

**FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
7.30PM ON 13 OCTOBER 2022
By Microsoft Teams video conference**

PRESENT: Councillor R. Woof, Chair. Cllr G. Jukes OBE, Vice Chair.
Councillors S. Bromley; D. Cornish; R. Cundy; G. Evans; G. Veitch
& S. Weeks.

K. Dagnall, Clerk.

221/2022 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr McDonald. Cllr Evans was welcomed as a new member of the Committee.

222/2022 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Non-pecuniary declarations of interest were received as follows:

Cllr Bromley: California Ratepayers Association; Finchampstead Park Management Committee.

Cllr Cundy: California Ratepayers Association; Finchampstead Park Management Committee;
Finchampstead Primary School.

Cllr Woof: Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership.

Cllr Weeks: Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership; Finchampstead Park Management Committee.

223/2022 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2022 were agreed as a true record. These will be signed in due course.

224/2022 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES / OTHER MATTERS

161/2022 Assets

There has been some progress towards adding images to the software package. Some assets require inspection – the Clerk will circulate information as soon as possible.

161/2022 Support for youth work activities

Cllrs McDonald and Woof and the Clerk have now held two meetings with FBC representatives to discuss the current youth activities and how the support provided by the Parish Council is utilised.

Following the discussions, the FBC are developing a new format for reports to be sent to the Parish Council three times a year to coincide with the school terms. This will include factual information on the activities provided as well as statistical data.

Regular meetings with the FBC representatives will continue, and an annual presentation to the Council is proposed.

161/2022 Declaration of Interests form

Updating of the Declaration of Interests form to align it with the new Code of Conduct adopted in 2021 is in hand.

165/2022 Authorised signatories

Cllr Jukes has been confirmed by the Unity Trust Bank as a signatory but is awaiting the final information from the Bank in order to be able to access the account.

Cllr Weeks' access is still outstanding. It was agreed that the performance of the Bank over these arrangements has been very poor. The Clerk will contact the Bank to express the Council's concerns and to try and resolve the issues.

167/2022 Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP)

The Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) IRP questionnaire was discussed at the previous meeting and it was agreed that the Parish Council would not introduce Councillor allowances. In view of the cancellation of the September Main Council meeting due to the national period of mourning, and to meet the deadline for responses, other Councillors were consulted by email and were in agreement with the recommendation of the Committee and the draft response. The response has now been submitted to WBC.

168/2022 Investment strategy / policy

Some progress has been made and a draft will be submitted to a future meeting.

Due to the cancellation of the September Main Council meeting, the following items discussed at the July meeting of the Committee will be recommended to the Council for approval at its meeting on 19 October 2022:

Changes to Ear Marked Reserves

Grants to Citizens Advice; First Days and the Gorse Ride Community House After School project.

Appointment of an Internal Auditor for 2023/24.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

No members of the public were present.

225/2022 FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNCIL

Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2021/22

Cllr Woof advised that the Council received an unqualified report from the external auditor, PKF Littlejohn.

Unity Trust Bank current account

The balance on 10 October 2022 was £191,042,88.

CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

The balance on 30 September 2022 was £1,004,280. The yield on 31 August 2022 was 1.6205%.

CCLA Property Fund

£25,000 was invested in the Fund in August 2017. Information on current market and bid values was circulated. The investment is stable and continues to be reviewed regularly.

Income and Expenditure to date

A report was circulated. No issues were raised.

Budget for 2023/24

Committees are currently being asked to consider budget requirements. The Clerk will work on other aspects of the budget in consultation with Councillors.

A draft budget will be presented to the Finance & General Management Committee at its meeting on 30 November followed by a final budget and precept proposal at the January Committee meeting.

The Council will be asked to approve the budget at its January meeting, and the Precept Demand is due to be sent to WBC in the first week of February.

