



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held at Mortimer Methodist Church Hall on Thursday the 2nd of November at 7.30pm.

Present:

Councillors:

Cllr. D. Morsley (Chairman), Cllr. G. Bridgman, Cllr. H. Geary, Cllr. S. Hill, Cllr. A. Noonan, Cllr. A. Richardson.

Officers:

Mrs. L. Hannawin.

Public/Press:

There were no members of the public and no members of the press in attendance.

Part I

23/038 Public Questions (for agenda items only)

None.

23/039 To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs. D. Butler and A. Marsden.

23/040 To receive any declarations of interest

To receive from Members at this point or at any point during the meeting, in respect of any items included on the agenda, disclosure of any interests in line with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct and gifts and hospitality in line with Government legislation.

None.

23/041 Minutes of Last Meeting

To resolve to approve the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting of the 5th of September 2023.

RESOLVED with one abstention that these minutes be approved for signature by the Chairman as a true and correct record of the meeting.

23/042 Clerk's Report

To receive a report from the Parish Clerk outlining actions taken following the meeting held on the 5th of September and other updates.

1. Community Infrastructure Levy.
West Berkshire Council (WBC) have confirmed CIL payments for the period 01/04/2023 – 30/09/2023 as:
 - 22/01422/RESMAJ (2 - 2B) Land South of Tower Gardens, The Street, Mortimer Common, Reading, West Berkshire £27,508.24
2. Voluntary Library Contribution.
A request has been received from WBC for the annual contribution which will be considered by full Council. Suggested amount is £1 per parish resident which equates to £3,731.

The Clerk will seek confirmation from WBC as to the balance of CIL due on MOR006 and the staged payments that can be expected.

The report was received.

23/043 Items to be taken into private session

To determine which items, if any, of the agenda should be taken with the public excluded.

Cllr. Morsley proposed that agenda items 23/045 1. Personnel and 23/045 2. Budget 2024/25 be taken in Part II.

Seconded by Cllr. Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

23/044 Working Party Reports

• Communications

Cllr. Bridgman confirmed:

- Cllr. H. Kilshaw is looking to be appointed to the Communications Working Party.
- An initial discussion has taken place regarding a review of the website. Any ideas and comments should be sent to the Communications Working Party.
- Consideration needs to be given to how Council events and information are promoted/published.

• Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath

Cllr Morsley reported:

- the decision deadline has been extended to the 23rd of November. This is to allow for Ridge & Partners LLP to provide further evidence required by Highways regarding the proposed plans and the accommodation of extra-large vehicles at the mini roundabouts. It is thought that permission should be granted if Highways are satisfied by the evidence provided.
- Further advice has been sought from WBC regarding the Windmill Common part of the route and, under the Commons Act, whether permission from the Secretary of State is needed. To date, nothing has been forthcoming from WBC, but it is believed that no additional permission is required.

• The Street Footway

Nothing to report.

23/045 Items for Consideration and Resolution

1. Personnel

As recommended by the personnel Committee, to receive and agree the revised:

- a. **staff contracts of employment for agreeing with relevant staff members.**

Minuted at Part II.

2. Budget 2024/25

- a. **To consider the operating income and expenditure figures for 2024/25 and agree any changes.**

- b. **To consider potential associated capital and revenue costs/income of the Working Parties:**

- i. **Footway Widening.**

- ii. **Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath.**

Minuted at Part II.

3. Investment Strategy

- a. **To review the Investment Strategy 2023/24**

- b. **To consider any changes for the Investment Strategy for 2024/25 for recommendation to full Council.**

The Investment Strategy 2023/24 was reviewed.

The following changes for the Investment Strategy were agreed for recommendation to full Council and will carry through to 2024/25:

- Under section 3. Add in "Any long-term investments i.e. CCLA Property Fund or stocks and shares will be added to an Asset and Investment Register.
- 3.2 change 'members' to 'Councillors'.
- 3.2 change 'officers' to 'Officers'.
- 3.4 remove 'primarily'.
- 3.4 add in 'see 4.1.3'.
- 4.1.3 reduce £85,000 to £50,000.

