



Finance Committee Meeting Clerk's Report

BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

- | Agenda
item # | Item |
|------------------|---|
| 1. | <p>Apologies for absence & housekeeping
Cllr. Taylor has sent his apologies.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Disclosure of interests
At the time of drafting this report, no disclosure of interests have been received from any Member. If a Member becomes aware of an interest in any agenda item, they must notify the meeting (either at the beginning of the meeting, or before the agenda item is discussed).</p> <p>Members have a positive duty to consider the agenda and notify the meeting if they, or their Partner, have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI), or other interest in any matter listed. If a Member, or their Partner, has a DPI, or any other interest, they are prohibited from participating in the discussion and/or voting. However, a Member can apply in writing to the Proper Officer (Clerk) for dispensation to participate and/or vote in the matter. It is a criminal offence for any Member to withhold disclosure of a DPI without reasonable excuse and/or participate in debate and/or voting (in the absence of dispensation from the Proper Officer).</p> |
| 4. | <p>Public participation
At the time of drafting this report, no member of the public has submitted a comment, question, or brief representation.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Order for Payments – July – August 2022
The Order for Payments for July - August 2022, which includes income and expenditure since the last full Council meeting on 13.07.2022, is published on the Parish Council website. This includes the end of Qtr. 1 HMRC VAT reclaim and the administration of the Platinum Jubilee fundraising in accordance with the Parish Council's resolution to adopt the recommendation of the Platinum Jubilee Working Group that any profit made be donated to the Disasters Emergency Committee.</p> <p>Of note, the Clerk is in the process of updating the Zoom and Secured Signing payment method with the Council's new bank card; moving forward, these costs will not be met by the Clerk personally.</p> <p>The error of double payment of the Clerk's expenses has been rectified.</p> |

Moving forward, the Council's accounting system can produce a payment and receipt analysis schedule; examples of the current schedules are published on the website. This would be in lieu of the Order for Payment. This would be accompanied by a bank statement for the same period (not publicly available). The accounting schedules will only show the expenditure made, rather than to be agreed; therefore, on occasion, an Order for Payment may be required for the Council to approve. Likewise, a 'traditional' Order for Payment provides simple explanations / breakdown of payments e.g., loan repayments, accruals etc. At times, this additional information and analysis will be helpful.

6. **Internal & External Audit Reports**

The Internal and External Auditor reports are published on the Parish Council's website, along with the Notice of Conclusion of Audit: <https://www.plaistowandifold-pc.gov.uk/reports-and-audits> This notice will also be added to the four notice boards within the Parish.

The three Internal Auditor's recommendations have now been executed:

- The Council has obtained a debit card on the Council's bank account
- The Clerk has attended RBS accounting system training
- The Council has correctly stated that it is the sole trustee of the Plaistow Playing Field Charity (charity 305404) on its Annual Return.

The External Auditor has commented that the period of public rights should have been for a single period of 30 working days; however, this year, the Council provided 31 days. This is because the date of publication was disregarded within the 30-day calculation. In future years the date of publication will be included in the 30-day calculation to avoid this 'trivial breach of the regulations' reoccurring.

7. **Verification of bank reconciliations for Qtr. 1 (April – July 2022)**

Members of the Committee have been sent the Dropbox link to the Qtr. 1 bank statements, corresponding reconciliation statements, cash book and balance sheets. Once reviewed, these documents can be signed by an appointed Member who is not a bank signatory.

8. **To consider the 2022/23 Budget Forecast Comparison spreadsheet at Quarter 1**

Column H states the agreed budget for this financial year.

Column J states the year-to-date expenditure against each budget heading.

Column L states the projected year-end position, which is based on

- new information not available at the time of setting the budget
- projected uplifts considering the current financial climate
- new matters which have come to the fore since the budget was agreed

Column N provides comment/ explanation for any changes highlighted in Column L.

For example, the budget for 'Website Maintenance, Internet and Email Management' has increased as the number of PC email addresses required has caused the Council to move from TEEC's standard package of support (£20pm) to its premium package (£36pm), which includes unlimited email accounts (rather than the cap of 15). PC policy requires that all Councillors, staff, Co-Opted members, and those participating in Working Groups have a PC email account. This is for GDPR and Freedom of Information purposes. With the creation of a Planning Working Group with 10 members (7 of which require new email accounts) this has caused the PC to upgrade its hosting package.

Some changes in Column L are subject to discussion/ agreement. For example, the Winterton Hall Management Committee have indicated that they will seek a financial contribution from the PC for the cost of the roof works. Therefore, an indicative % increase has been included. However, Members may wish to consider providing more or less financial support than currently outlined. Cllr. Colmer attended a meeting of the WHMC on 8th August and will provide the meeting with an update on their financial position and the likely financial support they will seek in due course.

Currently, the PC is forecasting an overspend at year end of £155.04. The disparity between income (£96,000 – precept) and expenditure (£128,684.78) and the net forecasted annual overspend of £32,432.78 will deplete the PC's reserves and see an overall overspend of £155.04. With the inclusion of the current loan (taken to finance the Lady Hope Playpark refurbishment) the year end position is £34,584.69. This is under the best practice recommendation of 50% precept level and each year, the Council should be improving its financial situation so that when the loan has been paid back, the Council is not reliant upon the loan to stay solvent.

The PC has committed projects and expenditure for this current year, which was financially affordable prior to the various planning matters now in need of address.

The PC may wish to consider the need / feasibility of taking a further Public Works Loan Board loan to finance the Ifold Playpark project.