226/2022 GRANT AWARDS FOR 2022/23

At the previous meeting grants for First Days and for the Gorse Ride Community House After School Project were agreed, subject to Council approval which will be sought at the October meeting of the Council. The Committee discussed whether it would be possible to use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds for these projects. This has been followed up and CIL funding is not appropriate for the First Days project. However, as the Gorse Ride project involves the purchase of equipment, the grant can be covered by CIL funds. It was agreed that this grant should be provided without a requirement for match funding.

The 1st Finchampstead Scout Group had submitted an application towards the provision of cycle racks at its hut in the California Country Park, but the application has now been withdrawn.

Grant applications were considered, and recommendations made as set out below, subject to the approval of the Council at its meeting on 19 October.

Organisation	Project	Grant requested	Committee recommendation
Growing Places	Horticultural therapy project involving the growing and selling of plants and vegetables. Grant is requested towards the purchase of tools and equipment.	£725	Grant of £725
Me2 Club	To allow children with additional needs to take part in mainstream leisure activities.	£750	Grant of £750
Wokingham Job Support Centre	Education and training and provision of services for job seekers	£1000	Grant of £1000
Keep Mobile	Running costs of the services including Dial a Ride, Shopping Bus, Group Transport and Day Trips	£4500	Grant of £4000*
Blackwater Valley Countryside Partnership	To support the work in Finchampstead and the wider Blackwater Valley, providing countryside sites and a network of paths for public access.	£4000	Grant of £4000

* Keep Mobile application: Cllr Woof will review the organisations' accounts before the grant is awarded.

Larger grant applications

If approved, any grants are likely to be CIL funded. All of the following projects are supported in principle by the Committee, but further information is needed before full consideration can be given to any funding award.

- Gorse Ride Schools**
 The Schools are securing up to date proposals and costs for their priority items, a replacement trim trail for the infant's playground, and an outdoor shelter / learning space for the Junior playground. Full information is not yet available.
- Finchampstead Village School**
 The school has supplied further information on its proposals for multi-use games areas and a trim trail / active play space. Further information on funding secured has been requested.
- Finchampstead Sports Club**
 There is no further information on the project to improve the officials' changing rooms and the grounds man's facilities.

227/2022 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) FUNDS

A report was circulated showing the current funds, expenditure to date this year and current commitments.

The current balance is £1,036,451. Expenditure to date in 2022/23 is £58,364.

Current approved commitments include:

- Bridlepath 24 drainage improvements
- War Memorial relocation project (underway)
- War Memorial junction concept designs (complete)
- California Crossroads improvements
- Parish gateway signs (complete)
- Rooks Nest access improvements

Potential projects were noted and / or discussed as follows.

- **Gorse Ride Schools** – outdoor facilities. Refer to agenda item 226/2022 above.
- **Finchampstead Primary School** – outdoor facilities. Refer to agenda item 226/2022 above.
- **Finchampstead Sports Club** – changing and groundman’s facilities. Refer to agenda item 226/2022 above.
- **CCTV to combat fly tipping** – no further information has been provided by WBC and it was agreed that this project should be shelved.
- **Platinum Jubilee Gift for the community / refurbishment of the FBC playing fields play area.** WBC appears to have shelved the refurbishment project and is continuing with ad hoc repairs. No approach has been made to the Parish Council for a funding contribution.

It was agreed that the £5000 provisionally allocated as a Platinum Jubilee gift should be retained to be used for a project to benefit local children.

- **California Country Park lakeside improvements:** WBC has now drawn up proposals which have been presented and circulated to the Parish Council and other Town and Parish Councils within the Borough. WBC has committed funds to the project and if Finchampstead Parish and other Town and Parish Councils agree to contribute, the project could be implemented autumn / winter 2023/24.

A formal bid for funds is expected from WBC this month and will be considered by the Committee at its November meeting.

- **War Memorial junction improvements:** The Parish Council’s War Memorial Working Group has had discussions with WBC over the potential improvements to the junction. Concept designs have been drawn up and the preferred option selected by the WBC Highways Department has been costed at an estimated £300,000. WBC is unlikely to be able to contribute more than around £20,000 as the junction is not a priority for improvement.