The Investment Strategy will be moved into the new policy format when available.

The recommendations were proposed by Cllr. Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr. Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

4. Pillbox Lease

To consider the Form of Notice and declaration for recommendation to full Council that the declaration should be signed.

The Notice and declaration were considered, and it was agreed the declaration to be recommended to full Council for signing.

5. Internal Audit

- a. **To receive and note the internal auditor's letter of engagement and standard terms.**

- b. **To receive the mid-term report for 2023/24.**

The internal auditor's letter of engagement and standard terms and mid-term external audit report were received.

23/046 Finance

1. Accounts to the 30th of September 2023

To receive and approve the Income and Expenditure Report to the 30th of September and the Balance Sheet as at that date.

Proposed by Cllr. Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr. Bridgman

The reports were received and approved unanimously.

2. The Public Sector Deposit Fund

To note the return on investment as at 30th of September 2023.

The return on investment as at the 30th of September was noted as being 5.20%.

3. Bank Reconciliation

To receive and note the reconciliation has been undertaken for the period ~~1st of April 2023 – 30th June 2023~~ 1st of July 2023 – 30th of September 2023.

Cllr. Noonan reported that the bank reconciliation had been thoroughly checked and there were no errors to report. The reconciliation had been signed off.

4. Internal Financial Control (IFC)

To receive and note the IFC Confirmation for the period ~~1st of April 2023 – 30th June 2023~~ 1st of July 2023 – 30th of September 2023.

Cllr. Bridgman reported the IFC had been undertaken. There was nothing to report.

23/047 Items for information only

Minor Matters

- Children's Art Competition: With a view to improving communications, Cllr. Morsley is proposing the Council runs an art competition with the winners being announced at the Annual Parish Meeting. The theme would be "This is Mortimer and monetary prizes would be awarded across 3 classes. The number of prizes will depend on the number of entrants.
- Scarecrow Trail: Cllr. Morsley thanked and congratulated all those involved with the prize-winning scarecrow.
- Pop-up banner and Council fleeces and t-shirts: these are still being considered.
- Power for Remembrance Sunday: Cllr. Hill confirmed he has sourced power for the PA system.
- Financial Regulations: Cllr. Bridgman confirmed the review of the Financial Regulations is nearly complete and he explained some of the amendments being proposed. The Committee Terms of Reference will be reviewed next.

23/048 Communications

To identify items for communicating

The forthcoming Councillor Surgery will be promoted via the website and Facebook.

23/049 Future Agenda Items

To identify future agenda items

None identified.

23/050 Exclusion of Press and Public

To pass a resolution under Section 1, Paragraph 2 of The Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting at Part II, items identified at 23/043 on the agenda due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

Proposed by Cllr. Morsley.

Seconded by Cllr. Bridgman.

Resolved unanimously.

Part II

23/045 Items for Consideration and Resolution

1. Personnel

As recommended by the personnel Committee, to receive and agree the revised staff contracts of employment.

The three proposed staff contracts and job descriptions were received, and some minor amendments agreed. Cllr. Morsley, as Chairman of Finance and General Purposes, will issue the relevant proposed contract to each member of staff, along with a letter providing an explanation and seeking staff feedback.

2. Budget 2024/25

- c. To consider the operating income and expenditure figures for 2024/25 and agree any changes.**
- d. To consider potential associated capital and revenue costs/income of the Working Parties:**
 - iii. Footway Widening.**
 - iv. Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath.**

The draft budget to date was considered and recommendations made. It was agreed to add an extra column to include "Year to Date Actual". The budget will be reviewed again in December prior to issuing to all Councillors for comments ready for agreement in January.

The meeting closed at 21:28.

Date of next meeting: TBA.