a figure close to the current level of general reserves by precepting for the budget.

RECOMMENDATION F2021/12h: That the Parish Council sets a **precept** for 2022/23 of **£152,250** (Example 3 in the Finance Officer's report). **Carried.**

This means that the charge per household for an average Band D property would be **£66.29 per annum, an increase of approx. 5%** on the council tax bill, but only £3.15 a year extra.

It was noted that, if 'needs must' and general reserves are deemed too low in the future, the Council would have to tighten its belt and move some earmarked reserves back to general reserves.

9. Annual Review

9.1 August Workshop: an informal meeting which replaces a full Council meeting Consider topics for the August 2022 workshop

Further work on climate action is proposed – how climate action can be embedded in how the Council works through the decision-making process.

10. Any other pertinent issues

10.1 Consultation on the Draft East Suffolk Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule and Draft East Suffolk CIL Instalment Policy FOR11 & CPs filed in the office together with these minutes

The Committee agreed to make no comment.

10.2 Civility & Respect Project CP filed in the office together with these minutes

The launch of this Project supported by NALC & SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) was noted.

11. Any items for the next agenda

Nothing specific identified.

12. Martlesham Newsletters/Website/Facebook

12.1 Contributions/what has this meeting achieved?

Recommendations for the budget & precept, and for two grants.

The 200 trees planted by volunteers recently in a Martlesham small holding helping to make the Parish more wildlife friendly and climate resilient.

The following item was not taken in camera as no new information had been received about staff pay.

13. Staff Matters

13.1 Staff pay

Results of negotiations still awaited.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 9.26pm.

M. Williamson

Chairman, 12 January 2022