



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held at Helsby Community Centre at 7.30pm on Monday 28th June 2021

Present:

Cllr. Terry O'Neill

Cllr. Sarah Temple

Cllr. Allan Fincham

Cllr. Paul Standing

Cllr. Peter Duffy

Also present:

Claire Jones Parish Clerk

1. Election of Chairman – It was **RESOLVED** that **Cllr. Duffy** be elected as Chairman – **F19/21**.
2. Election of Vice Chairman – It was **RESOLVED** that **Cllr. Standing** be elected as Vice Chairman – **F20/21**.
3. Public Participation – no members of the public were present.
4. No apologies for absence were received. Cllr. Gardner did not attend.
5. Declarations of Members' Interests. None were received/reported.
6. Minutes of the previous meeting. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes dated 6th April 2021 – **F21/21**.
7. Matters arising from the previous meeting – Outstanding and forthcoming S106 monies were noted. Clerk to circulate the list from CW&C and to request if this could be broken down further by development.
8. Review of Grants and Earmarked Reserves - It was **RESOLVED** to increase the office relocation funds from **£2,500 to £4,000** and to re-name the 'soft safety surface' earmarked reserve to 'play area improvements/upgrades' – **F22/21**. The revised table can be seen in Appendix 1.
9. Review of Investment Programme – the following funds were noted:
 - Co-Operative Bank – Business Select Account - £76,473.34 as at 21 June 2021
 - Monmouthshire Building Society Corporate Bonus 90 - £77,855.99 as at 21 June 2021
 - Nat West Business Reserve - £25,223.50 as at 21 June 2021
 - Nat West Current Account - £111,410.39 as at 21 June 2021

The Clerk outlined that Jim Stockton had advised the Council to remain with the existing programme given the low interest rates across the investment sector at present. Members were mindful that the Financial Services Compensation Scheme remained at £85,000 per banking group and noted that the Nat West accounts were in excess of this limit. It was

RESOLVED that the Clerk would investigate opening an additional flexible bank account and transferring over £40,000 from the Nat West current account – F23/21.

10. Annual Audit

10.1 The Internal Auditors recommendations for the year ending 31st March 2021 were noted as follows:
ISSUE – The risk assessment does not address the risks of supplier (procurement) fraud. Recommendation - *The risk assessment should be updated to include supplier (procurement) fraud including the adequacy of supplier onboarding controls.* It was **RESOLVED to add the following wording to the Council’s risk assessment – F24/21:** ‘Before entering into contracts with companies or other bodies the Council will carry out due diligence to safeguard public funds. All, or as many as deemed necessary, of the following measures will be taken:

- A check at Companies House;
- The lowest deposit possible to be negotiated, if appropriate;
- A suitable retention to be negotiated, if appropriate;
- The Council to require terms and conditions, depending on the contract value, as deemed appropriate;
- If appropriate the Council to buy goods and materials directly from the suppliers;
- Materials to be delivered to where the Council specifies and at an agreed time to suit the Clerk; and
- New payee checks to be carried out through the Council’s online banking facility.’

ISSUE – The Council’s general reserve as at 31/3/21 is in excess of 12 months Net Revenue Expenditure (net revenue expenditure is effectively Precept less any loan repayment and/or amounts included in precept for capital projects and transfers to earmarked reserves). Recommendation – *the Council should review their general reserves and consider whether they are being retained for ear-marked schemes.* It was **RESOLVED to add a number of projects to the Council’s earmarked reserves as set out in Appendix 1 – F25/21.** It was also agreed to request the Environment Committee to investigate a potential pedestrian crossing project and all committees to be requested to consider any other potential capital projects.

10.2 External Audit – it was noted that the AGAR documentation had been sent to PKF Littlejohn and the period for the exercise of public rights had commenced on 25 June in accordance with the external auditor’s instructions.

11. Budget Analysis – the receipts and payments summaries were noted. It was **RESOLVED to vire some monies from Code 241 (salaries) to Code 213 (parks maintenance) as calculated by the Clerk and to move the costs for the noticeboard repairs from Code 215 (park equipment) to Code 229 (Sherwood Court Land) – F26/21.** The Clerk agreed to look into the allotment water charges.

12. Review of the Council’s asset register and Fixed Asset Policy for insurance valuations and upgrades/life expectancy – it was noted that further work was required in terms of the current valuation of assets for insurance purposes. Clerk to investigate further as part of any future training.

13. Urgent Matters. None were raised.

14. Date of the next meeting – 27th September 2021.

The meeting closed at 8:46pm.

Chairman’s signature Dated

APPENDIX 1: Grants and earmarked reserves for identified projects (as at 28 June 2021)

Particulars	c/f 2019- 20 £	Provided 2020-21 £	Usage 2020-21 £	Released 2020-21 £	Balance 31.3.21 (£)	Provided 2021-22 £	Planned Usage 2021- 22 £	Expected Balance 31.3.22 (£)
Specified earmarked reserves								
Future burial provision	21,768 ^a	2,903	0	0	24,671	2,843	0	27,514
Play area improvements/upgrades	8,000	8,000	0	0	16,000	8,000	0	24,000
Public consultation	0	0	0	0	0	2,000	0	2,000
Sherwood Court projects	0	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	10,000
Queens Platinum Jubilee	0	0	0	0	0	10,000	0	10,000
CCTV and parish field lighting project	0	0	0	0	0	15,000	15,000	0
Defibrillator	0	0	0	0	0	3,000	3,000	0
Grant Show & community projects	0	0	0	0	0	10,000	10,000	0
Grants								
S106 reclaim - retention fee	0	738	738	738	0	0	0	0
Ho Ho Helsby	0	3,950	3,950	3,950	0	0	0	0
CW&C Covid HPC	0	10,000	2,664 ^b	2,664 ^b	7,336	0	4,000 ^b	3,336
CW&C Covid HCA	0	10,000	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	0
S106 reclaim – basketball and teen shelter	0	1,193	1,193 ^c	1,193 ^c	0	0	0	0
CW&C Members Budget laptop	0	500	500	500	0	0	0	0
Arts Council - Helsby Art of Here plus S106	0	9,900	870	870	9,030	6,100 ^d	15,130	0
Community Policing Fund 2020-21	0	500	0	0	500	0	500	0
Total	29,768	47,684	19,915	19,915	57,537	66,943	47,630	76,850
Total earmarked reserves balance at 31st March 2021					57,537	Expected balance at 31st March 2022		76,850

^a Incorrectly recorded in the 2019/20 final year accounts. Should have been £22,491. Add the £723 difference to 2020/21's figure of £2180 = £2,903.

^b Costs for new noticeboard to be taken from the COVID grant money in 2020/21 and for the office relocation in 2021/22.

^c Project paid for in 2019/20 financial year.

^d Includes remaining £1,100 grant money from Arts Council and £5000 contribution from S106 monies through CW&C.

Reserves (as at 31 March 2021)

Particulars	c/f 2019-20 £	Provided 2020-21 £	Usage 2020-21 £	Released 2020-21 £	Balance 31.3.21 £
General Reserves	103,302	39,603	0	0	142,905*
Earmarked reserves	29,768	47,684	19,915	19,915	57,537
Total	133,070	87,287	19,915	19,915	200,442

*The generally accepted recommendation with regard to the appropriate minimum level of a Smaller Authority's General Reserve is that this should be maintained at between 3 and 12 month's Net Revenue (Practitioners Guide, NALC, March 2021).