



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held at 7.00pm in the Parish Office at Helsby Community Sports Club on Monday 8th April 2024

Present:

Cllr. Terry O'Neill (Chair)

Cllr. Mike Branigan

Cllr. Chris Ellams

Also present:

Claire Jones (Parish Clerk)

1. Public Participation – No matters were brought to the Committee's attention.
2. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllrs. Temple and Nicklin.
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 8th January 2024 be accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – F12/24.**
5. Clerk's report. Members were invited to the parish office for an induction on the Scribe accounting system. The Clerk agreed to prepare a report on any potential new saving and investment opportunities for the next meeting, including any investment funds offered by CCLA. It was noted that the average speed camera project was progressing with the PCC/CW&C and the council would only need to pay the balance once the cameras were up and running.
6. Review of grants/earmarked reserves. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to approve the 'Reserves Balance' table denoting a balance of £171,315.08 as at 31st March 2024 – F13/24.** It was noted that some additional earmarked resources would be required for the cemetery extension area design project to fund the construction phase of the project. No quotes had yet been received but it was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to allocate an additional £5,000 from general reserves to the cemetery extension area project – F14/24.**
7. 2023/24 Bank Reconciliation, Budget Report and Financial Report for 31st March 2024. It was noted there was a surplus of £8,720.51, although there were a few outstanding invoices to be paid. The bank balance was noted as £249,192.31 and it was outlined that a VAT reclaim of £10,829.08 would be submitted shortly. It was noted that as the council now had General Power of Competence, no Section 137 payments were made during

2023/24. The Clerk agreed to look at some of the council's lease agreements to see if there was any scope to negotiate a cost-of-living increase. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Bank Reconciliation, Budget Report and Financial Report to 31st March 2024 – F15/24.**

8. Review of Financial Regulations – no amendments were proposed until NALC had updated the 2019 Model Financial Regulations for England and Wales (due shortly) and the new bank accounts with Unity Bank had been set up. It was therefore **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the existing Financial Regulations with no amendments – F16/24.**
9. Review of Asset Register – It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the Asset Register detailing £221,826.65 being the total value of assets held as at 31st March 2024 – F17/24.**
10. 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 which would expire in June 2024. The Clerk agreed to establish the replacement cost of the Council's assets to ensure that the Council remained fully insured and to check if the policy was on a 'new for old' basis. It was also agreed to seek competitive quotes in advance of the renewal date. It was noted that the 'Trucam handheld Laser MPH spec' and 'Mowers, Machinery and Tools' should be removed from the 'Additional Items' list as they had been removed from the asset register and that the meeting owl should be added under 'office and computer equipment'. It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the current insurance schedule (pending a review of the replacement costs of the council's assets and the removal/addition of several items under 'Additional Items') – F18/24.**
11. Review of General Risk Assessment – Members discussed the latest version of the document dated 25th September 2023. The following amendments were proposed:
 - No. 1 – remove further action required comments as this had now been resolved;
 - No. 3 – correct typo 'contactors' to 'contractors';
 - No. 4 – Under further action required, amend to 'Investigate enhanced cyber security, virus protection and file back-up measures';
 - No. 6 - remove second further action required comment (mitigate trip hazards) as this had now been resolved;
 - No. 7 – change monthly to periodic updates;
 - No. 12 – update further action required comment to 'Contractor to undertake further training on playground inspections';
 - No. 5 – amend to 6 vacancies;
 - No. 22 – correct typos 'Gove' to 'give' and 'Chairman' to 'Chair';
 - No. 30 – add the need for a 'data map' and reword further action required to 'new GDPR policies to be drawn up';
 - No. 33 – amend internet banking requirement for three councillors to two councillors in order to bring this in line with the Financial Regulations. Add 'Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy';

- No. 35 – Under further action required add ‘Internal Control Policy to be introduced with robust internal controls’;
- No. 40 – add ‘Credit Management Policy’;
- No. 43 – remove further action required comments as this had now been implemented;
- No. 52 - amend internet banking requirement for three councillors to two councillors in order to bring this in line with the Financial Regulations;
- No. 54 - remove further action required comments as this had now been resolved; and
- No. 55 – add ‘use Contracts Finder for projects over £25,000’.

It was **RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council to accept the General Risk Assessment with the proposed amendments as set out above – F19/24.**

12. Review of Section 106 money available – the latest list was noted although it was outlined that this was still to be checked by officers at CW&C. It was noted that the Clerk had asked for a deadline on any claims from each development. The Clerk agreed to request whether the open space allocation of £4,848.06 from the Horse and Jockey development (16/03313/FUL) could be spent on the cemetery extension area project. Committee members expressed an interest in a heritage project using the public arts project (to be considered further by the Environment Committee).

13. It was **RESOLVED to renew the Council’s annual insurance policy with Community First for Helsby Community Centre at a cost of £540.25 – F20/24.**

14. The Council’s investment programme was noted as follows:

- Co-Operative Bank – Business Select Instant Access Account - £77,477.89. Interest at a variable rate of 1.63% gross AER, paid twice a year in April and October.
- Monmouthshire Building Society Corporate Bonus 90 - £80,307.61. Interest at a variable rate of 1.50% gross AER, paid once per year in March.
- Nat West Business Reserve Account – £36,317.71. 1.46% gross AER, paid monthly.
- Nationwide Business Instant Saver Account - £40,000.00. Interest at a variable rate of 2.30% AER/gross, paid annually in April.

15. Annual Audit and Annual Return of the Council’s accounts for Financial Year ending 31st March 2024.

15.1. Internal Audit – it was **RESOLVED to approve the appointment of JDH Business Services to carry out the council’s internal audit for submission in April – F21/24.**

15.2. External Audit – it was noted that this would be carried out by PKF Littlejohn. The Clerk outlined that the default submission deadline was 1st July and that the council has been selected for an intermediate review for the 2023/24 reporting year.

16. 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)
- Grenke Leasing (quarterly DD for office photocopier)

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 – F22/24.**

17. Date of next meeting – Monday 17th June 2024.

The meeting closed at 19.51pm

Chair’s signature Dated.....