

Minutes of a meeting of
Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held on Thursday 23rd February 2022
At School Green Centre commencing at 19.30

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

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

23/FGP/1

Public Questions

- 1.1 There were no public questions.

23/FGP/2

Apologies and declarations of Members' Interest

- 2.1 There were no apologies for this meeting.
- 2.2 There were no declarations of members' interests.

23/FGP/3

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the committee meeting of 22nd December 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by Cllr. James.

Proposed: Cllr Peer
Seconded: Cllr Grimes
Approved: Unanimously

23/FGP/4

Actions and Matters Arising

- 22/FGP/43.1 Clerk to add Risk Register to the agenda for February meeting
- This was on the agenda at Item 4
- 22/FGP/47.1 Clerk to ensure that Land Registrations to remain on the agenda for February 2023 meeting
- This was on the agenda at Item 7.1

- 22/FGP/47.2 Clerk to arrange a full list of all properties requiring land registration and their status

This was on the agenda at Item 7.1

- 22/FGP/47.3 Clerk to investigate ownership of the School Green car park

The Clerk had visited Berkshire Records Office to inspect the parish minutes from 1988. As part of development in the area the developer built what is now the School Green Car Park and paid sums of money to both SPC and the then Wokingham District Council. The minutes record that SPC agreed to transfer the ownership of the car park to WDC. Although not stated it is assumed that the much smaller SPC of that time did not wish to take on the upkeep or management of the car park.

23/FGP/5

Risk Register

5.1 New format Risk Register

The Clerk set out the work that had been carried out on the new format risk register and advised that there were no items where the overall risk (after mitigation measures) was currently High or Very High.

Members resolved to recommend the risk register to the next meeting of Full Council. The Clerk was asked to add the Risk Register as an occurring item for this committee's agenda on a report by exception basis.

Where an item was identified as becoming High or Very High risk the Clerk should advise the Chair of Finance & General and ensure that Full Council was formally notified.

Proposed: Cllr Peer
Seconded: Cllr Clarke
Approved: Unanimously

ACTION – Clerk to add as a recurring item to Finance & General Purposes Committee agendas

- 5.2 The Clerk was asked to add the Risk Register as a recurring item to the agenda for the Annual Council Meeting in May to ensure that the council fulfilled its obligation to formally review the Risk Register each financial year.

ACTION – Clerk to add as a recurring item to the Annual Council Meeting agenda

Financial Reports

6.1 Bank Reconciliations

Cllr. James confirmed that he had reviewed the bank reconciliations to the end of January 2023 on 22nd February and that all was in order. Members **NOTED** the report.

The Clerk was asked to ensure that copies of the reconciliation were provided at future meetings should members wish to inspect them.

ACTION – Clerk to ensure that copies of the reconciliations were available for inspection at future meetings

6.2 Room Hire Report for School Green Centre and Spencers Wood Pavilion

The Clerk advised that he had updated the booking report based on actual bookings completed to the end of January and that the forecast for the rest of the year was relatively firm as only a small amount of income was being anticipated for bookings not yet made.

Members **NOTED** the report.

6.3 Actual vs Budget vs Forecast Expenditure as of 31st January 2023

Overall the forecast of outturn was an adverse variance of £5k against the approved budget. This was an improvement from a previously reported position of an adverse variance of £15k.

The reasons for the variance were discussed and included higher utilities costs and lower than expected rental income. It was noted that about 40% of electricity used at the School Green Centre was being provided by the PV panels but the unit rate for electricity was a significant concern.

There had been some savings on salary with the gapping of the Deputy Clerk post and the Clerk did not intend to replace the Jo Skidmore role.

Members **NOTED** the current position.

Financial Reserves & CIL7.1 Members **NOTED** that the balance of unexpended CIL was currently £1,055,000 with potentially a further £1,034,000 still to come.

8.1 Land Registrations

Cllr Clarke updated members on the recent progress with Katherine Lamprell on land registrations. These were with the Land Registry but could take up to 18 months to be formally registered.

8.2 The Clerk provided a list of the council's properties and the status of each for ease of reference.

The Clerk was asked to check if the council had extinguished the lease on the Parish Hall leasehold.

ACTION – Clerk to check position on Parish Hall leasehold

8.3 The Clerk was also asked to check on the lease for Millworth Lane.

ACTION – Clerk to check position on Millworth Lane lease

8.4 Current Position regarding Land Swaps

The Clerk had met with the Head of Estates (Craig Hoggeth) on 3rd February and the key points were:

SPC wanted to see matter resolved but we are still at a position where we have an imbalance in the areas to be included in the swap.

Mr Hoggeth disputes the fact that we would not be able to justify the swap as it stands as, in his opinion, he believes they are in the public good and would be admissible.

The Clerk advised that was not the SPC opinion and that we wanted to see more land included in the swap. Specifically SPC wished to have the School Green Car Park back.

The recent possibility that charges might be introduced for this car park showed how our bookings at School Green Centre could be affected by any decision made by WBC.

Mr Hoggeth said he would talk to the Car Park department about this.

He has now responded to advise that:

“The land is part of the WBC's car parking management strategy for the borough, so it is not surplus to requirements and therefore not available for disposal.

The School Green car park has, along with all Council car parks, been included in the Off-Street TRO which will enable the Council to administer control over them for the benefit of users. There are no plans to introduce charging at the School Green car park. The TRO will allow for the enforcement of any disabled bays and EV charging bays in car parks which have them and that currently have no enforcement abilities. It will also provide for restrictions being introduced such as time limits to ensure bays are being used for the right reasons. From our discussion, I took it that these restrictions are something the Parish Council would like to see introduced. If you would like to outline the restrictions the PC would like to see put in place at School Green Car Park, I'd be happy to pass them onto the Council's Car Parks manager so they can review and consider whether/how these can be introduced."

Cllr James reported that he and the Clerk had discussed the situation with the Internal Auditor on the subject. They did not raise any issue directly but did refer to the fact that SPC had a legal opinion that the land areas needed to be in balance

ACTION – Clerk to arrange a meeting with Cllr James and Craig Hoggeth

8.5 Ryeish Green Pavilion

The Clerk was asked to get quotes for both the demolition and the sale of Ryeish Green Pavilion

ACTION – Clerk to obtain quotes in relation to Ryeish Green Pavilion

23/FGP/9

Investment Policy

- 9.1 It was agreed to consider moving the £70k currently in the sinking fund into CCLA property investment funds for a minimum of 3 years and £250k into a CCLA standard investment fund.

23/FGP/10

Annual Audit

- 10.1 The Clerk advised that the initial visit by the Internal Auditor had taken place on 21st and 22nd of March. One issue had been identified regarding incorrect National Insurance rates being applied November to January and this will be corrected before the year end. No other material issues had been identified during the visit.

23/FGP/11

Financial Regulations

- 11.1 The Clerk advised that he would start a full review of Financial Regulations in March as this is part of his CiLCA training in any case.

23/FGP/12

Date of Next Meeting

- 12.1 Next meeting was scheduled for 27th April 2023. As the Chairman would be absent then it was agreed to reschedule the meeting for Wednesday 3rd May

The meeting ended at 21.05

DRAFT