



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held at 7.00pm in the Parish Office at Helsby Community Sports Club on Monday 4th April 2022

Present:

Cllr. Peter Duffy (Chairman)
Cllr. Terry O'Neill
Cllr. Sarah Temple
Cllr. Alan Gardner

Also present:

Claire Jones (Parish Clerk)

1. Public Participation – It was **RESOLVED that the meeting be suspended for public participation – F9/22**. There being no matters brought to the Committee's attention, it was **RESOLVED that Public Air Time be closed and the meeting reconvened – F10/22**.
2. No apologies for absence were received. It was noted that Cllr. Standing had resigned from all committees.
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 4th January 2022 be accepted as accurate and duly signed by the Chairman – F11/22**.
5. Matters arising. Under Item 5 and in relation to the definition of Net Revenue Expenditure (NRE), the Clerk read out an excerpt from the JPAG Practitioners Guide 2022 as follows: *'Net Revenue Expenditure (subject to any planned surplus or deficit) is effectively Precept/Levy less any Loan Repayment and/or amounts included in Precept/Levy for Capital Projects and transfers to Earmarked Reserves'*. It was noted that Smaller Authority's General Reserves should be maintained at between 3 and 12 months NRE. Under Item 9, the Clerk outlined that a report on online accounting packages would be presented at the next meeting. It was also noted that the Parks, Cemetery and Allotments Committee had recommended that some monies should be allocated into earmarked reserves to layout the cemetery extension area.
6. Review of grants/earmarked reserves. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Grants and Earmarked Reserves table as set out in Appendix 1 – F12/22**.

7. Review of Financial Regulations – It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the existing Financial Regulations with no amendments – F13/22**. Cllr. Temple suggested that the contracts section might benefit from a review at a later date.

8. Review of Asset Register – The Clerk outlined that an exercise to identify all the Council’s assets in situ would be helpful in due course to ensure that everything was listed accurately. It was suggested that this could be done by ward or by committee. Cllr. Temple suggested some amendments as follows: the litter bin valued at £284 was located at the parish field, not the junior area of the park and the location of the Stihl strimmer and Honda mower should be listed as the VPA garage, not the cemetery garage. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Asset Register detailing £196,793.10 being the total value of assets held as at 31st March 2022 subject to the above amendments – F14/22**.

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 1 June 2022. 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 – F15/22**.

10. Review of Risk Assessment – The Clerk proposed a number of suggested amendments to the document following the retirement of the general assistant. This included the removal of several controls under the following sections: ‘legal liability arising from asset ownership and providing services to the public’, ‘litigation by council employees due to injury in the workplace’ and ‘management of the children’s play area’. Cllr. Temple suggested that the section ‘litigation by council employees due to injury in the workplace’ should also include reference to the Council’s lone working policy. In addition, it was suggested that under ‘poor management/illegal use of Council owned land by leaseholders and tenants’, a reference could be made to the routine inspection of the allotments. Finally, under the ‘loss or damage due to disaster’ section it was agreed to remove reference to the reciprocal arrangement with Frodsham Town Council to share office space. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the proposed amendments to the Risk Assessment – F16/22**.

11. Review of Section 106 money available – the latest list from CW&C was discussed. It was agreed that there were a number of significant gaps in the list and that the Clerk would contact CW&C officers, Daniel Lockwood and Jonathan Roberts, for further clarification.

12. The Council’s investment programme was noted as follows:
 - Co-Operative Bank – Business Select Instant Access Account - £76,485.58. Interest at a variable rate of 0.03% gross AER, paid twice a year.
 - Monmouthshire Building Society Corporate Bonus 90 (interest calculated on 31st March) £77,855.99. Interest at a variable rate of 0.50% gross AER, paid once per year.
 - Nat West Business Reserve Account – £5,225.23. 0.01% interest gross AER, paid monthly.

- Nationwide Business Instant Saver Account - £40,000.00. Interest at a variable rate of 0.05% AER/gross, paid annually.

It was **RESOLVED to remove George Randles as a signatory of the Monmouthshire account and to add Chris Ellams as a replacement signatory – F17/22.**

13. Annual Audit and Annual Return of the Council’s accounts for Financial Year ending 31st March 2022.

- Internal Audit to be undertaken by JDH Businesses Services by the end of April – duly noted.
- External Audit to be carried out by PKF Littlejohn in advance of this year’s deadline of 1st July 2022 – duly noted.

14. 2021/22 Bank Reconciliation and Financial Report for 31st March 2022. The Clerk summarised the contents of the Financial Report. It was noted that there was a cash surplus of £27,218 as spending had been lower than anticipated due to a number of outstanding bills and the continuing effects of the Covid pandemic. The bank balance was noted as £227,661 and it was outlined that a VAT reclaim of £6,482 would be submitted shortly. Section 137 payments were noted as £2,788. The Clerk outlined that, despite allocating an additional £22,000 to Earmarked Reserves during 2021/22, the Council’s General Reserves stood at £151,177 (considerably greater than the recommended amount set out under Item 5). It was agreed that the Council should look into spending or allocating some of its General Reserves in 2022/23 and a consultation exercise could be considered as a first step. One suggestion was to allocate some contingency funding to Helsby Community Centre. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Bank Reconciliation and Financial Report 31st March 2022 – F18/22.**

15. Review of Bank Direct Debits.

- 15.1. Siemens (quarterly DD for photocopier rental and annual Lease Agreement fees)
- 15.2. Scottish Power (monthly DD for electricity charge Helsby Community Centre)
- 15.3. Water Plus (monthly DD for waste water charge Helsby Community Centre)
- 15.4. BT (monthly DD for rental, phone and broadband)
- 15.5. NEST (monthly DD employee/employer pension contribution)
- 15.6. Information Commissioner’s Office (annual DD for registration fee)

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 – F19/22.**

16. No matters requiring immediate attention were raised.

17. Date of next meeting – Monday 20th June 2022.

The meeting closed at 8.08pm

Chairman’s signature Dated.....

APPENDIX 1: Grants and earmarked reserves for identified projects (as at 31 March 2022)

Particulars	c/f 2019-20 £	Provided 2020-21 £	Usage 2020-21 £	Released 2020-21 £	Balance 31.3.21 £	Provided 2021-22 £	Usage 2021-22 £	Balance 31.3.22 £
SPECIFIED EARMARKED RESERVES								
Future burial provision	21,768	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
Total	29,768	10,903	0	0	40,671	32,843	0	73,514
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	2,664	7,336	0	6,448 ^a	888
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	1,193	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 ^b	0	7,448	1,582
Community Policing Fund 2020-21	0	500	0	0	500	0	500	0
CW&C Members Budget table tennis table	0	0	0	0	0	500	0	500
S106 reclaim - picnic tables	0	0	0	0	0	2,634	2,634	0
Total	0	36,781	19,915	19,915	16,866	3,134	17,030	2,970
TOTAL	29,768	47,684	19,915	19,915	57,537	35,977	17,030	76,484
Total grants and earmarked reserves balance at 31st March 2021					57,537	Balance at 31st March 2022		76,484

^a COVID grant money in 2021/22 used for noticeboard in 2020/21 (£2,664) and for office relocation in 2021/22 (£6,448).

^b Another £1,100 due from Arts Council plus £8,000 S106 monies due in 2022/23.

Protos grant for CCTV project - £4,000 awarded in 2021/22 but not claimed as yet