

**Minutes of a meeting of**  
**Finance & General Purposes Committee**  
**Held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023**  
**At School Green Centre commencing at 19.30**

Present: I Clarke, A Grimes, L James (Chair), I Montgomery, D Peer, R Tatla

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

**23/FGP/57 Public Questions**

57.1 There were no public questions.

**23/FGP/58 Apologies and declarations of Members' Interest**

58.1 There were no apologies for this meeting.

58.2 There were no declarations of members' interests.

**23/FGP/59 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

59.1 The minutes of the committee meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by Cllr. James.

Proposed: Cllr Montgomery

Seconded: Cllr Peer

Approved: Unanimously

**23/FGP/60 Actions and Matters Arising**

23/FGP/8.2 Clerk to check position on Parish Hall Lease

This is on the agenda



23/FGP/18.4 Clerk and Facilities Manager to develop a long-term maintenance plan

The Clerk advised that major ongoing repairs and redecorations (planned preventative maintenance) had been included in the 5-year budget to be discussed later in the meeting. The Clerk proposed that a condition survey was commissioned to consider the long-term planning for major items such as lifts and roofs. This would ensure that the Sinking Fund was adequately providing for future needs.

ACTION - Clerk and Facilities Manager to commission a condition survey

23/FGP/45.2 Clerk to arrange the display of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit

This had been completed.

23/FGP/49.2 Clerk to communicate the Draft Heads of Terms for a lease of Ryeish playing fields to Craig Hoggeth

This was on the agenda at item 8.2

23/FGP/49.3 Clerk to add Whiteknights School to agenda for Full Council

This had been added to the agenda for Full Council on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and was on the agenda for this meeting at Item 8.3

23/FGP/50.1 Clerk to add the revenue grant recommendations to the Full Council agenda

These had been added to the agenda for the Full Council meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> September and had been approved unanimously

23/FGP/50.2 Clerk to convene a meeting of the Working Party to consider capital grant applications

This had been done and the matter of capital grants resolved at Full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023

23/FGP/50.3 Clerk to offer the school prize scheme to all schools in the parish

The Clerk advised that he would write to the schools in the parish in the new term to advise them that this scheme was being offered to them.

ACTION - Clerk to write to all the schools

23/FGP/51.1 Clerk to include the financial assumptions into the budget process

This had been done and the budgets were Item 7 on the agenda.

23/FGP/51.2 Clerk to continue to prepare the 5-year financial plan

This was also covered under Item 7

23/FGP/52.1 Clerk to arrange the replacement of the bus shelter

The new bus shelter on Hollow Lane had been installed on 27<sup>th</sup> November

23/FGP/53.1 Clerk to arrange for the investment of funds in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

This was on the agenda

**23/FGP/61 Risk Register**

61.1 Risk Register

The Clerk advised that he had reviewed the Risk Register and had no recommended changes to any of the risk items for consideration at this meeting.

**23/FGP/62 Financial Reports**

62.1 Bank Reconciliations

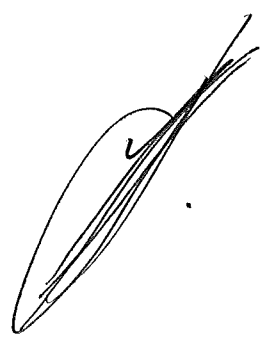
Cllr. James confirmed that he had reviewed the bank reconciliations to the end of November 2023 on 5<sup>th</sup> December and that all was in order. A copy of the reconciliation was included in the papers for the meeting. It was noted that NS&I only provide a statement where there had been transactions and there had been no recent movements on that account. Members **NOTED** the report.

ACTION – Finance Manager to request a statement for the NS&I account for the next bank reconciliation.

62.2 Update on Bookings

The Clerk advised that he had produced a booking report to the end of November 2023 including advanced bookings already in the system and his projected future bookings.

