



Helsby Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held at 7.00pm in the Parish Office at Helsby Community Sports Club on Monday 17th June 2024

Present:

Cllr. Terry O'Neill (Chair)

Cllr. Rob Nicklin

Cllr. Chris Ellams

Also present:

Claire Jones (Parish Clerk)

1. Election of Chair – It was **RESOLVED** that **Cllr. O'Neill be elected as Chair – F23/24.**
2. Election of Vice Chair – It was **RESOLVED** that **Cllr. Ellams be elected as Vice Chair – F24/24.**
3. Public Participation – no matters were brought to the Committee's attention.
4. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr. Temple.
5. Declarations of Members' Interests. None were received/reported.
6. Confirmation of Previous Minutes. It was **RESOLVED** that **the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 8th April 2024 were accepted as accurate and were duly signed by the Chair – F25/24.**
7. Clerk's report. It was noted that there were no further updates on the installation of the average speed cameras since the election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner. However, Cllr. O'Neill reported that the new commissioner was expected to commit to any projects that had been agreed to before the PCC elections. It was agreed that the Clerk would give a demonstration on the Scribe accounts system at the end of the next meeting. The Clerk agreed to follow up several other issues raised at the last meeting:
 - to seek legal advice in relation to any opportunities to raise rental income from council property;
 - to confirm with the council's insurers whether or not the contents cover was on a 'new for old' basis;
 - to seek confirmation from CW&C in relation to using S106 funds for the cemetery extension work; and
 - given the high levels of S106 monies available for public art, to seek volunteers at the next Full Council meeting to take forward a potential project with CW&C.

8. Members noted the grants and earmarked reserves carried forward from 2023/24 and provided for, received and spent in the current fiscal year as set out in Appendix 1. It was agreed to remove the word 'design' from the cemetery extension project heading.

9. The Council's investment programme was noted as follows:

- Co-Operative Bank Business Select Account - £78,109.12 as at 11 June 2024
- Monmouthshire Building Society Corporate Bonus 90 - £80,307.61 as at 11 June 2024
- Nat West Business Reserve - £116,553.17 as at 11 June 2024
- Nat West Current Account - £36,473.15 as at 11 June 2024
- Nationwide Instant Access - £40,000 as at 11 June 2024.

Members noted the Clerk's report 'Investment Opportunities for Council Reserves' and a draft Investments Policy. It was outlined that the government had advised councils with bank balances over £100,000 to have an appropriate investments strategy. It was also noted that the council could increase income by moving some of its savings into accounts with higher interest rates. It was **RESOLVED to present the draft Investments Policy for approval by Full Council (subject to the amendment below) and then to explore short-term investment opportunities with various banks which offered both security and liquidity but also better rates of interest – F26/24.** It was agreed to amend clause 5.3 to *"Notwithstanding 5.2, this policy shall be reviewed in the event the Bank of England increases its base rate above 3% or if the amount covered through the Financial Services Compensation Scheme is changed."* As a first step, it was agreed that the move from Natwest to Unity Bank should increase income from bank interest.

10. Annual Audit 2023/24

10.1. It was noted that the internal auditor had one recommendation for 2023/24: ISSUE – The payroll agent is notified of changes to pay rates by an e-mail from the Clerk. RECOMMENDATION – The Chair should be copied into e-mails to the payroll agent notifying them of changes to pay rates. ACTION - **Clerk to action with payroll agent when required and add the auditor's recommendation to the council's general risk assessment at the next review date in September (under Clause 47 – Fraud by Clerk) – F27/24.**

10.2. External Audit – it was noted that the Annual Audit was sent to PKF Littlejohn on 15 May (in advance of the deadline of 1 July 2024). It was also noted that the confirmation of the dates of the period for the exercise of public rights alongside Sections 1 & 2 of Part 3 of Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023/24 had been displayed on www.helsbyparish.org.uk and the HPC noticeboard in accordance with the external auditor's instructions.

