Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 29 October 2026 at Mortimer Methodist Church Hall, West End Road, Mortimer, RG7 3TB

Present

Members

Cllrs J Allan, D Backhouse, G Bridgman (Chairman), S Hill, D Kilshaw, and D Morsley.

Other Councillors

Officers of the Council

D Davis

Public/Press

No members of the public or media attended.

Commencement

The meeting commenced at 19:30

Part I

26/044 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs K Strong and J Todd.

26/045 To receive any declarations of interest

None.

26/046 Public Questions

None.

26/047 Minutes of last meeting

The Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 27 August were received and approved with one abstention for signature by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

26/048 Chairman's remarks

- Cllr Bridgman reported that a longstanding councillor was unwell and that best wishes had been conveyed to the family. As soon the family confirmed we could, details would be circulated.

- Cllr Bridgman advised that Cllr Todd, who had given her apologies for this meeting, might also be unable to attend the forthcoming AWE Local Liaison Committee meeting (in Cllr Bridgman's place since he was unavailable). He invited other Committee members to consider attending in her place. Cllr Backhouse indicated that he might be able to attend, subject to confirmation of Cllr Todd's availability. The Clerk would deal as needed.

26/049 Clerk's Report

The Clerk's Report was received, and the following updates were noted:

- The breast screening van would now attend in December rather than January, reducing the available car parking spaces by at least four for the market on 20 December.
- The Village Market would not take place in January or February.
- Members discussed the cost quoted by West Berkshire Council to amend the lease to accommodate the Pizza Press van, and agreed that it made the proposed arrangement financially unviable for the Parish Council. It was agreed to advise West Berkshire Council that the Council would not proceed with the legal work.
- The Clerk reported that the mid-year internal audit had taken place that day. The auditor had highlighted the importance of GDPR training for officers and councillors. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk would undertake training before delivering a training session for councillors ahead of a future meeting.

26/050 Items to be taken into private session

Cllr Bridgman determined that agenda items 26-051.2 (Budget), part of 26-051.3.a (Personnel Sub-Committee), 26-051.7 (Methodists Church Hall - Audio-Visual), and part of 26-051.a (Mortimer-Burghfield Footpath and Cycleway) would be taken in Part II.

26/051 Items for consideration

1 **Policies**

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

a Financial Regulations – Review of the reserves policy.

The reserves section within the Financial Regulations was reviewed and the committee determined that no changes were required.

2 **Budget 2027/2028**

To review the 2027/2028 Budget to date and consider any additions and amendments

Minuted at Part II.

3 **Personnel Sub-Committee**

a To note the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 October 2026.

The draft minutes were noted, and the proposal made was discussed in Part II.

b To review the membership of the Personnel Sub-Committee and agree any changes.

Cllr Bridgman proposed that the Scheme of Delegation be amended so that the Personnel Sub-Committee comprises all members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Cllr Kilshaw seconded.

Resolved unanimously.

4 **NALC – Silver Award Scheme**

To review the progress towards a Silver Award application, consider the outstanding requirements, and agree any further actions.

The Committee reviewed the NALC Local Council Award Scheme guidance and Cllr Bridgman's correspondence with NALC regarding the requirement for two-thirds of councillors to be elected. It was noted that, although the Council did not currently meet this apparent threshold, correspondence from NALC confirmed that it was eligible to apply.

The Committee reviewed the application requirements and noted the following:

- **Policies:** Health and Safety, Co-Option and Grant Awarding Policies were in place.
- **Action plan and related budget:** The requirement for an action plan and associated budget responding to community engagement was considered.
- **Community Engagement Policy:** The Council undertook community engagement but did not have a formal policy documenting its approach. The matter would be referred to the Community Committee at its November meeting, following which Cllr Bridgman would incorporate the agreed content into a policy template.
- **Councillor profiles:** Profiles were being collected for the website and would be passed to the Website Working Party. Councillors would be reminded to submit their profiles. Cllr Bridgman would also be reminded to contact local photographer M Aukland regarding councillor photographs.
- **Annual Parish Meeting:** Evidence of contributions from electors could be provided.
- **Community engagement evidence:** Relevant evidence was available and needed to be collated.
- **Planning for the future:** The work of the 350 Working Party and the Neighbourhood Plan could be used as supporting evidence.
- **Encouraging participation in local democracy:** Examples included the Annual Parish Meeting, engagement concerning the proposed 350 homes, the Neighbourhood Plan stand at the Village Market and the Council's stand at the MVP Fun Day.

It was noted that the documents required for the application were available, with the exception of the Community Engagement Policy.

It was agreed to refer the community engagement policy and plan to the Community Committee and to aim to submit the Silver Award application in January 2027.

5 **NALC – Gold Award Scheme**

To discuss an anticipated future application and , in particular, a 3-year action plan.

The Committee reviewed members' contributions to the proposed three-year plans. Concern was raised about the lack of public consultation on projects included in a three-year plan.

It was clarified that two separate documents were envisaged: a three-year financial forecast covering general operating costs and income, and a document identifying potential future projects and aspirations.

The latter would remain flexible and would not commit the Council to delivering particular projects. It could identify projects to consider should funding, such as CIL, become available, with public consultation undertaken before progressing proposals.

