



SANDGATE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on
Monday on 15th March 2024 at 6.30 pm**

Present: Chairman: Simon Horton

Councillors: Tim Prater, Gary Fuller and Michael Fitch

Deputy Clerk/RFO: Chani Sanger

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

- 1. Apologies for absence:** None
- 2. Declarations of Interest:** Councillor Simon Horton declared non-pecuniary interests for items nine and twelve.
- 3. Minutes:** The minutes of the previous Finance Committee meeting on **18th March 2024**, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Gary Fuller
Approved by all present

4. Monthly and quarterly finance information:

The monthly financial information was circulated prior to the meeting along with a year end summary penned by Councillor Simon Horton. The summary explained the financial situation at the council, and it was noted that the £20,000 National Lottery grant and the £2,500 grant from the Roger DeHaan trust were not included in the financial information due to not having been received or not having cashed the cheques.

It was noted that there was a higher than planned expenditure on the Granville Parade toilets but that the actual running costs are around the same as the income generated by them. It was noted that we could be expecting a large water bill. It was also noted that the replacement screen has already developed rust however this is largely expected due to the seafront location and that the screen has been in situ for a year.

Councillor Simon Horton noted that the interest rates on average for the council's bonds needed to be 4.41% for the loan interest to be equal to the bond interest and that anything above the 4.41% would mean we are minimising the loan attrition. It was noted that the PWLB commentary was helpful.

It was noted that we had unspent budget items in the 2023/2024 financial year but that any virement must be approved by the full council. It was noted that we do not currently have a reserves policy. NALC has issued guidelines, and we should have between 3- and 12-months' expenditure in reserves to best safeguard the council. As Sandgate is a mid-size parish council, we should be aiming for somewhere in the middle of the NALC guidelines but this needs to be considered and a policy approved.

Chairman's initials and date

It was noted that we have about £11,000 and that any viring would impact that £11,000. We should act with caution if we have less than three months' reserves and there are still some big costs to consider. CCTV will be a couple of thousand pounds and there are substantial tree works that need to be completed. We need to understand that the budget is extremely tight and this forms part of the reason that the precept was raised.

It was noted that there are some committed expenses that need to be considered but that it would be wise to explore external funding opportunities to assist with any potential shortfall.

The public toilets, cycle hoops on the village green and hedgehog holes are all committed spends and will come out of the Environment Committee's budget. The deep clean of the toilet block may cost more than initially expected due to vandalism occurring between a quote being requested and a quote being received.

It was noted that the three costs mentioned above had already been approved to come from the Environment Committee budget and that the CCTV costs would need to be approved by the full council.

5. PWLB

The account with Redwood Bank had been opened and the funds will be cleared in the account by next week. There is a slight delay getting the funds sent across due to the limits on the HSBC account of a maximum £10,000 a day transfer limit.

6. AGAR 2022/2023

It was noted that the Internal Auditor had completed his initial visit and had noted that while the Finance Committee had thoroughly considered the External Auditor's report following the 2022/2023 AGAR, the consideration procedurally must be done by the full council. This has been added to the agenda for consideration by full council.

7. AGAR 2023/2024

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. The official Internal Audit is due to take place on May 8th.

8. CCTV

An email regarding the CCTV had been circulated prior to the meeting. It is well known that we have been experiencing connectivity issues. Trial equipment was installed to see whether it would improve the functionality. It was noted that the trial equipment has improved connectivity significantly.

It was noted that some of the cameras suffer from weather damage due to the seafront location and this was unavoidable.

It was noted that quotes had been received in relation to the CCTV. It was noted that the CCTV is a valuable asset and has assisted in recent police requests.

To recommend to full council to vire the funds for the CCTV and to accept the maintenance quote.

Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded by: Councillor Gary Fuller

Approved by all present

9. Blinds

It was noted that a quote for draw down roller blinds had been received from Alpha Blinds. This is the final stage of the library refurbishments, and the cost of the blinds could be met using the remainder of the Covid grant with a small top up from the minor refurbishments budget.

Chairman's initials and date

Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Simon Horton
Approved by all present

10. Bin screen adjacent to Riviera Court

It was noted that the bin screen has been in situ for just over two years and that in that time some algae has formed at the base. This will need to be jet-washed off and may need to be pressure washed on an annual basis in the future. A quote has been received in relation to the jet-washing for £300.

Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Gary Fuller
Approved by all present

11. Clerk's mobile phone

It was noted that Clerk's mobile phone, which is used personally and for council related business, was experiencing issues due to the lack of storage space available. The council were considering the use of a separate phone and that would have been at a cost of around £30-40 per month on a contract. Having explored the options it was noted that it would be worth purchasing an SD card at a cost of around £40 to ascertain whether that would improve the issues without a large ongoing expense.

Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Gary Fuller
Approved by all present

12. Public toilets

It was noted that a quote for a deep clean of the toilets had been received but that a new quote had been requested due to the antisocial behaviour that had occurred between requesting the quote and receiving it. There should be consideration made that the subsequent quote may be slightly higher than the initial one received. It was also noted that if the deep clean makes a considerable difference, then the council should include a provision for an annual deep clean in the budget going forward. It was proposed to approve the quote up to £500 plus VAT.

Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Gary Fuller
Approved by all present

13. Correspondence

None at this time

14. Information

It was noted that the RFO had passed their initial training/probation to the satisfaction of the council and has assumed the full legal responsibility and title of 'Responsible Financial Officer'.

It was noted that due to councillor and staff changes, the process of changing signatories has come up. It was suggested that naturally as bonds mature and new accounts open, those accounts would have up-to-date information, however ongoing accounts (i.e HSBC) would need to be updated manually.

The RFO confirmed that the precept had been received on 09.04.24.

It was noted that at full council next week there would be an item held in camera due to the confidential nature of the item. The item relates to staff pay however the committee wanted to note that an informal discussion had taken place and that any proposed changes were in line with the budget.

Chairman's initials and date

It was noted that the KALC subscription renewal is also being considered at full council next week and that the proposed cost is within budget.

10. Date of next meeting: 13th May 2024

Meeting finished at 7.40pm.

Signed by Chairman of Finance Committee Dated

Chairman’s initials and date