



SANDGATE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on
Monday on 10th June 2024 at 6.30 pm**

Present: Chairman: Simon Horton
Councillors: Hazel Barrett, Tim Prater, Gary Fuller and Michael Fitch
Clerk: Gaye Thomas

These Minutes will only be deemed to be a correct record of the meeting when approved and signed at the next meeting.

- 1. Election of the Chairman:**
Councillor Simon Horton was nominated for the position of Chairman.
Proposed by Councillor Hazel Barrett
Seconded by Councillor Michael Fitch
Agreed by all.
- 2. Apologies for absence- there was none.**
- 3. Declarations of Interest; none declared.**
- 4. Minutes:** The minutes of the previous Finance Committee meeting on **15th April**, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman
Proposed by: Councillor Michael Fitch
Seconded by: Councillor Gary Fuller
Approved by all present
- 5. Monthly and quarterly finance information:**
It was noted that financial information for two months had been circulated, the most recent and the previous. It was agreed that if the circumstances of a meeting occurring after two months the financial information would be in future consolidated.
It was noted that the budget information was now being improved for greater clarity; a section dedicated to spends on all aspects of CCTV and enhanced information regarding ground maintenance charges had been included.
- 6. PWLB**
It was noted that there was a requirement to achieve a 4.41% interest accrual to service the PWLB loan and currently this was being achieved with 4.44% interest on all representative bonds and investments.
The Metro Bank investment would come up for renewal on 29th August and at present achieved 4.01%. The RFO was investigating a Unity Bank Product which was offering a 5% fixed rate over 2 years. It was noted that both FTC and HTC had investments with Unity bank, which also offered a day-to-day banking service with a two-signature system. Other options would be discussed at the next meeting.

Chairman's initials and date

It was noted that there had been significant difficulties in the past obtaining accounts for parish councils, and it was agreed that keeping the Metro Bank account alive with limited funds might be a sensible idea.

7. AGAR 2022/2023

It was noted that after a disappointing finding in AGAR 2022/23, this year the balances had undergone extensive enhanced scrutiny by the RFO and Chairman of Finance, and that this would be replicated prior to the final submission to the external auditor.

It was noted that last year the parish had over £200k income, (due to additional grants) and this resulted in additional information being required by Mazars, the external auditors. This was not the case this year, but there was a possibility that this might occur as a random 5% of councils are required to provide further financial information.

It was noted that the Internal Auditor's initial report was circulated prior to the meeting and that he was satisfied that there were no obvious issues. This report is incorporated into the larger AGAR document (page 3). It was noted that it was proposed that the Finance Committee should recommend the AGAR documents for approval by Full Council. These documents would then be submitted to Mazar's for the external audit to be undertaken.

Proposed by Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded by Councillor Michael Fitch

Agreed by all.

It was noted that as part of the internal auditor's feedback that an observation was made about the perceived lack of transparency regarding salary increases. Whilst these views were discussed it was felt that the parish would continue its current process of reporting limited personal information regarding salary levels unless a formal legal instruction was given. It was noted that within the monthly published scribe information, individual salary payments are shown, and it was felt that this was sufficient. This matter would be kept under review.

It was noted that a proposal was made to note the report.

Proposed by Councillor Prater

Seconded by Councillor Gary Fuller

Agreed by all.

8. Clerk's PC

It was noted that a specification for a new PC for the Parish Clerk had been circulated. It was proposed that up to £500.00 should be made available for a new machine and Councillor Gary Fuller would have delegated authority to nominate the PC.

Proposed by Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded by Councillor Gary Fuller

Agreed by all.

9. Correspondence

It was noted that a communication had been received from FHDC regarding CIL payments and the RFO would be investigating and will revert.

10. Information

- It was noted that discussion with UK Power Networks were continuing regarding the use of their area of the Boat House roof for solar panels. It was hoped that the parish would receive an email this week with a possible way forward. It was noted that the parish had received an initial refusal from UK Power Networks, following executive involvement between Councillor Simon Horton and Libby Stopard, a more practical and helpful approach was now being considered.

- CCTV- it was noted that the parish contractor was undertaking improvements to the CCTV and that issues between the speed of uploading images onto the iPad and RFO's PC were being investigated. It was noted that the Unmeasured CCTV power suppliers had now been changed to a new company and the RFO was pursuing a refund for the excess costs which had resulted from a delay in the new contract commencing.
- Planned Maintenance- it was noted that a schedule for the maintenance of the parish assets was being created. It was intended to be more proactive rather than reactive with maintenance which would assist in more specific budgeting in the future. A quotation had been received for the replacement of sleepers on the Village Green which would be discussed, and the Village Sign had now benefited from a significant clean.
- Budget adjustments- Councillor Simon Horton reported that he is working on a list of budget adjustments, this will be brought back for discussion. It was noted that following completion of the tendering process for the grounds maintenance contract that a surplus of £1250.00 had been identified and a smaller sum was available on the CCTV maintenance contract. It was noted that there were areas within the budget where current budget allowances were proving insufficient and adjustments to these budgets may need to be considered.
- A small trader had approach FHDC to acquire a street trading licence and received consent to trade from the road adjacent to the Sir John Moore Memorial. A discussion has been held with the vendor and a safer alternative location has been agreed to the east of the solarium on the pavement and parish land. He would be trading at this site from the end of June until the end of August. The area had been a parish asset for four years and this could be seen as a trial for the parish to gauge demand for this location. The income that would be generated from this short-term arrangement is intended to be used to assist with the maintenance of the benches in the Solarium and possibly the parish planters in that area.
- It was noted that Councillor Tim Prater had spoken with the Folkestone Town Sprucer regarding painting the bollards at the War Memorial and at the Sir John Moore Memorial, for a donation. It was noted that this may lead to other projects in the future, funding for the initial works to come from the Environmental Improvements budget.
- It was noted that costs of CCTV are significant each year and it was hoped that the ongoing improvements would reduce future outlay.

11. Date of next meeting: 15th July 2024

Meeting finished at 7.25pm.

Signed by Chairman of Finance Committee Dated

Chairman's initials and date