11. 2024/25 Budget Analysis – The final budget spend for 2023/24 was noted and the Finance Committee budget for the year 2024/25 was discussed as shown in Appendix 2. Members discussed the scope to carry out a pilot project to manage some of the overgrown vegetation and dirty signs in the village using funds under Cost Code 261 (Community

Projects). It was agreed to discuss this further at the next Environment Committee on 1st July. The Clerk agreed to try to seek any views from CW&C in advance.

12. Review of Section 106 money available – see Item 7. It was noted that a S106 application had been submitted to CW&C for a project at the Queens Drive allotments.
13. Participatory Budgeting Event – it was proposed not to hold a grant show in February 2025 but to consider any ad-hoc requests throughout the year in line with the council's Community Grant Policy.
14. Bank account update. It was noted that the Clerk had completed a new bank mandate with NatWest to add Cllr. Nicklin as a signatory to the account. The Clerk agreed to apply to open both a current account and savings account with Unity as soon as the mandate had been approved.
15. Review of Financial Regulations – it was noted that NALC's revised Model Financial Regulations for England and Wales had recently been published. The Clerk presented a revised draft version of the council's current regulations as based on this new template, but it was felt that further work was required before it could be approved. The Clerk agreed to produce a list of specific issues for discussion at the next meeting.
16. Review of other policies – the Clerk agreed to present a draft Internal Control Policy for discussion at the next meeting and to review the Fixed Asset Policy.
17. No urgent matters were raised.
18. Date of the next meeting – 23rd September 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.18pm

Chair's signature Dated.....

Appendix 1: Grants and earmarked reserves for identified projects (as at 11th June 2024)

Particulars	c/f 2022-23 £	Provided 2023-24 £	Usage 2023-24 £	Balance 31.3.24 £	Provided 2024-25 £	Planned Usage 2024-25 £	Expected Balance 31.3.25 £
Future burial provision	31,147	4,105	0	35,252	7,900	0	43,152
Play area improvements/upgrades	32,000	9,000	0	41,000	9,000	0	50,000
Cemetery extension area project	5,000	0	300	4,700	5,000	9,700	0
CIL payments	5,363	0	0	5,363	0	4,677 ^a	686
Wheelchair accessible roundabout	5,000	0	0	5,000	0	0	5,000
Average speed cameras	0	50,000	0	50,000	0	50,000	0
Helsby Community Centre maintenance	0	10,000	0	10,000	0	0	10,000
Parks Masterplan	0	20,000	0	20,000	0	0	20,000
Helsby News website	0	0	0	0	183	0	183
Public consultation	1,230	0	1,230	0	0	0	0
Sherwood Court projects	10,000	813	10,813	0	0	0	0
Queens Platinum Jubilee	606	0	606	0	0	0	0
Neighbourhood Pride grant	3,925	0	3,925	0	0	0	0
Cemetery garage roof	7,500	0	7,500	0	0	0	0
S106 Parish Field Reclaim	-2,318	2318	0	0	0	0	0
CW&C Covid HPC	113	0	113	0	0	0	0
TOTAL EARMARKED AND GRANTS	99,566	96,236	24,487	171,315	22,083	64,377	129,021

^a possibly required for average speed camera costs (total cost of project is £54,677)

Appendix 2: Finance Committee expenditure and income in 2023/24 and 2024/25 payments and receipts to date (all payments are NET)

