



WINTERTON-ON-SEA PARISH COUNCIL

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Chairman: Cllr. Mark Bobby, Vice-Chairman: *vacant*

Clerk to the Council: *Vacant*

Proper Officer: Cllr. Marina Carr. Responsible Finance Officer Cllr. Dawn Clegg

DRAFT Minutes of the Winterton-on-Sea Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 6:30PM at the Village Hall

Councillors Present: Cllrs., Mark Bobby, Marina Carr, Dawn Clegg, Nigel Coe, Liam McMahon, and John Smithson.

Public Present: no members of the public

Minutes taken by: Cllr. M. Carr

1. Elect a Chair of Finance Committee

Cllr. N. Coe proposed Councillor Dawn Clegg to be the Chair of the Finance Committee, seconded by Cllr. M. Bobby. Councillors present unanimously voted in favour.

The CHAIR OF FINANCE FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR WILL BE CLLR. D. CLEGG.

2. Apologies.

No apologies.

3. Declarations of interest.

No Councillors declared an interest on any item on the agenda.

4. Finance Committee Terms Of Reference

Councillors considered the Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee from the previous year. Changes to include greater strategic management and regular reporting obligations WERE AGREED and the updated Terms of Reference will be recommended to the full Council for adoption.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

No minutes from the January 2023 meeting were made available to Council or the public by the previous clerk before leaving. No minutes could be found on the Council's laptop.

Throughout the meeting, many ideas, proposals and considerations were raised and discussed, many 'to be continued', most to be further investigated. These are captured at point 13 below.

6. Standard Accounting Processes (from Financial Regulations).

6.1. The RFO presented receipts and payments against budget, year-to-date. (Fin. Regs 4.8). The following points were made:

- The report (from the accounting package Scribe) is in alphabetical order of Cost Centre which makes it hard to read and to compare to the full budget (sometimes needed, to find what types of expenditure is included in the cost centre).
- Councillors examined expenditure to find any significant variances (noting that only 2 months of the current financial year have elapsed):
 - Cllr. Clegg explained that half of the precept and half of the concurrent functions income had been paid (second half due in September);
 - It was explained that the £750 expenditure under the Grants Cost Centre was a payment made from a grant received last year and is therefore not in the 2023/24 budget;
 - There was significant overspend on Maintenance and Utilities under the Playing Field Cost Centre (NB. **amend to 'Recreation Ground'**) due to unplanned repairs.

ACTION: Cllr. D. Clegg

- Concurrent functions were examined to ensure expenditure is on track – Beach Cleaning attracted a great deal of discussion and will be raised at the next full council meeting for allocations;

ACTION: Cllr. M. Carr

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6.2 Verify bank reconciliations year-to-date (Fin. Regs 2.2).

Cllr. J Smithson signed the bank reconciliation for end May 2023, noting that the total payments made matched total spend, on the budget comparison report

6.3 Review Banking arrangements, mandate and signatories (Fin. Regs 5.1)

Cllr. Clegg told the meeting that:

- the previous clerk had been removed from the banking mandate;
- the address for all Winterton PC bank accounts had been changed to Cllr. Clegg's address as using the address of the village hall was not permitted;
- after some delays, Cllr. L. McMahon had been added as a signatory, so there were currently 4 people authorised to release payments, being Cllr. Clegg, Cllr. Coe and Cllr. McMahon and ex Cllr. M Hartley who will now be removed;
- While acting as RFO (interim) Cllr. Clegg has become the administrator of the bank account(s) enabling her to set up the payments to be released by authorised signatories; Cllr. Clegg told the meeting she will not authorise payments while acting as administrator to maintain the Internal Control measures adopted by the Parish Council;
- As part of the business continuity plans to be established, Cllr. Clegg will investigate whether it is possible to have 2 administrators.

ACTION: Cllr. D. Clegg

6.4 Confirm all invoices to date have been certified as per Financial Regulations 5.3.

Cllr. Clegg told the meeting that the Westcotec invoice for repairs to the SAM sign has not been paid yet, as there is a concern that the repair was not working. Payment has been authorised, but not released. However, a further check is required on a battery that may indicate that the current batteries are to blame (Authorisation for purchase for a further battery was granted in the May full Council meeting)

ACTION: Cllr. L. McMahon

There have been refunds from both Octopus and Eon (supply electricity to the village hall and recreation ground pavilion respectively) as considerable credit had built up. Cllr. Clegg explained that these will be negative value invoices on Scribe (the accounting package).

6.5 Regular payments as per Financial Regulations 5.6 & 5.7

Cllr. Carr had recently uncovered paperwork and process established by a previous clerk to cover regular payments, direct debits and supplier detail and suggested to the Finance Committee that these should be examined and used if suitable. Therefore, this item was deferred until the next meeting of this committee – also covers item 7.1 below.

ACTION: Cllr. M. Carr

Cllr. Clegg is reviewing all regular payments and suppliers for terms & conditions and charges. There appears to be considerable opportunity with the mobile phone. Further it was suggested that the use of SIM-only accounts may enable call divert to be used, which is not a feature the Parish Council have previously made use of but could be very useful.

ACTION: Cllr. D. Clegg

7. **Housekeeping**

7.1 Variable direct debits, standing orders and supplier details

See 6.5 above, **Action Cllr. Carr**

7.2 List of accounts requiring passwords, PINs and/or other digital access mechanisms.

It was agreed that the list would be set up by Cllr. Carr and stored in an agreed safe place using a combination lock where all councillors would be supplied the combination number, which should be changed whenever a councillor leaves the council. Add this to Internal Control Statement and require a new clerk to follow the process.

ACTION: Cllr. M. Carr

8. Budget review, revision and virement

8.1& 8.2 Budget Revision 1 (See 4.2 of Financial Regs.)