The Clerk advised that the School Green Centre continued to run slightly ahead of budget (projected for the year was £121.6k up £1.6k/1.33% compared to a budget of £120k). Of this £112.5k (92.52% of the total projected income) was already booked.



Spencers Wood Pavilion bookings for November were very good with three weekend bookings accounting for over £1.0k. This has resulted in the pavilion looking to be £0.9k/1.88% up on budget.

Members **NOTED** the report.

**23/FGP/63**

#### **Financial Reserves & CIL**

- 63.1 The balance of unexpended CIL was currently £1,411.0k with £1,210k earmarked for specific projects (£860k for Millworth Lane, £250k for Traffic Improvements and £100k for School Green – although it was not expected that the full sums would be required for the traffic and School green elements). To this balance of £201k there was approximately £549.9k anticipated in respect of future receipts. If these materialise this would result in a balance of £750.9k for new schemes with no projects currently earmarked. It was anticipated that there would be some capital expenditure around High Copse (for example providing additional PV panels to reduce utility costs)

Members **NOTED** the report.

- 63.2 The balance of reserves as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 comprised CIL of £1,439.5k and other reserves of £224.4k giving a total of £1,663.9k

Members **NOTED** the report.

**23/FGP/64**

#### **Budgets**

##### **64.1 Forecast of Outturn for 2023/24**

The Clerk and Finance Manager provided an update on the forecast of outturn for 2023/24. The current projection for 2023/24 was a surplus of £73.1k. The main factors were Manor Ground income (£24.0k), additional interest from higher rates (£15.5k) and lower than anticipated electricity costs (£37.9k).

Members **NOTED** the Forecast of Outturn

##### **64.2 Budgets for 2024/25**

The Clerk set out the assumptions that had been made for income and expenditure within the budget process and advised the anticipated increase in Band D equivalent properties to be used in the calculation of the precept. The planning assumption had been to ensure that the precept increase did not exceed 5.0%. The budget presented was based on an increase of 4.5%

Members agreed to recommend the proposed budget to Full Council at the meeting in January 2024.

Proposed: Cllr Tatla  
Seconded: Cllr Clarke  
Approved: Unanimously

ACTION – Clerk to add Budgets to the agenda for the January Full Council meeting

#### 64.3 **Precept**

The Clerk advised that Wokingham Borough Council had informed him that the Band D equivalent properties would rise from 7,613.2 to 7,802.8 an increase of 189.6 (2.49%).

The recommended Precept increase would be £3.54 (4.5%) rising from £78.75 to £82.29.

It was estimated that there were approximately 400-500 further Band D equivalents properties to be delivered.

Members agreed to recommend the proposed precept to Full Council at the meeting in January 2024

Proposed: Cllr Tatla  
Seconded: Cllr Clarke  
Approved: Unanimously

#### 64.4 **Projections for Future Years**

The Clerk advised that as instructed he had created a five-year plan including projections up to 2027/28. These projections for future years did not make any assumptions for inflation but did take into account anticipated volume changes.

The projections recognised

- a deficit in 2025/26 of £53.4k
- a smaller deficit in 2026/27 of 16.1k
- before returning to surplus in 2027/28 with £14.3k

The Clerk advised that these figures reflected the lag between expenditure being incurred for Millworth Lane and subsequently High Copse sooner than the income was generated. Significantly however there was a ramping up of contributions to the sinking fund from £30k to eventually £75k p.a.

Members **NOTED** the projections and agreed to recommend that the forecast surplus from 2023/24 was held in reserve against the anticipated shortfall in subsequent years.

**64.5 Elections Reserve**

The Clerk advised that within the reserves figure discussed earlier in the meeting there was a provision of £8,000 to cover the costs of one contested ward election based on advised costs from Wokingham Borough Council. As the council was at full capacity for the first time it was now more likely that there may be a contested election. The Clerk noted that this would be affected by how many members would wish to stand again at the next election. It was agreed to increase this reserve to £16,000 over the next 3 years to provide for the possibility of contested elections in two wards.

