



WINTERTON-ON-SEA PARISH COUNCIL

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Chairman: Mark Bobby, Vice-Chairman: *Vacant*

Responsible Financial Officer (interim): Dawn Clegg

Proper Officer (interim) Marina Carr; Clerk to the Council: *Vacant*

Finance Committee meeting of Winterton-On-Sea Parish Council,

held at the Village Hall at 7pm on Wednesday 6th September 2023.

MINUTES

1. Present

1.1. Cllr. D. Clegg (Chair), Cllr. N. Coe, Cllr. L. McMahon, Cllr. J. Smithson, and Cllr. M. Carr taking the minutes. No members of the public. Meeting commenced at 19:08.

2. Apologies.

No apologies received, the committee was quorate.

3. Declarations of interest.

No councillor declared a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest on any item on the agenda.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

4.1. All present AGREED the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting 7th June 2023 which were signed by Cllr. Clegg.

4.2. Review and update the Action Log from that meeting.

4.2.1. Actions 07-06-2023/ F1, F3, F5, F7, F8, & F11 were completed, any detail below.

- F3- there cannot be two administrators on the bank mandate;
- F7- it is extremely hard for not-for-profit organisations to open a savings account as these are usually linked to current accounts. The committee did not feel it was likely that council funds would regularly significantly exceed the £80k maximum for the FSCS guarantee, so the action is closed.
- F8 – the only available card is a credit card, linked to the Parish Council's bank account at a cost of £72 per annum per card and the card MUST be in the name of an individual. The Finance Committee does not believe giving an individual a credit card is a safe use of public funds and has therefore discounted this action.
- F11 -Cllr. Coe reported that he had spoken to the car park who agreed to an extra bin to be sited by the fisherman's huts, and to provide access for collection vehicles, but did not want dog-poo-only bins. When known how these bins will be supplied, the parish council will ensure that siting them by Bush Road beach access is acceptable to the holiday homes surrounding.

4.2.2. Ongoing actions:

Actions 07-06-2023/ F6 & F10 have not been started and are ongoing;

- F2 – funds remain unallocated, to be discussed in the October full council meeting; litter-pickers report that there is less litter on the beach
- F4 – regular payments in this meeting and every Finance Committee meeting, but item 5.7 of the Financial Regulations is too onerous for a small parish council in these days of internet banking. It will be amended to undertake the same 'authorisation; process as for bank reconciliations (2.2. in Fin. Regs) and therefore the action is closed and a new action raised.

ACTION F1: Cllr. M. Carr

- F9 – Use of expense claim forms and purchase order forms is still under consideration and will be added when the Financial Regulations are updated in November.

ACTION: Cllr. M. Carr

- F12 – Who pays for bins and how to order them is still not clear but Cllr. Clegg is pursuing, action ongoing.

5. Accounting Processes from Financial Regulations

A copy of 2023-24 Budget Revision 1, ratified by full Council on 28/06/2023, was provided.

- 5.1. The RFO presented receipts and expenditure against budget, for year to end August 2023 with the following observations: no overspend against any item; the period without a clerk has offered significant reductions in expenditure; grass-cutting is the largest item of expenditure. Cllr. Coe commented that a good job was done by the additional grass cuts, people offered very positive comments and it was noticeable that a person living in the village did a better job than borough services.

Cllr. Smithson asked about 'Village Hall improvements' as earmarked reserves had been allocated but the current spend was small and piecemeal. A discussion about the lease agreement followed, including many past and present ideas for improvements, and it was agreed that a proposal of planned improvements and required maintenance should be prepared. This would allow all councillors to understand what it entailed, obtain agreement from the landlords (Norfolk County Council) and enable the full council to approve spending against an agreed plan.

ACTION F2: Cllr. J. Smithson

Cllr. Clegg advised the committee that the Church had received their funds for the churchyard maintenance. She further reminded all that the concurrent functions payment for grass-cutting would be significantly exceeded but council had allocated funds from its own budget as previously mentioned.

Discussion turned to allotments which is projected to exceed allocated funds in the budget as Cllr. McMahon and a group of volunteers he has assembled are making significant improvements to the management and upkeep of this area. This is noticeable in the increased income from allotments as there are no outstanding payments for the first time in a while. The committee thanked Cllr. McMahon for an excellent job. Cllr. McMahon told the meeting that review of the next year fees was underway. As a short history, although not stated anywhere in any agreement, a previous clerk, some years earlier, had agreed that notice of increases would be 12-months in advance and this practice prevailed. Therefore, notice will need to be given in December. Current practice is to separate access to water and rental payments, but the council has been made aware that those who have not paid for water are still gaining access to it. After discussion it was decided that water and plot rental will no longer be separated out but added to make one charge with access to all, but the meeting did not decide if the increase in December should be a change to a flat rate or a %increase. This will be discussed at the next full council meeting in September.