6 **Investment Strategy 2027/2028**

To review and approve the Investment Strategy

The Committee reviewed the Investment Strategy for 2027/2028 and agreed the following amendments:

- Paragraph 35, second bullet point, to read: "Any sum to be agreed in respect of a specific project which cannot be met from current funding, or nil."
- Footnote 4 to be amended to refer to "any project".

Cllr Bridgman proposed approval of the Investment Strategy, subject to these amendments. Cllr Morsley seconded the proposal.

Resolved unanimously.

7 **Methodist Church Hall – Audio-Visual Equipment**

To consider the Church's proposal to introduce an additional charge for use of the Hall's audio-visual equipment and request for a suggested fee per session, and determine a response.

Minuted at Part II.

8 **Mortimer-Burghfield Footpath and Cycleway**

a To receive an update from the Steering Group, consider correspondence received and agree any further actions.

Cllr Kilshaw and the Clerk provided an update, confirming that Phase C had been completed and that there was now a continuous path from Mortimer to Burghfield.

It was noted that no further correspondence needed to be sent to West Berkshire Council until the map had been prepared.

Cllr Kilshaw and the Clerk had walked the route to identify the signage required. The signs would be intended for path users rather than road users and would include information acknowledging funding from the Parish Council and other contributors.

The rest of this item was further minuted at Part II.

b To note the funding arrangements for the remaining cycleway costs, including signage, through an allocation from budget line 4040 (PWLB Loan Repayment) and CIL.

The Clerk reported that the Cycleway earmarked reserve was insufficient to meet outstanding purchase order commitments and the cost of signage. She recommended transferring £15,000 from the PWLB Loan Repayment budget

and £4,400 from CIL reserves to the Cycleway earmarked reserve to cover the remaining costs.

Cllr Bridgman proposed that these transfers be recommended to Full Council for approval. Cllr Kilshaw seconded the proposal.

Resolved unanimously.

9 **Annual Parish Meeting**

The Committee held an initial discussion on the format of the Annual Parish Meeting, with detailed proposals to be considered and agreed by the Community Committee.

Suggestions included inviting local organisations to give brief presentations about their activities and holding competitions to encourage public participation. Members discussed the challenges of attracting public interest and attendance.

The Clerk would email all councillors inviting suggestions for topics, speakers and competitions. The Clerk would also ask Mr A Bourne and Mortimer Library to save the date. It was noted that the meeting could provide an opportunity for Mr A Bourne to recruit additional volunteers for the Mortimer Village Partnership Fun Day for 2027.

26/052 Action Tracker

To review the Action Tracker, receive an update outlining actions taken since the last meeting, and consider further actions.

The Action Tracker was reviewed.

26/053 Finance

1 **Accounts to 30 September**

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

The reports were received and approved unanimously.

2 **The Public Sector Deposit Funds (TPSDF)**

To note the return on investment as at 30 September 2026

The return on investment as at 30 September 2026 was noted as being 3.96%.

26/054 Items for information only

None.

26/055 Minor Matters

None.

26/056 Communications

Nothing to communicate.

26/057 Future Agenda Items

None.

Part II (if needed)

26/058 Exclusion of Public and Press

To pass a resolution under s.1(2), Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the item to be discussed.

Cllr Bridgman proposed.

Cllr Kilshaw seconded.

Resolved unanimously.

 # Cllr Bridgman proposed a time extension to 10pm, Cllr Morsley seconded, resolved with one abstention.

1 **26/051.2 Budget 2027/2028**

To review the 2027/2028 Budget to date and consider any additions and amendments

The various committees having now looked at their individual budgets, the initial draft of the 2027/28 budget was reviewed.

The Council's reserves and CIL reserves were also reviewed along with the baseline budgets.

More work was needed to align certain items, ear-marked reserves, etc, before the finalised draft could be put before F&GP, then Full Council – Cllr Backhouse offered to assist the Clerk in this respect as the budget will be being transferred to a new spreadsheet template.

2 **26/051.3 Personnel sub-committee**

a To note the draft minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 October 2026.

Following a recommendation from the Personnel Sub-Committee, Cllr Bridgman proposed that the Clerk, D Davis, and Deputy Clerk, S Taylor, each receive an increase of one spinal column point for 2027/28. It was noted that the Custodian was already at the highest spinal column point within the agreed scale for his role. Cllr Kilshaw seconded.

Resolved unanimously.

3 **26/051.7 Methodist Church Hall – Audio-Visual Equipment**

To consider the Church's proposal to introduce an additional charge for use of the Hall's audio-visual equipment and request for a suggested fee per session, and determine a response.

The Committee considered the proposal and agreed to suggest a charge of £10 per session for use of the Hall's audio-visual equipment. This would be communicated to Mortimer Methodist Church for its consideration.

4 **Mortimer-Burghfield Footpath and Cycleway**

a To receive an update from the Steering Group, consider correspondence received and agree any further actions.

Recent correspondence was reviewed and it was agreed that no further action would be required at this time.

Close

The meeting closed at 21:54

Date of next meeting: 26/11/2026.