

To all members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee

Notice is hereby given and you are summoned to attend a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Wednesday 11th December 2024 at School Green Centre, at 19.30



Bruce Winton, Clerk
6th December 2024

Members: I Clarke, A Grimes, L James (Ch), N Masseron, Z Matic, I Montgomery & D Peer

Agenda

1. Public Questions

- 1.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** public questions.

2. Apologies and declarations of members' interests

- 2.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** approval of apologies for absence.
2.2 To **RECEIVE** members' declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 16th October 2024

- 3.1 To **APPROVE** the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 16th October 2024 as a correct record of the meeting*
3.2 To **CONSIDER** matters arising from the meeting on 16th October 2024.

4. Corporate Governance Working Party

- 4.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update from the Clerk.

5. Risk Register

- 5.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update from the Clerk on the Shinfield Parish Council Risk Register

6. Financial reports

- 6.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** a report on the bank reconciliation at 30th November 2024**
6.2 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** an update on the current year budget (2024/2025)**

7. Financial Reserves and CIL

- 7.1 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** an update on CIL**
- 7.2 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** an update on Reserves**
- 7.3 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update on the Major Repairs Reserve.
- 7.4 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update on historic S106 funds from the parish

8. Budget Planning

- 8.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** the provisional budgets for 2025/26**
- 8.2 To **RECEIVE** and **NOTE** the notice of Band D Equivalent Properties for 2025/2026 (if available from Wokingham Borough Council)**
- 8.3 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** the financial projections for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29**

9. Land Issues

- 9.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update on the following items
 - 9.1.1 Land Registrations including list of properties
 - 9.1.2 Lease of Ryeish playing fields and Deardon Way Fields
 - 9.1.3 Provision of community space in the north of the parish
 - 9.1.4 Ryeish Green Pavilion
 - 9.1.5 Parish Hall Lease
 - 9.1.6 Assets of Community Value
 - 9.1.7 Millworth Lane
- 9.2 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** areas of land potentially suitable for acquisition.

10. Live Project Teams

- 10.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a summary of the current position of live project teams/working parties**

11. Microgeneration

- 11.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a verbal update from the Clerk regarding microgeneration

12. Proposed Revision to Meetings Schedule

- 12.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** a proposal to reduce the overall number of formal council meetings to take effect from 1st May 2025*

13. Joint Meeting with University of Reading

- 13.1 To **RECEIVE** and **CONSIDER** matters arising following the meeting held with the University of Reading on Wednesday 4th December 2024

14. Dates of future Meetings

- 14.1 To **NOTE** the date of the next meeting which is 19th February 2025.

* Paper attached/** Paper to follow

Minutes of a meeting of
Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held on Wednesday 16th October 2024
At School Green Centre commencing at 19.30

Present: Cllrs Clarke, Grimes, James (Chair), Masseron, Matic, Montgomery & Peer

Attending: B Winton (Clerk), J Mason (Finance Manager), Sally Herring (Deputy Clerk)

24/FGP/56 Public Questions

56.1 There were no public questions.

24/FGP/57 Apologies and declarations of Members' Interest

57.1 All members were present for this meeting.

57.2 There were no declarations of members' interests.

24/FGP/58 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

58.1 The minutes of the committee meeting of 21st August 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by Cllr. James as Chairman of the Committee

Proposed: Cllr Clarke
Seconded: Cllr Masseron
Approved: Unanimous

58.2 Actions and Matters Arising

24/FGP/43.6 Clerk to follow up the letter to the DfE Regional Director sent on 28th July 2024.

The Clerk had been chasing for a response and had received the following response dated 11th October ". We understand the importance of your letter and apologise for the delay. We will aim to provide a response as soon as possible.