Ideally, budget changes should be self-balancing.

Following discussion, the following recommendations to full Council were AGREED:

- Remove 2 months' clerk's salary & allowances from budgeted allocation = £3827
- Increase Allotments maintenance to £1000 (£500 increase)
- Increase Office Equipment to £1527 (£1327 increase)
- Increase Recreation Ground Maintenance to £1500 (£1000)
- Increase traffic management reserves to £10,000 (£1000 increase for SAM sign)

It must be remembered when decreasing staff costs in this unusual situation, that there will be a distortion in end-of-year costs when calculating the budget for the following year.

Additionally, the Finance Committee deliberately chose to reduce amounts by full months saved in retrospect: forecast reductions (such as, potentially, mobile phone costs) are not considered, just noted for the next meeting.

The office equipment budget, originally intended for repairs/maintenance, will be supplemented by the earmarked reserve of £800 for replacement costs. The committee will recommend that £1500 is allocated to purchase a new laptop, hopefully with some saving on that to allow for mouse, carry case, storage cards, etc. The current clerk's laptop is about to expire as the battery no longer charges. Software licence costs are separately accounted for.

8.3 Current/Savings Account balances

It was AGREED by this committee that Cllr Clegg should transfer funds from the current to the savings account as holding a large amount in the current account is inefficient. The current account balance is high as no funds were transferred last year and 50% of the precept and concurrent functions' payment has just been paid.

Further, as the FSCS maximum protected holding in any bank account is £85,000, Cllr. Clegg was asked to investigate opening a savings account with a different bank if this is possible: however, it is not urgent as it is expected that the balance will reduce soon enough!

ACTION: Cllr. D. Clegg

8.4 Several new budget lines were discussed, but eventually the item was deferred, awaiting full council decision for the proposals listed at item 13 below.

8.5 The earmarked reserves were examined and discussed. The Committee will propose to full council that £5000 is subtracted from the business continuity reserve, to be allocated to a recreation ground improvements project – see item 13 below.

The £9,000 currently earmarked for 'Changing Room Project' is insufficient. It had been planned to increase this amount by £5,000 per year but the 2022-23 financial year could only add £4,000 and it remains uncertain how much could be added this year, to be reviewed.

9. Section 4 of Financial Regulations, notably 4.1 and 4.5, (Authority to spend).

This was considered but deferred until firmer proposals are available. Currently, without a clerk, the council continues by ensuring a full council meeting approves proposed and actual expenditure. However, while a clerk needs to be aware of all expenditure, authority to spend does need to be delegated for urgent situations.

It is hoped that by including all councillors in financial matters, a greater appreciation of requisite recording and audit trails will ensue.

9.1 Bank debit card – considering item 6.18 of Financial Regulations.

Holding a bank card with which to make payments would be extremely useful, especially as the number of online payments increases with licensing and purchases. However, the current Financial Regulation limiting this to a clerk is an issue when a clerk is not available (sickness, leave, out of hours) as has proved the case in the past. Cllr. Clegg will investigate what Unity Bank offers and Cllr. Carr will look at procedure to manage a debit card.

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

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9.2 Councillor expenses claim form

Cllr. Carr suggested that a form, which included relevant budget codes and pre-approval to spend, to claim expenditure would assist councillors managing projects or events, while providing a quality accounting and audit record. This was considered a good idea based on processes that councillors would have encountered in their working life and should be drawn up with defined process for full council and the RFO to agree.

The idea was expanded to suggest a contingency fund pro forma claim form which would require 2 signatures to authorise against a pre-allocated contingency fund. This is linked to the various ideas and projects discussed during the meeting, and will be investigated further.

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

9.3 Consider allocation to spend for new council laptop and village hall door repair.

The Finance Committee AUTHORISED expenditure of (up to):

- £1,500 for a laptop and accessories (from the enhanced office equipment budget)
- £400 for repairs to the village hall door and frame.

10. VAT

The interim RFO/Clerk were instructed to undertake a VAT return as soon as possible, as this is public money that should be recovered.

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

11. Any other Business.

No other business raised.

12. The date of the next meeting

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

13. Additional Discussions and proposals

- (1) Grass-cutting: additional Reserves were allocated for grass-cutting and although different areas were discussed, some not previously under parish council management, along with additional cuts, it is believed that the budget (with reserves earmarked for grass-cutting) and that the current 'permission to commission' additional cuts is working well.
- (2) Grass-cutting did raise the suggestion that creating a wildflower garden in part of the children's playground should be considered: ball games are not permitted, additional play equipment is unlikely to be purchased and there are some sapling trees planted earlier this year to protect. Therefore, some robust flowering and longer grass in part of the area may provide an additional play area. This will be suggested at the next full Council meeting.
- (3) Additional outdoor bins were discussed, especially in areas near the beach where dog mess is becoming a real problem. Dedicated dog poo bins are no longer supplied, but additional rubbish bins may be purchased provided they are in a location suitable for Great Yarmouth waste management to collect. This is always the issue with additional bins: where to site them and who empties them. It means bins cannot be sited on the dunes for example, even if Natural England were to agree.

ACTION: Cllr. N. Coe to discuss location of extra bins with beach car park.

ACTION: Cllr. D. Clegg to investigate adding extra bins to existing routes in Winterton.

If possibilities arise, it is recommended that the Parish Council allocate funds for bins.

- (4) Following considerable discussion at the Annual Parish Meeting it is recognised that the village needs to make greater use of the recreation ground as a facility for all. A proposal will be brought to full council for small enhancements on a 'start small and work out' principle and in anticipation of approval for that, the Finance Committee identified £5000 for a project to commence (see item 8.5 above).

The meeting finished at 21: 05.