It was agreed that a provisional allocation of a maximum of £300,000 would be recommended to the Parish Council. This allocation would be subject to the Parish Council approving the final scheme and cost which will be prepared by the WBC Highways Department in due course.

228/2022 DONATIONS FOR 2022/23

Donations to local schools, halls and the St James’ Churchyard were discussed and agreed as follows, subject to the approval of the Council at its October meeting.

Category	Organisation	Donation agreed
Halls	California Ratepayers Hall	£1200
	Memorial Hall	£500
Churchyards	St James’ Churchyard	£800
Schools*	Nine Mile Ride Primary (roll 362)	£3077
	Gorse Ride Infants (roll 90)	£1284
	Gorse Ride Junior (roll 213)	£1862
	Finchampstead Primary (roll 104)	£952

* It was agreed that donations to Schools would be based on £8.50 per pupil or the donation provided in 2021/22, whichever figure was the higher.

It was noted that the Wokingham United Charities have taken on a coordinating role with the Voluntary and Community Sector organisations to ensure that available funds are used most appropriately and efficiently.

The Town and Parish Councils are linked into this initiative as most have funds available for organisations which provide support and or services to their residents.

This could lead to more funding applications being received by the Council.

229/2022 COUNCIL MANAGEMENT MATTERS AND WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

HR Sub Committee

- A meeting took place prior to the Committee meeting.
- The Deputy Clerk has resigned and will be leaving the Parish Council on 27 October. The recruitment process will start as soon as possible.
- Mid-term appraisal reviews for staff were completed in August / September.
- A new Litter Warden has been appointed and started work with the Council on 1 October.

Council Strategy / Forward Plan

- An initial meeting will be held on 20 October. This will include discussion on how best to integrate the Neighbourhood Development Plan with the work of and future planning for the Council.

Business Continuity

- Cllrs Jukes, McDonald and Woof and the Clerk and Deputy Clerk have met to discuss measures to be in place to ensure business continuity and work on the identified areas is progressing. A further meeting is taking place on 20 October.
- At the previous meeting Cllr Veitch suggested that an annual IT security audit should be carried out. Advice has been sought from the Council's IT and website support providers and this will be discussed at the meeting on 20 October.

Finchampstead Emergency Response

- The Working Group had arranged to meet the new WBC Emergency Planning Officer in September to review the role of FER and how this fits into the wider emergency planning. The meeting is now being rearranged for November.

230/2022 FORUM

No matters were raised.

231/2022 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 30 November 2022.

These minutes are subject to final approval at the next meeting of the Committee.

FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 13 OCTOBER 2022

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)
224/2022	Add images to asset management software	Clerk
224/2022	Circulate information on asset inspections needed	Clerk
224/2022	Youth Work – continue to liaise with FBC and ensure regular reports on activities and future plans are received	Clerk
224/2022	Authorised signatories – follow up with Unity Trust Bank	Clerk
224/2022	Draft investment strategy/policy	Clerk
224/2022	Update Declaration of Interests form	Clerk
225/2022	Potential funding requirement for NDP referendum	Clerk / RM

225/2022	Draft budget for 2023/24	
226/2022 227/2022 228/2022	Funding recommendations to Main Council 19/10/22 for approval Grants – from July and October meetings CIL provisional commitments Donations	Clerk
226/2022	CIL bids Gorse Ride Schools – maintain contact. Liaise with WUC. Sports Club – continue to seek additional information. Finchampstead Primary School – continue to see additional information	Clerk
229/2022	Deputy Clerk recruitment	Clerk
229/2022	Business Continuity Plan – continue to progress agreed actions Consider information from IT support company and web support company regarding annual security checks Circulate policy on document management/email retention	Clerk/ RW/SM/GJ Clerk
229/2022	Rearrange FER meeting	Clerk