ACTION – Clerk to follow up the letter to the DfE Regional Director

- 24/FGP/48.1 Clerk to invite comments on the tabled draft terms of reference by mid-September 2024
- This had been done.
- 24/FGP/48.2 Clerk to update arrangements for Staffing Committee agenda and public attendance
- This had been done.
- 24/FGP/49.1 Clerk to provide an update on Risk Register Additional Actions at the October Committee meeting
- This was on the agenda at Item 5.1
- 24/FGP/51.3 Clerk and Finance Manager to include additional provision for playground Repairs & Renewals.
- This will be included as a specific item in the budget process for 2025/26 and beyond.
- 24/FGP/51.4 Finance Manager and Clerk to complete as much analysis of historic S106 agreements as possible by mid-September
- This was on the agenda at Item 7.5
- 24/FGP/52.2 Clerk to continue to chase WBC for progress on the reciprocal leases for Ryeish Green playing fields and Deardon Field
- This was on the agenda at Item 9.2
- 24/FGP/52.3 Clerk to develop proposals for additional work to establish the specific needs of residents in the North of the Parish
- This was on the agenda at Item 9.3
- 24/FGP/52.4 Clerk to establish the legal position regarding access rights to Ryeish Green Pavilion
- This was on the agenda at Item 9.4
- 24/FGP/52.5 Clerk to ensure the completion of the process to extinguish the Parish Hall lease
- This was on the agenda at Item 9.5
- 24/FGP/54.1 Clerk to identify potential microgeneration consultants
- This was on the agenda at Item 11.1

24/FGP/59**Corporate Governance**

- 59.1 Full Council approved the Terms of Reference at their meeting on 25th September 2024. Attention is now on reviewing the Standing Orders for the Council with one meeting held on 16th September and another three scheduled for 28th October, 11th November and 9th December with the intention to submit a draft proposal to the next F&GP meeting in December 2024 and achieving Full Council approval before the end of the Financial Year.

24/FGP/60**Risk Register**

- 60.1 The Clerk gave an update on the overall risk position for the council and advised that the additional actions element of the register had been updated although many of the outstanding actions would lie with the Facilities Manager who would be starting in early November.

- 60.2 Insurance renewal for 2024/25

The Chair and Clerk advised that the insurance cover had been reviewed taking into account the additional elements of the cinema in Ryeish Green room at School Green Centre and also looking ahead to High Copse pavilion coming under SPC control. This would be the final year of a three-year arrangement with the existing insurer. The insurance premium increase was driven however mostly by rising building costs.

24/FGP/61**Financial Reports**

- 61.1 The Chair of the Committee confirmed that the audit process in respect of 2023/24 had been successfully concluded.

- 61.2 Bank Reconciliations

The Chair of the Committee confirmed that he had reviewed the bank reconciliations to the end of September 2024 on 16th October 2024 and that all was in order. A copy of the reconciliation was presented to members.

It was agreed that due to the delays in starting work at Millworth Lane it was agreed to place £350,000 on 95-day notice (deposit) account to achieve a higher rate of interest.

Members **NOTED** the report.

- 61.3 The Clerk provided members with an update on room bookings as at 30 September 2024. School Green Centre had bookings £61,272 to end of September compared to £56,725 for the equivalent period in 2023/24. This included the period where rooms were unavailable during the installation of the cinema. For Spencers Wood Pavilion the bookings to 30 September 2024 were £25,084 (including the Pre-School rental) compared to £23,905 for the previous year. The Clerk advised that he felt both venues were likely to exceed their targeted incomes for the full year by a modest margin.

Members agreed to maintain a discount on the rates for Spencers Wood Pavilion until 31st March 2025 in light of experience which has seen a higher volume of booking more than compensating for the lower rate being charged. The room hire charges for the new financial year (April 2025) will reflect and continue this arrangement as a standard set of prices.

- 61.4 Current Year Budget (2024/2025)

The Chair and Finance Manager provided an update on current year financial performance.

Members **NOTED** the report.

24/FGP/62

Financial Reserves & CIL

- 62.1 CIL update

The changes from the previous report were that:

- Some expenditure had occurred on Millworth Lane
- The predicted income was reduced to reflect the uncertainty of refurbishment of the Dobbies site following the announced closure
- A request for CIL funding for High Copse was on the agenda for this meeting

Members **NOTED** the report.

62.2 Reserves

The Chair provided an update on reserves.

The Clerk advised members of the proposed Wokingham Borough Council Corporate Governance review of town and parish councils scheduled to take place in 2025.

