

LITTLEMORE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 28th September 2023 at Littlemore Village Hall

Present: Councillors Dorian Hancock (Chair), Susie Aldridge, Peter George (28th September only), Sadiea Mustafa-Awan and Maggie Willis.

In attendance: Geoffrey Ferres (Responsible Financial Officer) and Morgan James (Parish Clerk).

The meeting opened at 19:01 hrs.

FG 97/23 Chair's Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

FG 98/23 Apologies for absence

None.

FG 99/23 Declarations of Interest

No further declarations were made.

FG 100/23 Minutes of previous Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting

The Committee **agreed** the minutes from Thursday 31st August 2023. The Chair signed them as a true record and initialled each page.

Action: RFO to scan and publish signed minutes

FG 101/23 Report of the Chair of the Grants Sub-Committee

The Chair of the Sub-Committee reported the Sub-Committee received no applications in Round 1.

FG 102/23 Receipts Report

The Committee **noted** the following receipts:

- £1,762.56, CCLA, Public Sector Deposit Fund monthly interest August
- £4,921.18, HMRC, VAT refund 2021-22.

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) advised the Committee that the Council's Public Sector Deposit Fund account will have paid monthly interest on 1st September which will appear on the statement the Council will receive in the next few days.

FG 103/23 Payments Report

The RFO informed the Committee that the missing date in the first row of the report is 19th September.

The Committee **ratified** all payments on a written report submitted by the RFO listing payments for all accounts between 23rd August and 22nd September 2023.

FG 104/23 Bank Balances

The Committee **noted** the written report submitted by the RFO showing the balances in all the Council's accounts at 22nd September 2023.

FG 105/23 Reserves Report

The Committee **agreed** to defer this item to later in the meeting when the Committee reconvened on Thursday 7th October – see below.

FG 106/23 Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee **agreed** to defer this item to later in the meeting when the Committee reconvened on Thursday 7th October – see below.

FG 107/23 Payments awaiting approval

The Committee **unanimously approved** the following payments:

- £504.00, Moore, External Auditor's fee
- £2,400.00, Judge Surveyors LLP, valuation report
- £245.00, Fine Print (Services) Ltd, Littlemore Local 453.

Action: Clerk to submit payments to signatories for authorisation

FG 108/23 Budget 2024-25

SMA said the Transport & Connectivity Working Group will present a report to a future Full Council meeting about possible transport improvements.

The Committee **agreed** to defer the rest of the item until later in the meeting when the Committee reconvened on Thursday 7th October – see below.

FG 109/23 Credit account

The Committee **agreed** to establish a credit account with Powell's Sheet Materials Ltd and to set a limit of £500.00 on the account.

FG 110/23 Audit 2022-23

The RFO reported that: the 2022-23 audit is over; he has published the External Auditor's report on the website and circulated it to all councillors; he has produced a Notice of Conclusion of Audit which the Clerk has signed and which will be published tomorrow on the website and the noticeboard.

The Committee **noted** the External Auditor's report.

Action: RFO to publish Notice of Conclusion of Audit on website; Cllr Aldridge to publish on noticeboard

FG 111/23 Review of Internal Systems of Control

Cllr Hancock reported that he and the RFO have this afternoon completed a review of all four quarters of 2022-23, but the report is not yet ready.

Cllr Hancock said he has signed the reconciliations for all four quarters of 2022-23, which means the RFO can now close the books for 2022-23 and activate 2023-24 on the Rialtas system.

Action: RFO to draft report for Cllr Hancock's approval

FG 112/23 Financial Risk Assessment

The RFO reported that he has made further minor amendments, but he recommended either more extensive amendments or starting again from a more appropriate borrowed example – the previous Clerk had borrowed the current one from a town council and it was not well adapted to this Council's needs.

Action: Clerk to contact counterpart in a fairly similar parish

FG 113/23 Asset Register

The Committee agreed to defer this item to later in the meeting when the Committee reconvened on Thursday 7th October – see below.

FG 114/23 Section 106

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council take a decision at its October meeting to make an offer to purchase a community asset with a combination of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money.

Cllr Mustafa-Awan said she had abstained because she agreed it was important that a decision be made at the next Full Council meeting, but she did not wish to be recorded as having supported the decision to make the purchase.

