



Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held at Mortimer Methodist Church Hall on Thursday 7 November 2024 at 19:30

Present:

Councillors:

Cllr D Morsley (Chairman), Cllr G Bridgman, Cllr N Carter, Cllr S Hill, Cllr A Richardson.

Officers:

Mrs L Hannawin

Public/Press:

There was one member of the public in attendance and no members of the press.

Part I

24/013 Public Questions (for agenda items only)

None.

24/014 To receive any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr H Geary.

24/015 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, and gifts and hospitality in line with the Code of Conduct.

None.

24/016 Minutes of Last Meeting

To approve and sign the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 4 June 2024.

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

24/017 Chairman's Remarks

Cllr Morsley:

- Reported that Cllr Andy Noonan had resigned. The Clerk confirmed that 1) the Public Notice had been issued with an expiry time/date of 24:00 on the 14

November and 2) the other vacancy had been readvertised, but no applications had been received by the closing date.

- Reminded the Committee the Christmas dinner is on Thursday 19 December. Cllr Bridgman will send an email to all councillors and officers.
- Confirmed that the project manager from TGMS Ltd had provided feedback on the tenders received for the cemetery extension. As a next step towards build, an online meeting shall be held with White Horse Contractors, TGMS Ltd and SMPC as soon as possible.

24/018 Clerk's Report

To receive a report from the Parish Clerk outlining actions taken following the meeting held on 4 June 2024 and other updates. Report 24/018.

The Clerk's written report was received. In addition, it was noted that the website has been taken over by a company called 28 Across. 28 Across is co-managed by an employee of the Council's former website provider.

24/019 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 agenda items 24/021 10. Budget 2025/26, 11. Fairground Trust and Mortimer Community Centre Leases, 12. Parish Clerk Appointment and 14. Officers' and Custodian's Salaries be taken in Part II.

Seconded by Cllr Bridgman.

Resolved by majority vote.

24/020 Steering Group and Working Party Reports

1. Communication

Nothing to report.

2. Emergency Planning

Cllr Richardson confirmed he had attended Emergency Planning Training and shall provide feedback at the full Council meeting. Cllr Bridgman reported that the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), alongside West Berkshire Council Emergency Planning, may be asking local councils to assist them with promoting a community wide mobile phone test they are planning.

3. Mortimer to Burghfield Cycleway and Footpath

Cllr Morsley reported an online meeting with Ridge had taken place. Ridge had provided a timeline detailing the project actions and showing construction should be underway towards the latter half of 2025. Potential funding streams were discussed, including taking out a Public Works Loan. An email is being sent to WBC regarding the possibility of using Active Travel Funding.

24/021 Items for Consideration and Resolution.

1. Policies

To consider any Policies within the ambit of the Committee requiring consideration, amendment, or proposal to full Council.

A discussion took place around changing the current committee structure and the number of Council and committee meetings needed. Cllr Bridgman continues to work on this in preparation for a future Council decision; any such changes would come into action from the new parish council year (May 2025) if agreed.

2. Fairground Hire Agreement

To receive and approve the amended Hire Agreement and Terms and Conditions.

The proposed amended documents were reviewed and other changes needed were identified.

Cllr Bridgman proposed the Fairground Hire Agreement and Terms and Conditions be approved with the changes as discussed.

Seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved unanimously.

3. CCTV

To review the Data Privacy Impact Assessment, specifically 2.2 (“Real-time images will be accessed and displayed via Parish Clerks hardware”) as to access to system images remotely by designated councillors to assist the office in reviewing recordings for incidents for recommendation to full Council.

Following a discussion, it was agreed to recommend to full Council that the wording at 2.2 of the Data Privacy Impact Assessment be changed from “Clerks” to “Council” hardware and for the CCTV software to be added to a stand-alone laptop. Both actions will enable councillors to assist with checking CCTV footage as required.

4. Internal Audit Report

To receive the mid-term Internal Audit Report for presentation to full Council on Thursday 14 November.

The report was received.

5. Enabling Remote Attendance, and Proxy Voting Consultation

To consider the information received on the Consultation and agree the actions to be taken.

Due to the structure of the Consultation, it was agreed it would be difficult to respond as a body but that councillors should respond individually if they so wished.

6. Management of Hedges

To resolve to write to West Berkshire Council and seek their permission for SMPC to cut overgrown hedges on Highways land at SMPC’s expense.

Cllr Bridgman has already enquired of WBC how a parish council may assist a district council with managing overgrown hedges and if any powers are transferable. It was agreed to wait for WBC’s response before taking any further action.

7. Members Bid

To consider ideas for the current round of funding and agree suggestions for recommendation to full Council.

It was agreed to recommend a Fairground/grazing area water supply to full Council as a suggestion for a Members Bid.

8. Soil Conditioner

To resolve to request a delivery of soil conditioner for use on SMPC land.

Cllr Hill shall establish with Cllr Shaw if any soil conditioner is needed for Parish Council maintained land.