SPC's own corporate governance review will include Transparency of council information which is likely to require changes to the website for which there is a reserve of £10k.

Members **NOTED** the report.

62.3 Major Repairs Reserve

The Chair reminded members of the proposals in the budget to increase the Major Repairs Reserve significantly over the period to 27/28. In 2023/24 the figure had been £30.0k rising to £37.0k for 2024/25 then to £45.0k, £65.0k and £75.0k in subsequent years.

62.4 Programme of Scheduled Major Repairs

The Chair of the Committee advised that one of the first significant tasks for the new Facilities Manager was to prepare a thorough programme of what major repairs will be required throughout the overall council estate. This may identify that additional contributions to the Major repairs Fund, above the current projected level of £75.0k per annum, are required.

ACTION – Facilities Manager to create a Long-Term Maintenance plan for the council estate

62.5 Historic S106 funds from the parish

The Finance Manager has continued to analyse the larger S106 agreements to show how they have been assigned to various categories of infrastructure. Of the £110.6m of S106 advised by Wokingham Borough Council the Finance Manager had identified allocations of £95.8m (86.6% of the total).

It was agreed that the Clerk would now write to WBC Finance Department to formally request assistance in fully understanding all the S106 funds raised from development within the parish and where this had physically been provided.

ACTION – Clerk to write to WBC Finance Department regarding s106 funding for the parish

24/FGP/63

Budget Meeting

- 63.1 The Chair discussed the preparations for the session on budget planning process being offered to all councillors on Thursday 17th October.

24/FGP/64

Land Issues

- 64.1 Land Registrations

Councillor Clarke provided an update on the overall position regarding land registrations and thanked Lynda Hope, Communications Officer for her assistance in this matter.

- 64.2 Ryeish Green playing fields and Deardon Field

The Clerk had chased WBC for a progress report on the reciprocal leases for Ryeish Green playing fields and Deardon Field.

ACTION – Clerk to continue to chase WBC for progress on the reciprocal leases for Ryeish Green playing fields and Deardon

- 64.3 Provision of Community Space in the North of the Parish

The Clerk was to arrange a meeting with Borough Councillors for neighbouring Reading Borough Council wards to see if there were any opportunities that could be jointly developed.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange a meeting with Reading Borough councillors

64.4 Future of Ryeish Green Pavilion

The Clerk reported that he was continuing to chase for an update on clarifying the legal access rights to the pavilion.

ACTION – Clerk to establish the legal position regarding access rights to Ryeish Green Pavilion

64.5 Parish Hall Lease

There had been some progress on this matter, but this also now required some legal input to resolve.

ACTION – Clerk to ensure the completion of the process to extinguish the Parish Hall lease

64.6 Acquisition of Land

There was discussion on a parcel of land currently unused (formerly part of Whitley Wood Lane) lying between Greenwich Road and the A327 Shinfield Road.

ACTION – Clerk to investigate ownership of the plot of land between Greenwich Road and the A327 Shinfield Road and report back to the next meeting

24/FGP/65

Live Project Teams

65.1 The Clerk provided an updated list of the live project teams.

Members **NOTED the report.**

24/FGP/66

Other Items

66.1 Microgeneration

The Clerk advised that the search for any viable consultancy support covering all fields of microgeneration had proved fruitless. It was suggested that the Clerk consult the Energy Institute and other relevant professional bodies. Cllr Matic would also seek advice from WBC.

There was also discussion on proceeding with some projects on a case-by-case basis e.g. to establish if a ground source heat pump was viable at Millworth Lane while the car park was being extended.,

ACTION – Clerk to contact relevant professional bodies to identify professional consultancy support for microgeneration within the council's estate

66.2 Initial Equipment Required for High Copse

The Clerk provided an initial list of equipment required for the kitting out of the offices, kitchen, store cupboard and community room at High Copse Pavilion. Members agreed to release up to £30,000 + VAT from CIL reserves for this purpose.

Proposed: Cllr Clarke
Seconded: Cllr Peer
Approved: Unanimous

ACTION – Clerk and Facilities Manager to arrange procurement of the required items

66.3 Defibrillators

The Chair displayed a map of existing defibrillator in the parish with general access to the public. Five additional sites were proposed to address gaps in coverage in the parish. Members agreed in principle to the proposed locations.