9. **Finance Working Group**

The Parish Council and any of its standing Committees can set up Working Groups to carry out tasks as defined by the Council or the Committee. The purpose of Working Groups is to meet to discuss issues, explore options and develop plans and then report back to the Council or Committee with recommendations. Subsequently, Working Groups may be tasked to deliver such plans. They have no decision-making powers, but simply present the Council or Committee with their findings. However, their ability to give topics that much more time -

outside agenda-driven public meetings - is invaluable to the efficient and effective working of the Parish Council. Additionally, Working Groups can meet remotely.

It is the Clerk's recommendation that the Finance Committee appoint a Finance Working Group – which can only be made up of elected Councillors – to support the work of the Committee. For example, the Working Group can meet more frequently, via Zoom (thereby reducing the cost of hall hire) to consider the feasibility of taking a loan for example. The recommendations will be then presented to and approved by the Committee or full Council depending on the nature of the matter under consideration (loans / budget / precept can only be approved by the full Council, therefore the Finance Committee acts as a Working Group in this regard in any event).

- a. To agree the Finance Working Group's objectives, scope, and outcome(s).

The aim of the Working Group is to work with the Committee and RFO in the management of the Council's financial resources and to consider and recommend strategy and action on policy and operational matters concerned with the Council's finances, property, and resources. For example (but not limited to) providing support, recommendations, and ideas on budget monitoring; budget preparation; financial management e.g., loans; actions required by Internal and External Auditors; annual grants and donations and other financial considerations as directed by either the Committee or Council.

- b. To receive and approve the Finance Working Group's Terms of Reference document.

The draft proposed document has been published on the website.

- c. To agree that the Finance Working Group can present directly to both the Council and the Finance Committee for decision making.

This is a requirement, as the Finance Committee and/or Finance Working Group cannot determine matters regarding annual budget, precept or borrowing.

- d. To appoint by resolution the membership of the Finance Working Group.

The draft proposed Terms of Reference document has provided for up to 6 members of the Working Group. Currently, the membership of the Finance Committee is 4; it is recommended that these members be appointed to the Working Group. If in time, two more Councillors join the Finance Committee (currently the Council has two Councillor vacancies), or other Councillors indicate an interest to join the Finance Working Group, the Terms of Reference document accommodates this.

10. **Winterton Hall & Youth Club**

- a. To consider the WHMC's request for additional grant funding to support an annual subscription to [AiRS](#) (Action in Rural Sussex).

AiRS is an independent charity. Among its various objectives, it provides advice and training for running community led village halls. For example, there is an annual conference on Village Halls in October. The Chair and Clerk have recently undertaken two training sessions held by AiRS regarding Village Hall management and Sole Trusteeship.

The service is available for an annual fee of £144.

Service benefits are:

- Dedicated support and guidance via phone and email.
- Access to the AirS Village Hall and Community Buildings Basecamp Group: our popular new forum where building committee members can meet in a virtual space and benefit from each other's experience and knowledge.
- Regular e-bulletins providing the latest news and updates including funding and training opportunities.
- Access to guidance documents on key themes, providing up-to-date and practical information on a range of topics including: insurance, hire charges, employment, budgeting, fire safety etc.
- Reduced rates for workshops and training events throughout the year.
- Free entry to one of two conferences held each year in West and East Sussex.
- Representation via the Sussex Community Buildings Advisory Group (SCBAG) to local and central government consultations, raising awareness raising of issues as they affect village halls and community buildings.
- Participation in the nationally accredited peer assessment 'Hallmark' Quality Assurance scheme.

The WHMC have asked if the PC would consider funding / contributing towards an annual membership in its own right. The WHMC receive a £1,500pa grant from the PC. The Kelsey Hall have recently subscribed to AiRS. They have obtained approval from AiRS for them to share the information they receive with Winterton Hall, and the Winterton Hall is considering contributing towards the annual cost of £144. The Parish Council might consider paying 50% of the annual cost to both village halls – a total annual expenditure of £144.

- b. To receive and note the Youth Club's answers to queries previously raised by the Finance Committee.

Q. The Council seeks, for its information and records, details of any grants the Youth Club received over the pandemic and how these have been used. It would also like information about the charitable status of the Youth Club. Thank you in advance for this information.

A. *We received a £10,000 grant from Chichester District Council which was linked to our business rates to compensate for the Youth club being closed for Covid. This grant was used for the following:*

- *Paying for the building insurance, rent and electricity*
- *Insurance for the Tennis court for the village to enable usage once exercise was permitted.*
- *To pay for the weekly cleaner to ensure that the Post Office operated in a hygienic environment*
- *To pay our Youth Worker*
- *To pay for fire extinguisher maintenance*
- *Initiatives to relaunch the club after closing for so long.*

Throughout the period we were unable to undertake any of the planned fundraising such as: Easter Egg Scramble, quiz night and local socials. Without this grant and not being able to fundraise we would have been in a position that we may have had to close the Youth Club after 50 years. Thankfully we didn't have to take this action and we could use the money to relaunch the clubs with exciting activities. We are registered charity with the Charities commission: 305407.

11. **Meeting Dates**

Subject to the decision of the Committee to appoint a Working Group, the end of Qtr. 2 meeting will take place on 11th October 2022 at Winterton Hall, Plaistow, 19:45. Members are reminded of the new meeting schedule, published on the website: -

https://www.plaistowandifold-pc.gov.uk/media/General/2022_23%20Hall%20booking%20schedule_publication.pdf