9. Bank Reconciliations

To appoint a Supervising Councillor to undertaking the verification of the bank reconciliations for all bank accounts.

Cllr Richardson was appointed as the Supervising Councillor for verifying the bank reconciliations.

10. Budget 2025/26

To review the 2025/26 Budget to date and consider any additions and amendments.

Minuted at Part II.

11. Fairground Trust and Mortimer Community Centre Leases

To determine the review process and timetable regarding the lease renewals.

Minuted at Part II.

12. Parish Clerk Appointment

To receive and update on the recruitment process undertaken and resolve the:

- a. Appointment of the Parish Clerk**
- b. Starting date**
- c. Starting salary**
- d. Particular contractual terms**

Minuted at Part II.

13. Officer Training

To review training requirements and agree the training programme for 2025.

It was agreed that the Assistant to the Clerk may undertake the ILCA to CiLCA training at a cost of £120.00 + VAT.

Other officer training shall be discussed at a Personnel Committee meeting.

14. Officers' and Custodian's Salaries

To:

- a. Note the Local Government Services pay agreement 2024/25 and changes to payroll.**
- b. Review the current pay scales and resolve any changes to be made.**

Minuted at Part II.

24/022 Finance

1. Accounts to the 30 September 2024

To receive and consider the Income and draft Expenditure Report to the ~~31-March~~ 30 September and the draft Balance Sheet as at that date.

The accounts were received.

2. The Public Sector Deposit Fund

To note the return on investment as at 30 September 2024.

The rate as at 30 September was noted as 4.99%.

3. Tenders and Purchase Orders

- a. Under Financial Regulation 52.3 to note that only two tenders were received for the:**
 - i. Fairground Footpath and Utility Square**
 - ii. Cemetery Extension**

It was noted that only two tenders had been received for the above projects.

- b. To note that the purchase invoice raised for the Fairground Footpath and Utility Square was for £17,090 as opposed to agreed amount of £15,590.**

The difference between the amount agreed and PO raised was noted.

4. Bank Reconciliation

To receive and note the reconciliations have been undertaken for the periods:

- a. 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024**
- b. 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024.**

It was noted that the bank reconciliations had taken place for the above periods.

5. Internal Financial Control (IFC)

To receive and note the IFC confirmation for the periods

- a. 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024**
- b. 1 July 2024 – 30 September 2024.**

The IFCs for the above period were noted.

24/023 Items for information only

Minor Matters

- Cllr Carter raised the possibility of placing a mini-recycling centre in West End Road car park. He will put it forward as an agenda item for full Council.
- Cllr Bridgman mentioned WBC's "Service Delivery Offers for Town and Parish Councils". It was agreed that this would be discussed at January's meeting.

24/024 Communications

To identify items for communicating

- Councillor vacancies
- Appointment of new Clerk

24/025 Future Agenda Items

To identify future agenda items

- WBC Service Deliver Offers – Jan 2025.
- 3-year budget – Spring 2025

24/026 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 24/019 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

24/021 Items for Consideration and Resolution

12. Parish Clerk Appointment

To receive and update on the recruitment process undertaken and resolve the:

- a. Appointment of the Parish Clerk
- b. Starting date
- c. Starting salary
- d. Particular contractual terms

Cllr Bridgman gave an update and proposed that Ms Danielle Davis be appointed as an Officer of the Council from 9 December 2024, and as Clerk to the Council from 1 January 2025, at the salary and as per the contractual terms of the Draft Contract circulated. Seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved unanimously.

14. Officers' and Custodian's Salaries

To:

- a. Note the Local Government Services pay agreement 2024/25 and changes to payroll.

The new rates were noted.

- b. Review the current pay scales and resolve any changes to be made.

Cllr Morsley explained that, subject to confirmation that her performance had been satisfactory and in accordance with the Council's Performance Management Policy, the Clerk's pay should have gone up to Spinal Column Point (SCP) 35 as of 1 April 2024. Cllr Bridgman said that the Clerk's performance had been more than satisfactory and proposed that the Clerk's spine point be moved to SCP 35 as from, and with a payment backdated to, 1 April 2024.

Seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved unanimously.

10. Budget 2025/26

To review the 2025/26 Budget to date and consider any additions and amendments.

In considering how much the Mortimer to Burghfield cycleway project will cost and from where the money could be sourced, Cllr Bridgman presented historical information regarding the Precept, and the potential affect that a Public Works Loan may have on the Precept for different band properties. In addition, the Council's reserves and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) reserves and CIL income were reviewed. It was agreed to revisit the previously identified baseline costs.

Cllr Bridgman proposed a time extension for the meeting

Seconded by Cllr Morsley.

Resolved unanimously.

11. Fairground Trust and Mortimer Community Centre Leases

To determine the review process and timetable regarding the lease renewals.

Aspects of the leases were discussed. It was agreed an initial meeting should be held in January with the Fairground Trustees and directors of the Community Centre Community Interest Company to commence the process.

Close

The meeting closed at 21:35

Date of next meeting: 5 December 2024.