

**FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
7.30PM ON 3 MAY 2023
At the FBC Centre, Gorse Ride North, Finchampstead**

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

K. Dagnall, Clerk.
K. Lang, Deputy Clerk.

23/2023 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Committee members were present.

24/2023 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

25/2023 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 January 2023 were agreed as a true record and were signed by Cllr Woof.

26/2023 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

323/2022 Asset inspections and asset management software updates

The asset management software is in the process of being updated. Details of asset inspection requirements will be circulated shortly.

323/2022 Declaration of Interests form

The Declaration of Interests form has been updated to align it with the new Code of Conduct adopted in 2021.

326/2023 Investment Strategy and Reserves Policy

The new document was approved at the previous meeting and adopted by the Council in January 2023. The Internal Auditor is aware that this is now in place and had no further comment to make on the document.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

No members of the public were present.

27/2023 FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COUNCIL

Unity Trust Bank current account

The balance on 27 April 2023 was £538,320.21. This includes the first 40% of the Precept from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) and a Community Infrastructure Levy fund payment. It was agreed that £400,000 should be transferred to the CCLA Deposit Fund.

CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

The balance on 31 March 2023 was £1,371,704.13. The yield on 31 March 2023 was 4.1223%.

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 showing the position at the end of 2022/23. No matters were raised.

Expenditure to date in 2023/24 was reported at the Council meeting held on 27 April 2023.

28/2023 GRANT AWARDS FOR 2023/24

Prior to 2020 all grant applications were considered in October each year but since 2020 applications have been considered at any point during the financial year. It was agreed that in 2023/24 this approach should continue, but in 2024/25 the Committee and Council should revert to considering all grant applications in October / November 2024.

It was agreed that this approach could be varied at the discretion of the Committee, in appropriate circumstances. It was further agreed that applications for larger grants, where any awards would generally be made from Community Infrastructure Levy funds, would continue to be considered on an adhoc basis throughout the year.

Four grant applications were considered, and the following awards agreed, subject to approval from the Council at its meeting on 24 May 2023.

Organisation	Project	Grant requested	Committee recommendation
Citizens Advice Wokingham	Free, confidential and impartial advice and provision of information on many topics for Finchampstead residents.	£3500	Grant of £4000
Berkshire Vision	Services to blind and partially sighted children and adults in the Parish	£250	Grant of £250
Sue Ryder – Duchess of Kent Hospice	Care for patients and their families at the hospice based in Reading.	£500	Grant of £500

A decision on an application from Parenting Special Children was deferred pending more information coming forward about the organisation.

Donation towards local celebrations to mark the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III

The St. James' Church Social Committee is holding a Big Lunch on 7 May, open to all Finchampstead residents, and has requested a contribution of £200 to cover the cost of the band who will play at the event. The donation was unanimously approved, to be covered by the Community Activities budget.

WBC Sports Sponsorship Fund request

WBC has decided to award a sum of money to a young Finchampstead trampolinist and has requested match funding, or a contribution, from the Parish Council. While commending the young athlete for their achievements, the Parish Council's policy is not to award grants to individuals and it was agreed that a contribution would not be provided.

FBC Youth Work activities

The Parish Council provides its largest single grant to the FBC towards the provision of youth activities. Cllrs Woof and McDonald and the Clerk have had several meetings with FBC representatives over the last year to discuss the youth activities and how the support provided by the Parish Council is utilised.

The need for the Parish Council to have regular reports on the topic has been stressed and a new format agreed. Two reports were circulated to the Councillors, covering activities provided in 2022.

It was agreed that the reports provided sufficient information. The Clerk will continue to liaise with the FBC representatives to ensure that the agreed quarterly reports are provided going forward.

29/2023 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) FUNDS

The Regulation 62A Monitoring Report covering 2022/23 was circulated. This has been published and forwarded to WBC in accordance with the legislation.

A report was circulated showing the current funds and current commitments. The current balance is £1,739,901.

