

Minutes of a meeting of
Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held on Wednesday 20th September 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/41

Public Questions

41.1 There were no public questions.

23/FGP/42

Apologies and declarations of Members' Interest

42.1 There were no apologies for this meeting.

42.2 There were no declarations of members' interests.

23/FGP/43

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

43.1 The minutes of the committee meeting of 21st June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by Cllr. James.

Proposed: Cllr Grimes
Seconded: Cllr Montgomery
Approved: Unanimously

23/FGP/44

Actions and Matters Arising

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

The Clerk advised that he had located the original lease and some correspondence on the matter but nothing definitive. Katherine Lamprell had been involved in 2019 and the Clerk had written to her for any advice on this issue. Katherine would investigate this but did not have immediate access to the files.

ACTION - Clerk to follow up with Katherine Lamprell



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

The Clerk advised that this was at the early stages of development and would also be used to feed in to a detailed 5-year plan for the council.

ACTION - Clerk and Facilities Manager to develop a long-term maintenance plan

- 23/FGP/35.2 Clerk to arrange a meeting with Cllr James regarding Land Swaps

This was on the agenda at Item 7.2

- 23/FGP/35.3 Clerk to advise Whiteknights regarding the discussions on support for their proposed new hall.

The Clerk had advised the school accordingly and this matter was on the agenda at Item 7.3

- 23/FGP/36.1 Clerk to arrange a meeting with Cllr James regarding investment policy

This was on the agenda at Item 11.1

23/FGP/45

Annual Accounts and Annual Governance and Accountability Return for Year Ending 31st March 2023

- 45.1 The Clerk advised that he had received the external auditor's report and certificate in respect 2022/23.

"On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met."

There were no other matters which the auditors felt should be drawn to the attention of the authority

- 45.2 The Clerk advised that the "Notice of Conclusion of Audit" will be displayed on noticeboards and the website with effect from 21st September in accordance with the regulations.

The notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2023 were discussed. Members **NOTED** the content of the notes

ACTION - Clerk to arrange the display of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit

23/FGP/46

Risk Register

46.1 Risk Register

The Clerk advised that there were no recommended changes to any of the risk items. The Clerk noted that the council's involvement regarding concerns over school buses may be an indicator of how to handle risks RR1.1 – Damage to Residents' Trust in the Council and RR1.2 – Relationship to Wokingham Borough Council

23/FGP/47

Financial Reports

47.1 Bank Reconciliations

Cllr. James confirmed that he had reviewed the bank reconciliations to the end of August 2023 on 13th September and that all was in order. A copy of the reconciliation was included in the papers for the meeting. Members **NOTED** the report.

47.2 Update on Bookings

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

The Clerk advised that the School Green Centre was running slightly ahead of budget (projected for the year was £121.4k up £1.4k/1.15% compared to a budget of £120k). The bookings for the previous year had been £99.0k – the increase being that School Green Centre was not fully established in the early part of 2022/23 and the largest hirer (Flexx) had not come on board until September 2022. Of the total projected income £25.0k (20.6%) related to bookings not yet taken

For Spencers Wood Pavilion bookings were very much in line with the budget.

Members **NOTED** the report.

47.3 Update of current financial position

The Clerk and Finance Manager gave an update on the current financial position for the year. Currently the projection was for an outturn that was approximately £39k better than budgeted. It was also noted that the budget had assumed a salary increase of 7% while the nationally decided figure was likely to be lower than that.

23/FGP/48

Financial Reserves & CIL

- 48.1 The balance of unexpended CIL was currently £1,248.6k. There was approximately £717k anticipated for future receipts and £1,075k earmarked for specific projects leaving approximately £890k available for new schemes with no projects 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.

- 48.2 The CIL expenditure in year related to final Lifebuild contract and other expenditure on SGC. There had been a payment from reserves relating to footpath 11 of £30.4k. This left the balance of reserves as at 31st August as £1,513.2k.

Members **NOTED** the report.

23/FGP/49

Land Issues

- 49.1 Land Registrations

There were no updates on land registrations.

- 49.2 Draft Heads of Terms for a lease of Ryeish playing fields

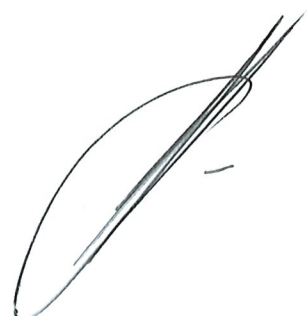
Following discussions at Full Council, the Clerk had proposed to Craig Hoggeth at WBC that the concept of land swaps be dropped and instead there be a discussion on mutual leases of the land. Mr Hoggeth had agreed to this approach and suggested that SPC put forward some Heads of Terms for the arrangement

It was agreed that SPC propose to use the lease for the use of Deardon Field as the basis of a 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.

Cllr Grimes felt that this arrangement would require WBC to act positively with SPC on the issue.

Proposed: Cllr Grimes
Seconded: Cllr Montgomery
Approved: Majority decision (Cllr Clarke abstained)

ACTION – Clerk to communicate these proposals to Craig Hoggeth



Whiteknights proposal

- 49.3 The Clerk advised that there had been a meeting on 19th September involving:
Cllrs James, Montgomery & Tatla
Richard Crompton (Operations Director Bellevue Place Education Trust - BPET)
Francois Walker (Headmaster, Whiteknights School)
Anna Hobart (Finance Office, Whiteknights School)
The Clerk
Facilities Manager

BPET advised that their preferred approach would be to achieve Phases 1 & 2 of an overall three phase build at the same time and were hoping to move as quickly as possible on this.

