

TWYFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held at Loddon Hall, RG10 9JA on Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 7.45pm.

Present: Mr M Alder, Mr J Bowley, Mr M Bray, Mrs B Ditcham, Mr F Newman, Mr C Wickenden & Mr T Winchester (from item 5 onwards).

Minutes: Mrs L Moffatt (Clerk).

1. **Public Questions** – No questions.
2. **Apologies** – None.
3. **Declaration of interest in items on the agenda** – None.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2023** Approval of the minutes as a true and accurate record proposed by Mr F Newman, seconded by Mrs B Ditcham, motion carried nem con.
5. **Matters arising and action points** – None.
6. **Budgets and Precept 2024-25**
 - 6.1 To review the Finance and General Purposes committee budget for 2024-25. The figures were reviewed and adjusted.
 - 6.2 To note the 2024-25 tax base – it was noted that the draft tax base is 3047.30.
 - 6.3 To review the whole Council budget for 2024-25
The committees will be further reviewing their budgets in January and it was agreed that the budget heading increases should be justified with a story behind the increase.
7. **Clerk's Report (written report circulated to councillors)**
 - 7.1 Approval of the Berkshire Pension contact information sheet – the sheet was reviewed and will be submitted to Berkshire Pensions.
 - 7.2 NALC - 2023/24 NJC pay scales agreement – to note agreement and backdated pay award. Noted.
 - 7.3 To note the Loddon Hall room hire terms and conditions – November 2023. Noted.
 - 7.4 To agree how to fund the playground works £21,172.64 [Suggest CIL and withdraw from Income Bonds]. It was unanimously agreed to allocate £21,172.64 CIL funds and withdraw the funds from the Income Bonds for these playground works.
8. **Deputy Clerk broadband** – on the suggestion of BT the telephone contract has been moved onto the cloud voice package. Costs incurred are a setup fee of £20 and an additional £4 per month. This should resolve the issue of the telephone signal dropping. The Deputy Clerks broadband speed was found to be more than satisfactory and so no changes have been made to this.
9. **Risk assessments 2023 – circulated 09.11.23 & considered by each individual committee.** Noted.
 - 9.1 HSE workstation assessment - to consider the following when items are being replaced:
 - Seat with adjustable back height and tilt adjustment
 - Digital screen adjustment – needs to be eye level
 - Ergonomic mouseClerk to check the screen for adjustability.
10. **Twycombe Lodge Lease – to approve and sign the memorandum confirming rent of £16,800 per annum** The committee unanimously approved the signing of the memorandum. This was duly signed and will be forwarded to Fiona Blair, The Vet Centre for signing.
11. **To consider adding the Edge – Event software module**
£570.50 initial cost and set up
Additional costs - £40 annual licence fee for Docusign and £1.60 per envelope sent and £120 annual support fee for online payments
Ongoing costs after the first year £145 - annual fee for the module

There was concern over the cost versus benefit of the software. Following consideration it was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should monitor how much time is spent on the stall holder bookings. Agreed not to progress with the software at present.

12. Audit 2023-24

12.1 To note that the internal audit stage 1 took place on 14.11.23 – noted.

12.2 To note the Interim Internal Audit report (one drive folder) – noted.

13. Citizen of the Year

13.1 To consider the nominees and make a recommendation to Full Council

Part 2 recommendation from the Finance committee

The Council agreed that as confidential items were to be discussed the Chairman invoked Standing Order 1C “That in view of the special or confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw”. Proposed Mr T Winchester, seconded Mr M Bray and carried unanimously.

The committee agreed to present a gift of thanks to recognise a named members significant contribution to the Neighbourhood Plan at the Annual Parish Meeting.

A recommendation for Citizen of the year 2023 will be made to the Full Council meeting. Due to the confidential nature of this business a record of the recommendation is kept on a confidential set of minutes.

Proposed Mrs B Ditcham, seconded Mr T Winchester to return to the public meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

14. Succession planning & business contingency [referred by Full Council]

14.1 Councillor – To provide smooth transitions and promote leadership roles.

14.2 Officers – To consider what might be needed.

Agreed no further action required.