At 8pm the Committee **agreed unanimously** to adjourn until Thursday 5th October at 7pm. Cllr George gave his apologies in advance for the reconvened meeting.

On the evening, Cllr Maggie Willis also gave her apologies (ill-health). The meeting re-convened at 19:12hrs and, instead of immediately continuing its discussion of Section 106, proceeded to deal first with deferred items in the order they appeared on the agenda.

FG 105/23 Reserves Report

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council at its October meeting:

- a) Abolish the General Reserve Earmarked Reserve (EMR 327)
- b) Increase the Tree Works Earmarked Reserve (EMR 329) by £10,000
- c) Increase the Neighbourhood Plan Earmarked Reserve (EMR 326) by £10,000.

FG 106/23 Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee **noted** a written report from the RFO indicating that payments in the first half of the financial year had totalled <£40,000, or less than 60% of budget for the year. Within this overall total, pay and expenses had totalled 43% of budget for the year.

The RFO advised the Committee that receipts are running well above budget: the budget for bank interest is £2,500 for the year but interest payments for the Council's Public Sector Deposit Fund are currently about £1,800 per month.

FG 108/23 Budget 2024-25

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council at its October meeting approve the use of the following assumptions for creating a draft budget to be considered at its November meeting:

- Staff payments to increase by 9%
- Other payments to increase by 6%
- Bank interest receipts for 2024-25 to be £15,000
- Band D Council Tax to be reduced by at least £10.

FG 113/23 Asset Register

The Committee **agreed** to defer this item to its next meeting.

FG 114/23 Section 106 – continued

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council at its October meeting take a decision to accept the application from the Village Hall Committee to use the indoor play money to improve facilities for indoor sports at the Village Hall.

FG 115/23 Community Infrastructure Levy

The Committee **noted** a written report submitted by the RFO listing all unspent payments of CIL and updating the Committee regarding anticipated future payments.

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council at its October meeting set aside £20,000 from its CIL Earmarked Reserve to enable each councillor to put forward one small improvement – such as a bench, a bin or a tree – to be completed by the end of the current financial year.

FG 116/23 Review of Investment Strategy

The Committee **noted** a written report submitted by the RFO updating the Committee on progress implementing the Council's Investment Strategy.

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council at its November meeting approve a transfer of £35,000 from the Council's Unity Trust Bank current account to its Public Sector Deposit Fund account.

FG 117/23 Bank Mandates

Cllr Hancock said he has still not received notification from Unity Trust Bank that he has become an authorised signatory on the Council's two accounts with them.

The Council **instructed** the RFO to make arrangements so that the Clerk replaces him as key contact for the Council's accounts with Unity Trust Bank. **Action: RFO**

FG 118/23 Financial Regulations

No amendments were proposed.

Action: RFO and Chair to ensure Council has up-to-date version of Financial Regulations

FG 119/23 Proposals for major spending

The Committee **instructed** the Clerk to:

- a) Spend up to £6,000 (to be taken from the Play Equipment Earmarked Reserve) to replace as many damaged items such as swing seats as possible using the Council's own Grounds Staff
- b) Commission routine tree works at the Oxford Road Rec and Little Park at a cost of £3,450 (to be taken from the Tree Works Earmarked Reserve) from the same contractor who had demonstrated best value when quotations for essential work were obtained.

Action: Clerk

FG 120/23 Virements

The Committee **agreed** to recommend that Full Council at its November meeting approve a virement of £400 from code 4250 (IT Equipment/Emails – mainly used for the Cloudy IT contract) to code 4260 (Accounting Package – currently used only for the annual payment to Rialtas) so that the cost of Microshade hosting the Rialtas system would also be met from code 4260, bringing all the costs of the Rialtas system under a single code.

FG 121/23 Date of next meeting

The Committee **confirmed** the date of the next meeting as Thursday 26th October 2023.

FG 122/23 Agenda items for next meeting

Motions to be submitted to the Clerk at least seven working days before the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 20:46 hrs.

Signed as a true and accurate record:

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Cllr Dorian Hancock
Chair, Finance & General Purposes Committee
Littlemore Parish Council
Thursday 26th October 2023

draft

Initialed:

Date: Thursday 26th October 2023