



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held at 7.00pm in the Parish Office at Helsby Community Sports Club on Monday 3rd April 2023

Present:

Cllr. Terry O'Neill (Chairman)
Cllr. Peter Duffy
Cllr. Mike Branigan
Cllr. Alan Gardner

Also present:

Claire Jones (Parish Clerk)
Cllr. Graham Stothard

1. Public Participation – No matters were brought to the Committee's attention.
2. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr. Temple.
3. Declarations of Members' Interests. None were received/reported.
4. Confirmation of Previous Minutes. It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 9th January 2023 be accepted as accurate and duly signed by the Chairman – **F8/23**.
5. Clerk's report. It was noted that the 2022/23 accounts had been uploaded onto Scribe and the system was now fully operational for the 2023/24 financial year. Members were invited to the parish office for an induction on the system. It was also noted that free training sessions were available through Scribe. The Clerk outlined that various cost codes had been amended/introduced and these would be shared at the next meeting. The Clerk also agreed to bring a report to the next meeting on changing the Council's current bank account provider but in the meantime, it was agreed to approach Natwest to request a dual signatory system for payments. It was noted that further information was being sought from CW&C Property on future expenditure plans at Helsby Community Centre. No update was available on the boiler repairs at the guide hut. It was noted that a new photocopier would be installed in the parish office on 21st April. It was agreed that the coping stones issue at the parish field would be raised at the next Full Council meeting. Cllr. O'Neill reminded members to send comments on proposed expenditure for the 5-Year Business Plan 2023-2028.
6. Review of grants/earmarked reserves. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Full Council to approve the 'Earmarked Reserves and Grants' table denoting a balance of £101,895 as

at 31st March 2023 – F9/23. Cllr. O’Neill suggested that plans were put in place to spend some of these allocated funds during 2023/24.

7. Review of Financial Regulations – It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the existing Financial Regulations with no amendments – F10/23**. It was noted that a working group meeting was being held on 27th April to review all the Council’s policies and procedures and the document would be considered in more detail then.
8. Review of Asset Register – It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Asset Register detailing £231,084.04 being the total value of assets held as at 31st March 2023 – F11/23**. The Clerk agreed to investigate the current status of the Trucam hand-held camera with Cheshire Police. It was agreed to discuss the purchase of additional planters and the maintenance or replacement of the Council’s brick bus shelter at the next Environment Committee.
9. Review of Insurance Schedule – It was noted that the Council had taken out a 3-year long term undertaking (LTU) agreement with Zurich for the Parish Council insurance and that this would renew automatically on 1st June 2023 (expiring in June 2024). The Clerk noted that an exercise to establish the replacement cost of the Council’s assets would be useful to ensure that the Council remained fully insured. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the current insurance schedule – F12/23**. The Clerk agreed to remove the Trucam from the ‘Additional Items’ list if this had been replaced by Cheshire Police.
10. Review of Risk Assessment – It was noted that the Clerk had undertaken a comprehensive review of this document as part of her CiLCA studies. It was agreed that the document, as well as an overarching risk management strategy document, would be discussed at the policy and procedures working group meeting being held on 27th April.
11. Review of Section 106 money available – the latest list as amended by officers at CW&C was noted. It was outlined that clarification was still being sought on the remaining funds for public arts.
12. Outsourcing Payroll – following agreement by Full Council in February to outsource the Council’s payroll service, a report was presented which contained various quotes. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to outsource the Council’s payroll service to Company B at a cost of £180 per year – F13/23**.
13. It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s annual insurance policy with Community First for Helsby Community Centre at a cost of £527.70 – F14/23**.
14. The Council’s investment programme was noted as follows:
 - Co-Operative Bank – Business Select Instant Access Account - £76,585.98. Interest at a variable rate of 1.28% gross AER, paid twice a year in April and October.
 - Monmouthshire Building Society Corporate Bonus 90 £78,478.84. Interest at a variable rate of 0.90% gross AER, paid once per year in March.

- Nat West Business Reserve Account – £25,400.42. 1% gross AER, paid monthly.
- Nationwide Business Instant Saver Account - £40,000.00. Interest at a variable rate of 0.35% AER/gross, paid annually in April.

15. Annual Audit and Annual Return of the Council’s accounts for Financial Year ending 31st March 2023.

15.1. Internal Audit to be undertaken by JDH Businesses Services by the end of April – duly noted.

15.2. External Audit to be carried out by PKF Littlejohn in advance of this year’s deadline of 3rd July 2023 – duly noted.

16. 2022/23 Bank Reconciliation and Financial Report for 31st March 2023. It was noted that the annual interest payment from the Monmouthshire Building Society had not been available prior to the meeting and would be added to the 2022/23 end of year accounts shortly. It was noted there was a cash surplus of £12,061.02. The bank balance was noted as £239,721.95 and it was outlined that a VAT reclaim of £11,612.30 would be submitted shortly. Section 137 payments were noted as £1,150. The Clerk outlined that, despite allocating an additional £34,497 to Earmarked Reserves during 2022/23, the Council’s General Reserves stood at £137,827 (over the recommended amount as set out in the Practitioners Guide, NALC, March 2023, Section 5.33). It was agreed that the Council should consider spending or allocating some of these reserves in 2023/24. It was noted that an additional £5,000 would be allocated under earmarked funds for average speed cameras and it was also **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to allocate an additional £10,000 for future maintenance costs at Helsby Community Centre – F15/23.** It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Bank Reconciliation and Financial Report 31st March 2023 (subject to the inclusion of an interest payment from the Monmouthshire Building Society) – F16/23.**

17. Review of Bank Direct Debits.

The payments as below were noted:

- Scottish Power (monthly DD for electricity charge Helsby Community Centre)
- Water Plus (monthly DD for wastewater charge Helsby Community Centre)
- BT (monthly DD for rental, phone and broadband)
- NEST (monthly DD employee/employer pension contribution)
- Information Commissioner’s Officer (annual DD for registration fee)

It was noted that the final payment to Siemens (quarterly DD for photocopier rental and annual Lease Agreement fees) had been made in January 2023.

It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to continue paying regular payments and utilities by Direct Debit as an efficient and acceptable method of payment – F17/23.**

18. Date of next meeting – Monday 19th June 2023.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm

Chair's signature Dated.....