

Haslington Parish Council Finance Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 4th April 2023

Attendance: Cllrs. Lee Allen; Yvonne Bushill; Richard Hovey; Graham Sawyer.
Also in attendance: Gill Ayres, Parish Clerk.

Meeting commenced at 7.00pm

1. Apologies

No apologies received.

2. Declarations of Members Interests

No declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting (previously known as the Finance Working Group) on 28th November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and approved.

4. Accounts and bank reconciliations (2022-23)

- i. The Parish Clerk reported that bank reconciliations have now been carried out from end October to end February. This has revealed the following errors

£5531.17 payments not recorded on Scribe

£8887.02 receipts not recorded on Scribe

£869.69 payments into Cheshire Pension Fund recorded but not actioned

£4034.40 payment to Broxap for Jubilee planters wrongly allocated to Remembrance Cost Centre

£1041.60 payment to Ashridge trees wrongly allocated to Floriculture Cost Centre.

All of these have now been rectified. The chief implication is that the VAT reclaim submitted in December has missed some payments. However, this is not critical because JD Services (£2701.00) is not VAT registered and Scottish Power (£1078.66) is at the lower rate.

- ii. The end January bank reconciliation shows £215,907.70 cash in hand.
- iii. The Committee went through the budget as at end January 2023 line by line down to cost code level and makes the following recommendations to Parish Council

Administration 11 Election Costs. There has been no expenditure in 2022-23 so, in addition to a £2000 budget allocation in 2023-24, £2000 will be earmarked in reserves for election costs.

Administration 33 Noticeboards. There has been no expenditure in 2022-23 so, in addition to a £1000 budget allocation in 2023-24, £1000 will be earmarked in reserves for noticeboards.

Grants and Donations cost code 17. To reflect the Parish Council decision earlier in the year to approve a grant of £8000 for the Cricket Club, this amount will be vired from Community Projects code 40 (which is underspent) to cost code 17 Grants and Donations for 2022-23.

Gutterscroft 34 Feasibility Study and 56 Rebuild Project. The budget allocations of £5000 for the Feasibility Study and £10,000 for the Rebuild Project have not been spent in 2022-23 and, since £7000 is already earmarked in reserves for the Feasibility Study, this £15,000 will be earmarked for Gutterscroft Rebuild in 2023-24. A further £35,000 will be earmarked for Gutterscroft Rebuild (see item 9 below) so the grand total is £50,000.

Neighbourhood Plan cost code 35. This cost code is underspent in 2022-23 so, in addition to a £3000 budget allocation in 2023-24, £2700 will be earmarked in reserves for the Neighbourhood Plan on top of the current £10,000.

Parish Community 40 Community Projects. The 2022-23 budget allocation will be changed from £15000 to £7000 to reflect that, as outlined above, £8000 funds have been moved to Grants and donations cost code 17.

Parish Community. Coronation. A new cost code will be created under the Parish Community Cost Centre for the Coronation and £2000 allocated in the 2022-23 budget. This will come from the General Reserve and cover the purchase of commemorative coins. £3000 will be allocated to this code in 2023-24 and together these amounts reflect the decision of the Parish Council to spend up to £5000 on the Coronation.

Parish Community 53 Public Convenience. There has been no expenditure in 2022-23 so, in addition to a £1040 budget allocation in 2023-24, an additional £1040 will be earmarked in reserves for the Public Convenience on top of the existing £6200 making a grand total of £7240.

Streetlighting cost code 20. To reflect the Parish Council decision earlier in the year to pay for streetlighting repairs in Gutterscroft and Mount Pleasant, £10,885.12 will be moved from general reserves to Streetlighting code 20 to cover the cost.

The Finance Committee urge the Parish Council, when approving funding for items not already covered in the budget, to clearly specify which heading the money is coming from or whether it is coming from reserves.

5. Audit and AGAR

The Clerk gave a heads up on issues which may arise in the internal audit process and these were noted by the Committee.

6. Budget 2023-24

In line with the recommendations in 4 (iii) above, and the broad allocations agreed at the Finance Committee meeting on 28th November 2022, the detailed budget and earmarked reserves for 2023-24, as set out in Appendix 1, is now recommended to Parish Council.

7. Asset Register

No progress has been made to draw up an Asset Register, as stipulated in the internal audit for 2021-22. The Locum Clerk offered, later in the year, to assist with the preparation of an Asset Register, if the new Clerk does not have the capacity. In the meantime, Box 9 on the AGAR will be re-stated as the current insurance valuation which is £706,225.

8. Regular payments

The list of Standing Orders, Direct Debits and other Regular Payments, as set out in Appendix 2, is recommended to the Parish Council by the Finance Committee.

9. Reserves

The Committee noted that the AGAR figure for Reserves (Box 7) should not be more than twice the amount of Precept (Box 2) unless earmarked.

To ensure conformity, the Finance Committee recommend that, in addition to the earmarking outlined in item 4 (iii) above, an additional £35,000 be earmarked towards the rebuilding costs of Gutterscroft.

The Clerk reported that she is currently in discussion with Cheshire East about what the true figure should be for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in earmarked reserves. She will update the Finance Committee in due course. CIL funds can only be used on a certain range of infrastructure projects and must be used within a certain period of time. An annual report should be made on how CIL funds are spent in the relevant financial year.

10. AOB

Large balances are held in both Co-op bank accounts, so the Finance Committee recommends that the Parish Council considers using an interest bearing current account.