**23/FGP/65**

**Land Issues**

**65.1 Land Registrations**

Members noted the updates with the Land Registry for Pound Green (BK525694) and Arborfield Road (BK525693) allotment sites. Cllr Clarke noted that this was a project that had been underway for three years and was now moving towards completion. He advised that when completed we should formally arrange for the deeds to be transferred into our possession.

**65.2 Draft Heads of Terms for a lease of Ryeish playing fields**

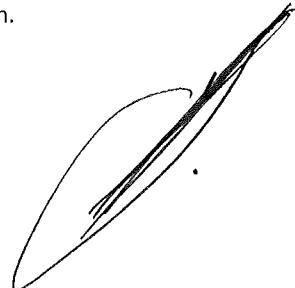
The Clerk had written to Craig Hoggeth at WBC setting out the proposed terms of the renewal of the lease on Deardon Field and based on the terms of the original lease. These would be mirrored in the lease of the Ryeish Green playing fields to Wokingham Borough Council. Both leases would run for 7 years, have the same expiry date and be for a peppercorn rent.

The Clerk was awaiting a formal response from Mr Hoggeth

ACTION – Clerk to follow up with Craig Hoggeth

**65.3 Provision of Community Space in the North of the Parish**

The Clerk advised that he was still reviewing options for the provision of community space in the north of the parish. Cllr James noted that we were still waiting an input from Whiteknights School regarding to their intended approach for a new building at the school which the council may wish to be involved with.



It was noted that the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting would be closing, and the site put up for development. The Clerk was asked to investigate with Wokingham Borough Council whether there was any possibility of having a community building included in any redevelopment.

ACTION – Clerk to investigate options for a community building on the ECMWF site with WBC

There was a discussion about the possibility of providing a community space in the form of a bus that could travel to Shinfield North (and other parts of the parish). The Clerk was asked to investigate the feasibility of this option.

ACTION – Clerk to investigate feasibility of a mobile community space

#### 65.4 **Future of Ryeish Green Pavilion**

Members considered the costs of refurbishing the pavilion that had been provided by our Chartered Building Surveyor. These were in the region of £440k.

Cllr Clarke expressed concerns regarding vehicle access to the playing fields for maintenance and emergency vehicles. The Clerk advised that it was always the intention to protect this access. Cllr Grimes also suggested that other access points to the playing fields could be found.

Cllr Clarke also wished to ensure that there was a “home” for the football teams within the parish. The Clerk suggest that Millworth Lane pavilion or the High Copse pavilion could function in the role of “clubhouse”.

All agreed that there was insufficient access to playing fields, but this would not be affected by any sale of the pavilion. The future of the container currently used by Spencers Wood Football Club would need to be considered.

With regards to the refurbishment the Clerk advised that to recover the costs involved would take at least 17 years on an assumed rental of £25k per annum. This was before considering the effect of inflation. There was also a very high risk of the building being left without a tenant during that period.

The option of renting the pavilion out on a rent-free basis with the tenant paying for the refurbishment of the building was considered. However it was felt that to be attractive to any possible tenant there would need to be an extremely rent-free period (20 years) and the

offer of security of tenure. The outcome of such an arrangement would be the same as a disposal of the building.

It was proposed therefore that as

- There was no suitable alternative council use of the building and
- The costs and risks of refurbishment were uneconomic

The building should be put up for disposal as had originally been proposed.

Members agreed to recommend to Full Council that the building be sold.

Proposed: Cllr Grimes  
Seconded: Cllr Tatla  
Approved: Unanimously

ACTION – Clerk to add to the agenda for the December Full Council meeting

**65.5 Parish Hall Lease**

The Clerk had circulated to members a response from Katherine Lamprell which advised on the process for extinguishing the lease. Members agreed that the Clerk should proceed with that process.

