



SANDGATE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on
Monday on 20th January 2025 at 6.30pm**

Present: Chairman: Simon Horton
Councillors: Michael Fitch, Hazel Barret, Guy Valentine-Neale, Gary Fuller & Tim Prater
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:** None
- 3. Minutes:** The minutes of the previous Finance Committee meeting on **9th December 2024**, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Michael Fitch
Approved by all present

4. Monthly finance information: The finance information had been previously circulated.

5. Granville Parade toilets:
It noted that there have been ongoing issues with one the Granville Parade toilet cubicles washer dryer unit. The manufacturer of the unit had stopped producing the same unit currently used in all four of the toilet cubicles. Similarly sized units have been identified and the cost for the replacement unit alone amounts to around £5000. It has not been possible to locate another unit that is exactly the same size.

It was noted that this cost would need to be taken to and approved by main council however the proposal could be to use the building reserve and repay the funds over the next two years. It is important to note that the cost does not include installation, this is expected to be an additional £700 approximately.

The ideal is for the toilet to be repaired, by the usual contractor, by the end of the financial year and functional by the start of the peak season.

Motion: To take the above to main council
Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater
Seconded by: Councillor Guy Valentine-Neale
Approved by all present

6. 2025/2026 budget:

Chairman's initials and date

Councillors discussed the PWLB investment monies and the possible impact they may have on the budget. Current interest rates are creating a potential issue however it should be manageable for now. We have been able to locate three accounts offering 4.44% or higher which is the figure required to service the PWLB loan (both capital and interest). The interest rates found are 4.5%, 4.55% and 4.6%.

It was noted that certain assumptions can be made about future costs, for example National Insurance and National Minimum Wage increases. In addition, the '20 is plenty' project, rewilding Battery Point and purchase of new Speedwatch equipment amounts to just over 7% of the proposed annual precept.

We are currently waiting for confirmation on whether the KCC elections will be postponed which presents potential nominal loss of £350 to the council as the library is used as a polling station.

There was discussion regarding a document previously circulated regarding rewilding an area at Battery Point. The document included the following summary: Assuming the area is 500m² the total cost for undertaking the works will be £2,810.00 + VAT (£5.62m² + VAT). This is to prepare the ground, supply and broadcast the seed. To cover the proposed cost, it will be necessary for us to undertake the virement of some unspent budget codes from the current financial year and also utilise a specific £1,000.00 wildflower budget included in our proposed 2025/26 budget.

Councillors enquired whether there was a cheaper way of rewilding Battery Point however it was confirmed that Battery Point is a larger area than it appears to be and that while there may be temptation to cut costs or take a cheaper option, this is a high visual impact area and should be done correctly. In addition, if Battery Point looks more appealing as a result of the rewilding, it is possible that the hanging baskets, which also require costly watering during the summer months may not be required in the future, potentially saving the parish around £1000 a year. Councillors noted that wildflowers are a long-term project which should improve the appearance of the area.

Councillors noted that the version of the budget that was being considered was version 5 with the first draft having been produced in November. The budget is prudently drawn and includes provisions for projects including '20 is plenty' Speedwatch equipment and the rewilding.

Sandgate has been fortunate to see an increase in the tax base primarily from the Shorncliffe development which means that the precept can be raised a small amount. The proposed precept increase would correspond to 2.78% on the 24/25 precept.

Motion: To recommend the draft budget for approval to main council + current year budget virements up to £1,810.00 towards the rewilding project

Proposed by: Councillor Simon Horton

Seconded by: Councillor Tim Prater

Approved by all present

7. PWLB

It was noted that councillors are not at the stage where formal decisions can be made. When considering new accounts, if they are covered by the FSCS and are less than two years they are fine to be opened so we can make the most of high interest rates and not miss opportunities due to delays. The RFO noted that instructions were needed for the Buckinghamshire account as it is due to mature shortly. It was noted that the monies should be returned to the HSBC account while we decide where to deposit the funds.

Motion: To allow the RFO, in conjunction with the Chair of Finance, to open new savings accounts if they are FCSC protected and less than two years in duration (if fixed term).

Proposed by: Councillor Tim Prater

Seconded by: Councillor Guy Valentine-Neale

Approved by all present

8. Correspondence

None at this time

9. Information

It was noted that FHDC had sent out a spreadsheet to be used when calculating the precept. Feedback on the spreadsheet would be welcomed.

10. Date of next meeting: 17th February 2025

Meeting finished at 7:03pm.

Signed by Chairman of Finance Committee Dated