Phases 1 & 2 would cost approximately £1.5m if done together (but £1.8m if completed as separate phases). The school currently had £1.0m available through ten years of fundraising by the school

It was agreed that SPC should continue to maintain a dialogue with the school with a view to having some involvement with the development. This should include public visibility of SPC's involvement e.g. "badging" on the building.

ACTION – Clerk to add to agenda for Full Council

23/FGP/50

Annual Grants Scheme

- 50.1 As agreed previously at Full Council, SPC had implemented an Annual Grant Scheme which had resulted in a total of 26 applications being received. A working party of Cllrs James, Montgomery, Peer & Tatla, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk had met to consider each application in detail on 30th August. The recommendations of that Working Party were set out in the papers for this meeting.

It was agreed that the non-capital bids recommended by the working party (14 of the 26 applications) be recommended to the September Full Council meeting.

ACTION – Clerk to add the grant recommendations to the Full Council agenda

- 50.2 There were four capital grant applications that remained, and it was agreed that the working party should reconvene to consider these further

ACTION – Clerk to convene a meeting of the Working Party to consider capital grant applications

- 50.3 It was also agreed that the school prize scheme should be offered to all schools in the parish

ACTION – Clerk to offer the school prize scheme to all schools in the parish

23/FGP/51

Budget Planning Assumptions and Development of 5-Year Financial Plan

- 51.1 Members considered the main planning assumptions to be made to allow the draft budgets to be prepared for considerations later in the year;

Pay (Last year 7% assumption) – 5%

This was not an agreement to increase salaries by that much just an assumption to allow a salary figure to be included in the budget.

Rental income

School Green Centre (last year £100,000 + VAT) – Target to be £110,000 + VAT (based on £5k volume and £5k rate increases)

Spencers Wood Pavilion – Target income to increase by 5%

The budget for grants (*last year reduced to £20k*) – Return level for grants to £30k

Overall Precept (*last year target was to restrict to no more than 7% and achieved 5%*) – Limit to no more than a 5% increase

Events Budget – Set an initial events budget to cover costs of advertising, set up etc £10k

Education WP/Oakbank? – Allow £5k for specialist education consultancy support

ACTION – Clerk to include the financial assumptions into the budget process

- 51.2 The Clerk advised that he was in the process of preparing the 5-Year Financial Plan and would build in the above planning assumptions

ACTION – Clerk to continue to prepare the 5-year financial plan

23/FGP/52

Request to Replace Bus Shelter

- 52.1 The Clerk advised that the process of renewing the bus stop at the Southern end of Hollow Lane had already started through the Facilities committee who had agreed to this in principle. Since that meeting the structure had been vandalised and the Clerk had arranged for it to be taken out of use and subsequently removed for safety reasons.

Members agreed the replacement of the bus shelter at the quoted cost of £6.3k + VAT plus the cost of removal.

Proposed: Cllr Clarke
Seconded: Cllr Peer
Approved: Unanimously

ACTION – Clerk to arrange the replacement of the bus shelter

23/FGP/53

Investment Policy

- 53.1 Cllr James, the Clerk and Finance manager had met to consider the council's investment policy. Their recommendation was NOT to invest in property funds but to consider CCLA's Public Sector Deposit Fund which would be cash and could be accessed reasonably quickly (90 days' notice). Latest yield on this fund is 5.11%. Members agreed with this approach.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange for the investment of funds in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

23/FGP/54

Shinfield Studios Proposal

- 54.1 The Clerk advised that a site visit had been undertaken by the design team appointed to create the concept for this proposal on 23rd August and a follow up Teams meeting had been held on 19th September. The concept was to create an 80-seat cinema space that would continue to function as used presently for existing hirers. The designers were looking at a concept which would be based on the Pound Green room and involve issues such as lighting, black out blinds and seating. When ready the proposal would be submitted to Full Council for consideration.

23/FGP/55

Financial Regulations

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

23/FGP/56

Date of Next Meeting

- 56.1 Next meeting was scheduled for 13th December 2023.

The meeting ended at 21.15

List of Actions

23/FGP/8.2	Clerk to follow up Parish Hall lease with Katherine Lamprell	Clerk
23/FGP/18.4	Clerk and Facilities Manager to develop a long-term maintenance plan	Clerk Facilities Manager
23/FGP/45.2	Clerk to arrange the display of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit	Clerk
23/FGP/49.2	Clerk to communicate the proposals for leases to Craig Hoggeth	Clerk
23/FGP/49.3	Clerk to add Whiteknights School to agenda for Full Council	Clerk
23/FGP/50.1	Clerk to add the grant recommendations to the Full Council agenda	Clerk
23/FGP/50.2	Clerk to convene a meeting of the Working Party to consider capital grant applications	Clerk
23/FGP/50.3	Clerk to offer the school prize scheme to all schools in the parish	Clerk
23/FGP/51.1	Clerk to include the financial assumptions into the budget process	Clerk
23/FGP/51.2	Clerk to continue to prepare the 5-year financial plan	Clerk
23/FGP/52.1	Clerk to arrange the replacement of the bus shelter	Clerk
23/FGP/53.1	Clerk to arrange for the investment of funds in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	Clerk