ACTION F3: Cllr. M. Carr

Different rates are paid by renters, due to different sizes of plots, with one plot left unmeasured, and therefore not accurately charged, to be amended.

ACTION F4: Cllr. L. McMahon

Finally, Cllr. Clegg told the committee that she had suggested to a resident asking for a discount on village hall fees, as they were a charity, to approach the council for a small donation in return for an explanation of what the voluntary group did and how it benefitted residents. Cllr. Carr explained that engagement with existing groups in the village, whether voluntary or public body, was an important part of the council's remit: to support and facilitate such groups for the benefit of all residents, and asking such groups to speak to the council where support was required.

Cllr. McMahon advised the committee that a volunteer group for Duffles Pond had recently been formed and they would appreciate some financial support. It was suggested that one of the group address the council as described above and Cllr. McMahon will extend the invitation.

ACTION F5: Cllr. L. McMahon

- 5.2. Bank Reconciliation to end August 2023 was reviewed by the committee and AGREED accurate. After the meeting, Cllr. Smithson examined bank statements and some invoices to verify the bank reconciliation (year-to-date) and signed to confirm his agreement, as per Financial Regulations 2.2.
- 5.3. The Committee AGREED that the Banking arrangements, mandate and signatories were acceptable in operation, with no changes required. (Fin. Regs 5.1)
- 5.4. Cllr. Clegg confirmed all invoices to date had been examined, verified and certified as per Financial Regulations 5.3. No invoices needed explanation but one village hall hirer was late paying – as this one often is.
- 5.5. The committee was provided with a list of regular payments (direct debits as there are no standing orders) to review; no changes since the last list. The requirement 2 members to sign this list for each month payments have been made as per 5.7 of the Financial Regulations was met (Cllr. Carr & Cllr. Clegg signing) but this will be changed in the Financial Regulations as per action F1 above.

6. Housekeeping

- 6.1. The meeting reviewed the Confidential list of supplier details and AGREED all appeared in order with no challenges or unusual payments.
- 6.2. The meeting reviewed and APPROVED the payments and receipts for August 2023 as there was no full council meeting in August 2023.
- 6.3. The Committee considered the y-t-d spend by budget cost centres/ codes report and believed the correct allocations were made. Earmarked reserved do not appear in this report and Cllr. Clegg and Cllr. Carr will investigate how to include these for complete reconciliation and cross-check.

ACTION F6: Cllr. D. Clegg & Cllr. M. Carr

It was noted that the cost code for 'Jubilee Weekend' should be amended to 'Craft Fair' which will be held on 2nd December 2023. It was further noted that the allocation of £100 to the Environment Group did not appear in the cost codes.

ACTION F7: Cllr. D. Clegg

7. Budget review, revision and virement (2023-24 budget)

- 7.1. No estimates for the forthcoming quarter were made available to the committee as recruitment for a clerk is underway and Cllr. Clegg declared she was confident the allocated budgets would cover all anticipated expenditure in that quarter. However, the 3 months since the last Finance meeting, with no overspends and without a clerk, the council had underspent £5, 737.50 of the costs of employing a clerk.

These are unspent funds that may be reallocated.

The Committee decided to suggest to the full council that a further £1,737.50 should be allocated to Allotments Maintenance to continue the overhaul of this facility and area. It is understood that the same level of funding will not be required next year as this boost should enable more clearance and repairs and improved ongoing maintenance.

Allocation discussions of the remaining £4000 included £2000 to a proposal from Cllr. Smithson to build a 'Winterton Workshop'; £1000 to traffic management and £1000 to business continuity although possibly a new cost code for Village Hall appearance upkeep, as per the lease agreement conditions.

The Winterton Workshop will require a proposal for the full council. The Finance Committee are concerned that nothing further has been heard on the yellow lines application and asked Cllr. Smithson to investigate – with the reminder that the Parish Partnership applications close in early December. The village hall lease agreement requires internal and external painting and refurbishment on a 3 and 5 yearly basis respectively and the council had not specifically budgeted for this.

