

**Minutes of the meeting of the
FINANCE COMMITTEE
held on Monday 6th December 2021 at 7:01pm
at the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford**

Councillors present: Chairman S May, Mrs L Dalby, Mrs E Gadsdon, R Gardner, R Patient & Mrs M Weir

F 21/15 Receive apologies for absence:
No apologies were received.

F 21/16 Declarations of any:
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;
b) Other Pecuniary Interest; or
c) Non-Pecuniary Interest
on any matter on the agenda for 6th December 2021:
Cllr Mrs M Weir made a pecuniary interest declaration (b - other) as Chairman of the Rochford Old People's Welfare Committee for Agenda item 13.b (Minute F 21/27b).

**Cllr Mrs M Gadsdon made a late declaration in relation to an interest (uncategorised) in the hall as Trustee of the HVHMC, which was noted. (Minute F21/21)*

F 21/17 Public Forum:
No members of the public were present.

F 21/18 Approve Minutes of the meeting held on the 26th July 2021 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:
It was **resolved** that the minutes from the meeting held on 26th July 2021 were approved as a correct record and Members agreed to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

F 21/19 Action Update List (December 2021):
21/19.1 There were no updates regarding the grant request from Ashingdon Parish Council (APC); it was noted that the toilets were up and running. Monies had been set aside if Council were ever re-approached by APC. Members agreed to close the item.
21/19.2 The office would be talking to Metro Bank about the online payments as the process was not simple; the Clerk would need to speak to the Account Manager accordingly.
21/19.3 Two Members were carrying out the safety checks for the defibrillators, but more Members were required. It was agreed to refer the item to Full Council.
21/19.4 Both grant applications for the defibrillators had been successful and grant monies had been received. Members agreed to close item.
21/19.5 Surplus funds over £85k had been transferred to the CCLA PSDF Fund. Members agreed to close the item.
It was **resolved** that Members accepted the Action List update and agreed to the removal of closed items

F 21/20 Financial Report – November 2021
The Clerk reported that expenditure was a 52% spent against a target of 66%. Finance was 48% spent, General Purposes 54% spent, and Parks 55% spent. The Clerk expected there

would be an overall underspend at the end of the year.

There were no further questions, and it was **resolved** that Members accepted the Financial Report.

F 21/21 Consider & agree Finance budget for 2022-23:

A Member felt it was disgraceful the salary award still had not been decided for the staff. Members noted the travel budget had been reduced as many courses were being provided remotely. Members discussed the utilities budget which was for the office electricity. It was noted the contract for the electricity was arranged by the Hawkwell Village Hall Management Committee (HVHMC) and they were tied into a long-term contract; therefore impending electricity price hikes would not affect the overall cost to Council in the short-term as prices were pro-rata. A Member enquired what fell under the professional services budget and was reminded it included an allocation for the potential Police Special(s), any security company services and climate change audit(s) along with other standard costs such as payroll services and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) services. A Member enquired if the allocation for a security company should be removed and gave their personal view there was low level crime in the area and that talks of crime were inflated; the Member was reminded that it had been agreed to consult with residents via the next newsletter to ascertain whether a private security company was needed/supported. It was further noted there had been no success recruiting a Police 'Special' to date, but monies had remained in the budget accordingly.

Correspondence from the Chair of the HVHMC was noted by Members and that a proposal for an annual 175% increase in rent had been put forward to Council. Members discussed the history of the Parish Office and Council's contribution towards it build, along with the annexe which had resulted in a historically low rental cost. Members enquired where the new proposed rental cost had come from and requested further information from the HVHMC. One Member felt that the office rent was extremely low. Members pointed out that substantial costs for the maintenance and improvement of the office had always been covered by Council and it was maintained to a good and safe standard with Council never asking the HVHMC for any assistance with costs. It was further noted that had Council not maintained the office to the current standard, it would not have been in a lettable state. The Clerk informed Members that Council also paid an annual sum for the electricity which included the electricity for the annexe/kitchen as well as the office. A Member enquired what services the hall provided which were included in the rent. The Clerk explained the office only had the use of one toilet which unfortunately was often poorly cleaned and there were no other services provided. Members felt that any increase in rent should be gradual and that services/maintenance would need to be factored into any rental costs and agreements. Members enquired if the rent proposal was based on commercial rent and Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon in her capacity as trustee of the HVHMC (*) explained that the rent proposal was not and relayed figures for the weekly and monthly cost to Council.

Members **agreed** the **Finance Committee budget for 2022-23 of £98,000** for recommendation to Full Council.