ACTION – Clerk to proceed with the formal extinguishing of the lease on the parish hall

**65.6 Land to the North of School Green Centre**

It was noted that the land to the north of the School Green Centre would be redeveloped at some point in 2024 and that there was an approved scheme for the work. This included the provision of public art which was being considered under the auspices of the Arts, Culture and Events committee.

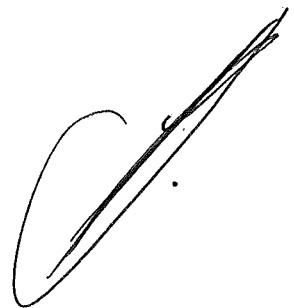
**23/FGP/66**

**Screening Facility in School Green Centre**

66.1 Cllr Grimes advised that a letter of support for the proposed facility had been provided on the basis of the approval at Full Council in October. A further letter of reassurance had been requested from the studios.

Members felt unable to give any further reassurance as this was a matter for Full Council at their meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> December and the Clerk would write accordingly.

Cllr Grimes, the Clerk and Facilities Manager had been part of an online meeting on Tuesday evening to go through the detailed specifications for the screening facility. The equipment would be to a very high standard and all costs would be met by the studios.

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The main items to note were that the floor would need to be lifted in Pound Green Room to provide for the tracks for the retractable seating and suitable alternative storage would need to be provided. The studios would appoint specialists to explore potential solutions involving AOC and SPC.

ACTION – Clerk to add to agenda for December Full Council

**23/FGP/67**

**Investment Policy**

- 67.1 Members AGREED the proposals to
- Transfer £103,000 to CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund. It was not anticipated to require these funds within the next 5 years
  - Move the balance of monies held in the Lloyds Current Account but not required to fund ongoing revenue expenditure to short-term fixed deposit (still with Lloyds Bank)

ACTION – Finance Manager to arrange for the moving of the funds as agreed

**23/FGP/68**

**Financial Regulations**

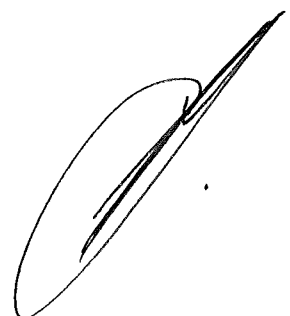
- 68.1 The Clerk advised that the review of Financial Regulations was progressing slowly and would report as soon as this had been completed.

**23/FGP/69**

**Date of Next Meeting**

- 69.1 Next meeting was scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

The meeting ended at 21.30

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### List of Actions

|             |                                                                                                                               |                                |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 23/FGP/60   | Clerk and Facilities Manager to commission a condition survey to establish long-term sinking fund requirements                | Clerk<br>Facilities<br>Manager |
| 23/FGP/60   | Clerk to write to schools within the parish to offer funding for the school prize scheme                                      | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/62.1 | Finance Manager to request a statement for the NS&I account for the next bank reconciliation                                  | Finance<br>Manager             |
| 23/FGP/64.2 | Clerk to add Budgets to the agenda for the January Full Council meeting                                                       | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/65.2 | Clerk to follow upon discussions regarding lease for Ryeish Playing Field with Craig Hoggeth                                  | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/65.3 | Clerk to investigate options for a community building on the ECMWF site with WBC                                              | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/65.3 | Clerk to investigate the feasibility of a mobile community space                                                              | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/65.4 | Clerk to add the future of Ryeish Green pavilion to the agenda for the December Full Council meeting                          | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/65.5 | Clerk to proceed with the formal extinguishing of the lease on the parish hall                                                | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/66.1 | Clerk to add the proposal for a Screening Facility at School Green Centre to the agenda for the December Full Council meeting | Clerk                          |
| 23/FGP/67.1 | Finance Manager to arrange the movement of funds to CCLA and Lloyds Short-term deposit accounts                               | Finance<br>Manager             |