15. Review of Policies

15.1 Investment policy – carried forward.

[Note (1): this has been carried forward since December 2019])

A brief discussion took place on divesting the shares for the skate park project.

[Note (2): The purchase of shares in a corporate body is capital expenditure under Regulation 25 the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) Order 2003, so if they are sold the money can only be used for capital purposes and cannot be used to fund revenue expenditure. Advice from HALC (12.07.23) confirmed that the skate park proposals would be considered as capital expenditure and therefore would be an acceptable use of the funds.]

15.2 Draft appraisal policy (JB)

[Note: this has been carried forward since January 2022]

The committee agreed that this is important and both Mr J Bowley and Mr C Wickenden will produce a draft for approval.

15.3 The following policies have been reviewed and should be approved unamended:

- Anti Harassment & bullying policy
- CCTV policy
- Code of Conduct
- Community Engagement policy statement
- Data Protection policy
- Election protocol
- Financial Regulations
- Metal Detecting policy
- Pension Fund Policy
- Procedure for making cheque payments
- Publishing policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Snow/grit policy
- Standing Orders

The committee **RECOMMEND to Full Council** approval of the unamended policies listed above. Motion carried unanimously.

15.4 The following amended policies should be considered for approval:

[Copies with tracked changes are in the one drive folder]

- Disciplinary Procedure
- Document Management Procedures
- Electronic Mail Policy and Procedure
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Social Media Policy

The committee **RECOMMEND to Full Council** approval of the amended policies listed above. Motion carried unanimously.

- Handling Complaints Procedure – to consider having this available on the website rather than a policy

The committee **RECOMMEND to Full Council** the revised Handling Complaints Procedure should be available on the website as procedure rather than a policy.

Motion carried unanimously.

16. Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027 – to review committee actions and agree on main focus. Which actions should not be included in the plan? Which councillor will be responsible for the action? Can any information / timescales be added?

The committee reviewed the actions and updated the plan.

17. Correspondence – all noted.

17.1 Berkshire Pension Scheme AGM 16.11.23

17.2 Berkshire Pension Scheme - Inscribe Autumn 2023

18. Items to be considered from other Committees

18.1 Planning and Amenities

18.2 Parish Lands

To note that Skate Park has gone to tender with a project budget of £200,000. To consider the project funding.

Although no formal recommendation was made it was agreed that the Council have sufficient funds and the committee expressed support of the project.

18.3 Community Events and Engagement

19. Date of next meeting – 23rd January 2024

Finance and General Purposes committee report

Tuesday 12th December 2023

1. Bank Balances and VAT.

Bank balances as at the end of October 2023

Nat West current account £41,334.37, Unity Trust current account £71,094.26, Deposit account £7,034.94, income bonds £117,000, National Savings account £5,014.51 and Twycombe Lodge tenants deposit account £3,052.07

VAT return for October 2023 - £2,438.10

Bank balances as at the end of November 2023

Nat West current account £44,134.37, Unity Trust current account £58,246.90, Deposit account £7,034.94, income bonds £117,000, National Savings account £5,014.51 and Twycombe Lodge tenants deposit account £3,052.07

VAT return for November 2023 - £526.15

2. SMS Environmental Credit Application Form (Legionella Controls) – completed & submitted 6.10.23

3. **Edge security Incident 13.10.23**

3.1 To note additional security and Multi Factor Authentication

3.2 To note a forensic investigation looking into how the incident happened and what, if any data was impacted

4. **Bank signatories** – NS&I pending

5. **CIL reports** –

5.1 To note the September & October report. To note that the next deadline to make expenditure is 2025.

5.2 CIL Co-funding - October

6. **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

6.1 To note collation of quotes – March deadline

7. **Data Protection Regulations update – no items to report**

Expenditure approved under Financial Regulation 4			
Description	Budget	Amount	Approval
Edge – increased band on Finance software	Software	£160.00	Clerk

The meeting closed at 21:15