Current approved commitments include:

- War Memorial relocation project (final items)
- California Country park improvements (provisional allocation)
- California Crossroads improvements
- War Memorial junction concept designs (complete)
- War Memorial junction improvements (provisional allocation)
- Parish gateway signs (complete)

Potential projects were noted as follows.

- **Gorse Ride Schools** – outdoor shelters and play equipment. A grant application was submitted in 2022 and a provisional allocation made but further information is needed before full consideration can be given to any funding award.
- **Finchampstead Sports Club** – changing and groundman's facilities A grant application was submitted in 2022 and a provisional allocation made but further information is needed before full consideration can be given to any funding award.
- **Screens / portable television at the FBC Centre** – the Clerk has suggested that the FBC submit a grant application for support for replacement presentation/ display equipment and associated infrastructure but this has not been received to date.
- **Nine Mile Ride Primary School** – the school has made an initial approach regarding support with the provision of play equipment and has been encouraged to submit a grant application. This has not been received to date.

Bids from WBC for CIL funds towards projects to be delivered by WBC

In accordance with the agreement for joint working over CIL, WBC has recently submitted 3 bids to the Parish Council.

- Waverley Way play area - £14,000 requested for the replacement of play equipment, with a total project cost of £28,000.

Funding of £14,000 was agreed, subject to approval from the Council at its meeting on 24 May.

- Bus Services - £1220 over 3 years has been requested towards the provision of unspecified bus services. The principle of supporting bus services was agreed, and further information will be requested so that the application can be considered.
- War Memorial junction improvement – further to the provisional allocation agreed by the Council in October 2022, WBC has now submitted a formal bid for funds. This will be considered by the War Memorial Working Group before being brought to the Committee and Council for consideration.

30/2023 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

Financial Regulations – these have been reviewed by Cllrs Jukes and Woof and the Clerk and minor amendments have been made.

Risk Management Policy – this has been reviewed by the Risk Management Sub Committee including Cllrs Jukes, McDonald and Woof and the Clerk and minor amendments have been made.

The updated documents were circulated and were approved by the Committee. The documents will be recommended to the Council for approval at its meeting on 24 May 2023.

31/2023 COMPLIANCE WITH FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

In accordance with its Financial Regulations the Parish Council is required to regularly review and approve the continued use of certain payment methods:

- Financial Regulation 6.7 Direct Debits
- Financial Regulation 6.8 Standing Orders
- Financial Regulation 6.9 BACS and CHAPS payments
- Financial Regulation 6.10 Internet banking transfer

The continued use of these payment methods was approved and will be recommended to the Council for approval at its meeting on 24 May 2023.

Financial Regulation 2.2 states that a Councillor other than the Chair of the Council shall verify bank reconciliations for all accounts on a regular basis. It was confirmed that verifications have been completed at regular intervals throughout 2022/23 by Cllrs Cundy and Woof, and that the Internal Auditor is satisfied.

Parish Council debit card

As permitted by Financial Regulation 6.18 the Clerk and the Footpath Warden each hold a Parish Council debit card. The per purchase limit on the Clerk's card is £250 and the monthly total spending limit is £500. It was agreed that the limits should be increased to £500 and £1000 respectively.

32/2023 COUNCIL MANAGEMENT MATTERS AND WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

HR Sub Committee

- A meeting of the Sub Committee took place on 3 May prior to the Committee meeting. The main discussion topic was the draft Terms of Reference drawn up for the Planning Committee.
- It was also noted that staff appraisals have been completed and all matters relating to the end of the 2022/23 year and the start of the new financial year 2023/24 are complete or in place.

Policy reviews

- A summary of the Council's policies and the position regarding reviews was circulated. All priority reviews are complete or in hand, a further priority is to review the Council's Standing Orders by the end of 2023.

Council Strategy / Forward Plan

- A separate meeting will be convened to discuss the Strategy, with an initial focus on communications. The Clerk will arrange a meeting for Cllrs Allen, Jukes, Mortimer and Woof.
- Parish demographics are being looked into, with a view to establishing the current situation, and future projections.