ACTION – Clerk and Facilities Manager to procure agreement for the proposed locations (where they were not under direct SPC control) and arrange installation

24/FGP/67

Date of Next Meeting

67.1 Next meeting was scheduled for 11th December 2024.

The meeting ended at 21.00

List of Actions

24/FGP/43.6	Clerk to follow up the letter to the DfE Regional Director	Clerk
24/FGP/62.4	Facilities Manager to create a Long-Term Maintenance plan for the council estate	Facilities Manager
24/FGP/62.5	Clerk to write to WBC Finance Department regarding s106 funding for the parish	Clerk
24/FGP/64.2	Clerk to continue to chase WBC for progress on the reciprocal leases for Ryeish Green playing fields and Deardon field	Clerk
24/FGP/64.3	Clerk to arrange meeting with Reading Borough councillors	Clerk
24/FGP/64.4	Clerk to establish the legal position regarding access rights to Ryeish Green Pavilion	Clerk
24/FGP/64.6	Clerk to investigate ownership of the plot of land between Greenwich Road and the A327 Shinfield Road and report back to the next meeting	Clerk
24/FGP/66.1	Clerk to contact relevant professional bodies to identify professional consultancy support for microgeneration within the council's estate	Clerk
24/FGP/66.2	Clerk and Facilities Manager to arrange procurement of the required items	Clerk
24/FGP/66.3	Clerk and Facilities Manager to procure agreement for the proposed locations (where they were not under direct SPC control) and arrange installation	Clerk

Proposal for a Slimmed Down Meeting Schedule

Introduction

The number of formal council meetings has risen significantly in recent years with the division of Recreation & Amenities into Facilities and Arts, Culture & Events. It is felt that the committee structure is correct but there is now scope for the reduction in the overall number of meetings.

Currently the schedule has a total of 66 formal meetings. In the year 2025-26, the schedule currently envisages 18 weeks where there are two such meetings in the same week.

Work involved in each Committee or Council meeting

Each meeting requires the production of a formal agenda and set of papers which must comply with a required minimum notice period. This can take approximately 4 hours for each meeting. In addition minutes require at least 2 hours to prepare.

Reasons for reducing the number of meetings

The proposals envisage each of Planning & Highways, Facilities and Arts, Culture and Events (ACE) reducing from monthly to bi-monthly.

This is felt viable as the vast majority of major developments are now well established, the council's estate will become relatively stable once High Copse is operational and the experience with ACE is that now the cinema is operational more time is required for event delivery rather than committee oversight.

Full Council

The proposal is to also go to one Full Council meeting every two months. The alternate months would be set aside for a "Members Update" meeting which will ensure that the momentum is maintained on actions from meetings by requiring the Clerk/Deputy Clerk to provide an update on all extant actions.

Reserved Dates

It is proposed however that a number of reserve dates are retained in members diaries in case they are required at short notice. 6 are scheduled in the alternate months (for Planning & Highways) and 6 for the alternate months for Full Council.

Proposed Implementation

It is proposed that, subject to approval by Full Council, the revised schedule is implemented from 1st May 2025

Net Savings

It is calculated that reducing to total number of formal meetings by 24 per annum would reduce would save a combined 4 weeks of staff time (6hrs x 24 meetings = 144hrs divided by 37hrs per week = 3.89 weeks).

Comparison with Other Councils

	W/ham Town	Earley Town	Woodley Town	Shinfield	Shinfield PROPOSED
Amenities	6				
Amenities & Leisure		6			
Leisure Services			5		
Facilities				12	6
Arts & Culture	6				
Arts, Culture & Events				12	6
Finance & Personnel	6				
Policy & Resources		4			
Strategy & Resources			6		
Finance & General Purposes				6	6
Planning & Transport	9				
Planning		12			
Planning & Community			12		
Planning & Highways				12	6
Civic	5				
Staffing				6	6
Children & Young Adults				6	6
Full Council	6	6	5	12	6
TOTAL	38	28	28	66	42

