



DITCHLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1 November 2022 at 6.30pm in the Parish Office, Ditchling Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Orme (Chair), Cllr Farrands, Cllr. Ingham and Sarah Mamoany (Clerk).

Public Participation:

No members of the public were present

1.	<p>Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Cllr. Madden</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest No declarations of interest were made.</p>	
3.	<p>To approve minutes of Finance Committee meeting held on the 15 November 2021 The minutes of meeting held on the 15 November 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.</p>	
4.	<p>To note payment schedule for car park project The Clerk had been provided with a schedule of payments from DGP Infrastructure and Gould Baxter in relation to the construction and project management of the car park. It was noted that funds of £150,000 had been received from LDC and the £70,000 from the SDNP was expected to be transferred on the 3 November. Therefore, funds were in place to make the required payments. It was noted that Gould Baxter will prepare a certificate stating the amount to be paid which will be issued to the Council and the Contractor, an invoice will then be issued by the contractor.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the VAT will be claimed back by the Council. In addition, the CIL funds available can only be used for the construction costs of the project and the project management fees need to be paid from Council reserves as has been resolved by the Council.</p> <p>It was noted the Clerk may have to be given delegated powers to approve any invoices that fall outside the Parish Council meetings, in particular as a payment will be due at the end of December and the Council meeting will be held on the 12 December. It would be difficult to arrange an extraordinary meeting during that period. The Clerk will add this to the November Parish Council agenda for further discussion.</p> <p>Cllr. Orme noted it would be a good idea to enquire with Gould Baxter with regard to the drainage works on the site as these should be checked prior to the surfacing being carried out.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
5.	<p>To consider interim internal audit report and recommendations (if completed) The Clerk reported the interim audit was booked for the 5 December 2022.</p>	
6.	<p>To consider funding of major projects in 2023/24 It was noted that the Council had not yet considered future projects, although the playground refurbishment, burial ground extension and Scout Hut have been previously</p>	

	discussed. The Council will have a better idea of funds available, once the car park constructions is completed and this matter will need to be considered by the full Council in January 2023.	
7.	<p>To consider precept and budget 2023/24 for recommendation to the full Council</p> <p>A draft budget had been prepared by the Clerk and circulated to all the Committee. The precept for 2023/24 was calculated at £110,778 a 0.56% increase. The Clerk noted that the precept had increased substantially over the past few years and the Council hold good reserves so potentially a smaller increase this year would be required. The tax base figure from LDC has not yet been received.</p> <p>The following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary budget increased to reflect pay awards in 2022 and NALC pay award that is expected to be approved and backdated from April 2022. In addition, the new role of Administrative Officer has been calculated on 10 hours a week, should additional hours be required. This relates to a 5.9% increase. • Training increased by £400 as elections in 2023 • Legal/professional fees increased by £1000 as we are aware of lease renewals • Subs/memberships reduced by £300 • Insurance increased by £500 over budget last year, additional costs potentially to cover car park fixtures/fittings once project completed. • The subject of the Kings Coronation was discussed and it was felt any event expenditure could be covered by reserves if the Council organized a beacon for example. • Loan repayment – not needed as car park funded by CIL grants and Council reserves. • Election expenses – 2023 election year, it was noted that if an election was called this could cost in the region of £4-£4,500 however it was felt that this could come from general reserves if required. • Neighbourhood Plan Expenditure – no budget set for this • Scout Hut Premises – Concerns in relation to possible external repairs to the building were raised and a budget of £3,000 was allocated • Traffic – a further £1,000 was budgeted in relation to possible Spatham Lane speed reduction – the Clerk to check with ESCC Highways on the progress and funding required for the scheme which is due to be delivered in December. • Football Pitch Maintenance – due to the large amount of ear marked reserves for the grounds, this has not been increased • Grounds Maintenance – increased by 5% as expecting these costs to rise • Dog/Waste bins – increased by 5% • Tree Works – increased by £500 • Car Park Maintenance - £2000 increased from £500 last year. The Council need to consider building up a reserve fund for future repairs to surface etc • Lighting maintenance/supply – increased by 30% due to electricity supply costs increasing • Lighting repairs – increased by £1,500 the Council are aware that they will be over budget this year <p>With minor amendments to the draft the precept for 2023/24 will be £110,893 which equates to a 0.67% increase on 2022/23.</p>	

	This recommendation will be put to the full Council at the November meeting for consideration.	
8.	<p>To review risk assessment</p> <p>The Clerk had circulated the current risk assessment. Some amendments to this document were made and the document will be reviewed at the November Council meeting for approval.</p> <p>The following points were also noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground weekly inspections – rota to be put together so that Councillors carry out weekly visual inspections • Burial Ground headstone inspection – it was suggested that Kim is asked if he could carry out an inspection, unsafe headstones to be laid down as precaution if possible. • Clerk to look into options of off-site back up of computer files 	
9.	<p>To review asset list</p> <p>The Clerk had circulated the current asset register. It was noted that the Council had received a reinstatement cost assessment report which had been recommended by our insurance company due to the recent increases in building materials to ensure that assets were insured for the correct rebuild value. The Scout Hut was assessed at £577,856 and the Tractor (Groundsmans) Shed was assessed at £80,902.</p> <p>Currently the Scouts provide insurance on the Scout Hut, and the Clerk has evidence that the building is currently insured, but has requested the value it is insured for and is awaiting a response.</p> <p>The Groundmans Shed is currently insured by the Cricket Club under the terms of the Licence to carry out works, whilst the building is being renovated. The Clerk noted that the solicitor is recommending that the Council insures the building, although the Cricket Club would need to insure any contents. The Clerk noted that the work on the lease needs to be completed and she is currently working on this with the hope of signing it off at the November/December meeting.</p> <p>The asset list will need to be reviewed again before the end of the financial year following the completion of the car park. The Clerk will ask the advice of the internal auditor in relation to how to calculate the value of the completed car park.</p>	
10.	<p>To consider review of Scout Hut as an asset and long term future plan</p> <p>A discussion was held in respect of the fact the current lease is due to expire in March 2023 and that the Scouts have indicated that the facilities are not meeting their needs although currently they have not found any alternative venue. The main issues with the current building are the acoustics, parking and running costs. However, the building does have a large amount of storage which is something that is required. It was noted that the Council need to consider the long term future of the building and the site and the potential future use. In order to determine this it was discussed that a planning consultant and valuer should be engaged by the Council to look at the planning options and legalities in relation to any covenants that are potentially on the deeds of the property that was gifted to the Council. The Clerk noted that the funds of any capital asset sold by a Parish Council has to be used for a capital project. The condition of the building was discussed and it was felt that the first step for the Council should be to obtain a building condition survey report to establish maintenance required if the Scouts decide to stay in the existing building. The Clerk will obtain a cost for this and the recommendation will be put forward to the Council.</p>	

11.	<p>To review savings accounts The Clerk noted that the current savings account is only paying 0.01% interest and due to the recent interest rate changes, other accounts are available with higher rates, for example Unity Trust has a savings account paying 0.96%. It was agreed that this should be reviewed when the car park construction has been completed.</p>	
12.	<p>Future meeting dates May 2023 – TBC</p>	

The meeting closed at 8.20pm