CIL Project List

- It was agreed that a separate meeting would be arranged to undertake a full review of the Project List, for discussion at the next meeting of the Committee. The meeting will include Cllrs Allen, Cornish and Woof and the Clerk. Other Cllrs should contact the Clerk if they would like to be involved.

Wokingham Independent Remuneration Panel Report

- A report received from the Panel in March 2023 was circulated.
- All of the Town and Parish Councils were asked to provide their views on remuneration through a questionnaire circulated in September 2022. Finchampstead Parish Council stated that it did not wish to consider paying an allowance to the Chair or to elected members. The Parish Council does however cover Councillor expenses.
- The Report circulated stresses that remuneration is completely at the discretion of the Town or Parish Council but provides maximum levels of allowances which can be paid, should the respective Council choose to do so.
- The Report also notes that the Panel will be writing to the Government asking that it review the regulations as these do not allow a dependents or carers allowance to be paid to Councillors. They

are also requesting that allowances should be available to co-opted Councillors as well as elected Councillors.

It was agreed that the Parish Council should review its position on allowances – this will be discussed at the October meeting of the Committee.

Business Continuity

- A meeting of the Working Group will be arranged to review the current position.

Finchampstead Emergency Response

- The next stage is for the Working Group to review the Emergency Plan, and for former volunteers and refugees to be contacted to see if they are still willing to be involved.

33/2023 FORUM

- Cllr Veitch promoted the use of hybrid meetings. This will be looked into.
- Cllr Cornish advised that the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Group is seeking the opinion of its planning consultant on the next stages following receipt of the report from the Independent Examiner. The cost of up to £1500 will be covered by the existing budget for the FNDP.

34/2023 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 5 July 2023.

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

FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 3 MAY 2023

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

MINUTE REFERENCE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S)
26/2023	Check and update asset management software, add images as required.	Clerk
26/2023	Circulate information on asset inspections needed.	Clerk
27/2023	Transfer funds to CCLA	Clerk
27/2023	Review the performance of the CCLA Property Fund investment 2017 – 2023.	RW/Clerk
28/2023	Grant recommendations to May Council meeting for approval Citizens Advice / Berkshire Blind / Sue Ryder	Clerk
28/2023	Further information on application from Parenting Special Children – for consideration at the July meeting. Contact WUC.	Deputy Clerk
28/2023	Advise St James' Church social committee of donation.	Clerk
28/2023	Advise WBC that FPC will not match fund the Sports Sponsorship Grant	Clerk
28/2023	Youth Work – continue to liaise with FBC and ensure regular reports on activities and future plans are received.	Clerk
29/2023	Potential CIL projects – continue to follow up. Gorse Ride Schools Sports Club Screens / TV etc. for FBC Centre Nine Mile Ride School	
29/2023	WBC CIL bids	Clerk

	Waverley Way play area – recommended to Main Council for approval Bus Services – Seek further information.	
	War Memorial junction – arrange meeting of Working Group to discuss	
30/2023	Financial Regulations – final update and to Council in May for adoption Risk Management Policy - final update and to Council in May for adoption	Clerk
31/2023	Committee recommendations and information to Council in May Financial Regulations compliance Parish Council debit card (subject to approval – organise increased limit)	Clerk
32/2023	IRP Report	
32/2023	HR subcommittee – Planning Committee ToR to next stage	Clerk
32/2023	Policy reviews – continue with updates. Ensure SO are reviewed.	Clerk
32/2023	Strategy / Forward Plan – arrange meeting with focus on communications	Clerk EA/GJ/CM/RW
32/2023	CIL project list – arrange meeting to update for full discussion at next Committee meeting.	Clerk EA / DC/RW
32/2023	Business Continuity – arrange Working Group meeting	Clerk
32/2023	FER - Review Emergency Plan; Contact volunteers and refuges	Working Group/ Clerk
32/2023	Review FPC position on Councillor allowances. October meeting	Clerk
33/2023	Look into requirements for hybrid meetings	Clerk