F 21/22 Consider Parks, General Purposes & Youth budgets for 2022-23

Parks: A Member questioned the higher costs for the bin emptying budget and enquired if District Council could provide the service, noting they were about to renew their contracts. The Clerk pointed out that contract was in relation to household waste and kerbside collections. The Member was reminded of past discussions and meetings where the matter had been discussed in detail and that the increase in costs had been unavoidable with the new company contracted proving to be the most economical option. It was further noted other Parish Councils were using the company and service had been good.

Members **agreed** the **Parks Committee budget for 2022-23 of £60,500** for recommendation to Full Council.

General Purposes: Members discussed the utilities budget, noting there would be significant increases within the market in the coming year. It was agreed that £1.5k be added to the utilities budget. It was further noted that the Clerk had pointed out to Members that Council's General Reserves were high; Members therefore agreed it would be prudent to source funds from the Reserves should any events be held and further agreed to remove the £5,000 allocation to the projects budget.

Members **agreed** the **General Purposes budget for 2022-23 of £27,700** for recommendation to Full Council.

Youth: Members **agreed** the **Youth budget for 2022-23 of £3,000** for recommendation to Full Council.

F 21/23 Set the precept for 2022-23 for Recommendation to Full Council:

Members noted the information provided in the report and the Clerk explained that the Precept figure would need reworking since the General Purposes budget had been reduced. The overall budget figure was now £189,200 and Members considered Options 1 or 2 in relation to setting the Precept.

Cllr R Patient moved that the Finance Committee recommend Option 1 (set the Precept to match the planned expenditure) to Full Council for 2022-23. This was seconded by Cllr R Gardner with five Members in favour and one against.

F 21/24 Completion of Internal Audit (Interim) 2021-22 – report attached.

Members were pleased with the report and thanked the Clerk and Assistant for their work.

a) Confirmation that petty cash reconciliation has been undertaken by two Members.

Members noted checks had been carried out by Cllr S May and Cllr Mrs L Dalby with no issues arising.

F 21/25 Notification of commencement of quarterly financial checks by two Members in January 2022 (Q3) – consider which Members to undertake checks

Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon agreed to carry out the checks. The Clerk would also ask Cllr M Strubel who was not on the Finance Committee. Cllr Mrs L Dalby volunteered to assist should either two Members be unable to do it, but noted her availability was limited during office hours.

F 21/26 Subscriptions: Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) £234

Members **approved** the annual subscription to the SLCC for £234.

F 21/27 Donations:

a) Consider donation to the Poppy Appeal 2021

Members agreed to donate £100 plus the cost of the wreath (£20) to the Poppy Appeal (£120).

Cllr Mrs M Weir left the Chambers at 7:56pm due to her declaration of pecuniary interest (Minute F 21/16)

b) Rochford & District Old People's Welfare Committee (Rochford Day Centre)

Members were grateful to have used the Day Centre for their meetings.

Cllr R Patient moved that £300 be donated to the Rochford & District Old People's Welfare Committee. This was seconded by Cllr R Patient and agreed by all Members.

Cllr Mrs M Weir returned to the Chambers at 7:59pm.

F 21/28 Approve Staff Christmas Lunch – Chairman’s Fund:

It was agreed that the regular contractor join the Staff for their Christmas lunch given his commitment and dedication to Council, with costs to be met by Council.

F 21/14 Summary of Decisions:

- Members to assist in defibrillator checks; item to be referred to Full Council.
- Finance Committee budget for 2022-23 of £98,000 be passed to Full Council for recommendation.
- Further information to be sought from HVHMC regarding proposed office rent costs.
- Parks Committee budget for 2022-23 of £60,500 be passed to Full Council for recommendation.
- General Purposes Committee budget for 2022-23 of £27,700 be passed to Full Council for recommendation.
- Youth Committee budget for 2022-23 of £3,000 be passed to Full Council for recommendation.
- Precept for 2022-23 to be re-worked by Clerk (against Option 1) and recommended to Full Council.
- Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon to carry out quarterly checks; Clerk to ask Cllr M Strubel with Cllr Mrs L Dalby able to assist should Members not be able to carry them out.
- SLCC Subscription of £234 for 2022 approved.
- Donation of £120 to the Poppy Appeal approved (£100 donation; £20 for wreath.)
- Donation of £300 to the Rochford & District Old People’s Welfare Committee approved.
- Staff Christmas lunch approved; contractor to join staff and costs be met by Council.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8:00pm

Chairman