Payments

Budget Code	Description	Budget 2023/24 £	Budget spent 2023/24 £	Budget 2024/25 £	Budget spent to date £	Predicted To 31/03/25 £
232	CC – Light and heat	5000	3487	5000	514	5000
233	CC – Repairs/renewals	3000	0	3000	0	3000
234	CC – Water charges	400	396	450	79	400
235	CC – Insurances	500	1068	510	0	510
237	CC – Sundries	100	44	100	0	100
238	Clerk’s pension	2247	2707	2800	549	3295
239	Hire charges/meetings	250	220	250	0	40
240	Cllr/employee training	600	785	600	30	600
241	Salaries	31419	37089	38000	7224	43343
242	Council office	700	1663	735	18	735
243	Admin subscriptions	3000	3770	3800	1682	3000
244	Admin car allowance	360	234	378	41	250
245	Admin stationery	100	68	100	5	100
246	Postage and phone	1000	908	1000	243	1000
247	Councillors’ expenses	100	33	100	50	100
248	Internal audit fees	350	338	365	363	363
249	Admin sundries	250	245	250	6	250
250	Remembrance Day	250	319	300	0	300
251	External audit fees	420	420	420	420	420
252	Insurance premium	1300	1469	1500	1510	1510
253	Legal and professional	1000	1080	1000	0	2000
254	Donations – s.137	200	0	0	0	0
256	Equipment	1000	979	1000	213	1000
258	Sundries	3000	1225	3000	80	3000
261	Community Projects	8000	7050	5000	0	5000
262	Chairman’s allowance	225	225	225	0	225
265	H&S/PPE	500	0	500	118	500
267	Newsletter	3000	4027	4500	320	4500
270	Neighbourhood Plan	0	0	0	0	0
275	Election Expenses	3517	591	0	0	0
TOTAL		71788	70440	74883	13465	80541

Footnotes:

- i) Code 232 – shared area electricity bills remain under query with CW&C. No invoicing from CW&C so far this year. Difficulty transferring bills to HCA due to wording in lease.

- ii) Code 233 – Still no invoices from CW&C for work carried out (e.g. roller shutter door, asbestos and fire remediation).
- iii) Code 235 – paid two invoices in 2023/24 as renewal falls in early April.
- iv) Code 237 – covers webhosting fee which is reclaimed from HCA.
- v) Code 238 – will be higher than anticipated due to increase in Clerk’s hours and salary. Also to add on the Local Government Pay Claim 2024/25 once agreed.
- vi) Code 239 – expected to be far lower this year due to Full Council meetings being held in the parish office.
- vii) Code 241 – will be higher than anticipated due to increase in Clerk’s hours and salary. Also to add on the Local Government Pay Claim 2024/25 once agreed.
- viii) Code 242 – Annual utility costs for HCSC office set as £635 plus VAT (£762) per annum (index linked). 2023/24 covered 2 years.
- ix) Code 243 – Included IT support from Cloudy IT in 2023/24 to migrate files so costs are likely to be lower this year.
- x) Code 252 – PC insurance LTU agreement taken out which expires in May 2027.
- xi) Code 253 – Some lease/land registry issues need to be resolved (scout hut, guide hut, VPA, AQMS and RSK). Costs unknown at present.
- xii) Code 258 – Could be used to cover new IT requirements (e.g. Microsoft Business Premium, data storage, webhosting) and new office furniture.
- xiii) Code 261 – To discuss whether to hold a Grants Show in Feb 2025.
- xiv) Code 262 – to be held in the council’s accounts to benefit from VAT savings.
- xv) Code 265 – covers personal safety alarm subscription.
- xvi) Code 267 – Additional costs due to new design fees.
- xvii) Code 275 – No elections expected.

Receipts

Budget Code	Description	Budget 2023/24 £	Budget spent 2023/24 £	Budget 2024/25 £	Received to date £	Predicted To 31/03/25 £
101	Precept	104844	104844	109040	109040	109040
102	Interest on accounts	1000	3092	3000	1639	3000
103	Rent on Eccies etc.	13054	19485	13315	3312	13315
104	Grants	0	2318	0	0	1236
105	Insurance claims	0	0	0	0	0
106	Helsby Com. Centre	4000	4794	5000	629	5000
107	Cemetery fees	7000	10950	7000	250	7000
108	Allotment rents	1800	1658	1800	86	1800
109	Sundries	100	0	100	0	100
110	VAT recovery	9000	11602	8000	10829	10829
TOTAL		140798	158744	147255	125785	151320

Footnotes:

- i) Code 102 – much higher interest rates this year.
- ii) Code 103 – Payment for last half of 2022/23 was late – received in April 2023.
- iii) Code 104 – S106 claim for Queens Drive allotments has been submitted.