- 7.2. The above recommendations will be taken to full council at the end of September.
- 7.3. Moving amounts between current and savings accounts is not required at present, but may be undertaken when the final precept payment is made. Cllr. Clegg will seek the agreement of full council if this is required after forecasting future expenditure.
- 7.4. Creating new budget provision for items currently paid for from reserves was discussed and two have been identified in this meeting. Beach signs (current and planned) will be allocated to the beach cleaning cost centre.
- 7.5. No revisions to the reserves budgetary planning are required at this stage or result from this meeting, but the costed proposal for Action F2 above may change that.

8. Review Section 4 of Financial Regulations, notably 4.1 and 4.5, (authority to spend) considering current and future circumstances. The Finance Committee agreed that changes may be made by updating the council's Financial Regulations in November.

- 8.1. Bank card was discussed at Item 4.2.1 under Action 07-06-2023/F8 above.
- 8.2. The Committee considered approval to spend for:
 - 8.2.1. Village Green boat planter repair: The committee authorised £40 for rope purchase and approved the project to be undertaken by Winterton InBloom.
 - 8.2.2. Councillor attendance at Norfolk ALC Conference: The Committee agreed that any councillor wishing to attend would be funded from the existing training budget.
 - 8.2.3. Village hall maintenance actions; the door has been repaired but requires painting, still under discussion. A quote to clean windows and gutters has been accepted and authorised outside of this meeting by majority (electronic) approval from councillors. Cllr. Clegg asked the committee whether quotes could be obtained for painting the interior and exterior of the village hall (as discussed under Section 7.1 above) and was granted permission (full council to approve both new budget allocation and actions to be taken).
 - 8.2.4. Foot showers / public toilets: the Committee felt that this was not our jurisdiction as Great Yarmouth Borough Council manage and maintain facilities there. However, as no-one addresses the amount of sand dispersed across Beach Road (which obscures yellow lines) it may be a parish council problem to address. This will be raised at the next full Council meeting.
 - 8.2.5. Website hosting and plans: Cllr. Carr reported that Cllr. Henwood has agreed to take on content management of the parish council website and a new host provider is required as the current provider is to start charging from 4th October 2023 via purchase of packages the cheapest of which is £9.99 + VAT per month.

She has asked Cllr. Henwood to investigate alternative provision but Norfolk ALC have indicated that they would provide hosting at £70 per annum. This would not include the costs (and disruption) of transferring the existing provision to a new platform. Cllr. Carr to ask Cllr. Henwood (currently away) for progress and Cllr Clegg to include a new budget line (cost code) for website provision.

ACTION F8: Cllr. M. Carr & Cllr. D. Clegg

9. 2024-25 Budget & Precept

9.1. To begin the budget process for 2024-25 (to be submitted in January 2024) the Finance Committee was to consider the annual income and expenditure (without reserves and concurrent functions) to establish priorities and potential uplifts in charges. Cllr. Smithson agreed that commencing the budget process early and across all councillors was a preferable method but felt that the council required an agreed and adopted 'mission statement' to form the framework of this process. The pillars around which the budget is built remain unchanged, being:

- Administration and Statutory obligations;
- Events;
- Recreation Ground (incl. changing rooms, excluding pavilion);
- Village Hall;
- Allotments;
- Village (including green spaces, traffic management, tourism, village maintenance outside of GYBC and NCC)

However, a mission statement would inform spending, budget allocation and activity by providing priorities and drivers for change or status quo.

It is not the role of the Finance Committee to provide a mission statement for the whole council and so this will be returned to the next full council meeting, but to facilitate the budget building process, Cllr. Clegg will produce a draft budget through combination of forecast and uplift, which could then be tested and refined against an agreed overarching mission statement.

ACTION F9: Cllr. D. Clegg

The Finance Committee noted that, although the Parish Council had deliberately chosen to use reserves rather than increase the precept in this financial year, that option would not be open for the next year and there would need to be a precept increase.

10. Any other Business.

Cllr. McMahon reminded the meeting that the newly-formed Duffles Pond volunteer Group would be grateful for donations of gardening and pond-maintenance tools.

Cllr. Smithson suggested that the council should make a practice of reviewing its projects, such as rewilding, recreation ground enhancements, etc. with residents' opinions collected.

11. The date of the next meeting

The Committee AGREED that the next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 6:30pm in the Village Hall.

The Committee AGREED to a private working meeting in November (date to be set between Councillors) to further the discussion on the 2024-25 budget setting, having established core principles in Item 8 above.

The meeting ended at 21:22.