



FAIR OAK & HORTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

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**Minutes of the FINANCE COMMITTEE meeting held on
Friday, 1 December 2023 at 10.00am
at the Fair Oak Parish Office, 2 Knowle Park Lane, Fair Oak**

P – present, Pt – part of the meeting, Ab – absent, Ap – apologies.

Ap Cllr Barrett
P Cllr Douglas (Chair)
Ab Cllr Chivuchi
P Cllr Couldrey
Ab Cllr Forfar
Ap Cllr Higby
P Cllr Marsh
P Cllr Tennent

Officers in attendance:

Joanna Cahill, Responsible Finance Officer and Melanie Stephens, Clerk (via Teams)

PUBLIC SESSION

No members of the public were present.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Douglas, Minute No 15.

14 MINUTES OF MEETINGS (PAPER A)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the inquorate meeting held on 4 September 2023 be noted.

15 COMMUNITY GRANTS (REPORT B)

Cllr Douglas declared a pecuniary interest as the wife of the Treasurer of the Squash Club. She did not participate in the discussion and did not vote.

The meeting was inquorate for this part of the meeting.

The Committee considered the grant applications received for 2023/24.

Discussion ensued on whether the grant fund had been fairly distributed between the

applicants, based on the merit of each project. Members expressed some concern that a smaller amount was allocated to the squash club compared to other grant applicants. As such all members agreed to increase this by £100 and award £350 to the Club.

Some members raised their concern regarding supporting projects for other statutory bodies such as local schools who were funded separately by the Local Education Authority. As such the School's recommended grant allocation was reduced by £100.

As the meeting was inquorate for part of the discussion, the Council are hereby:

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council approve the community grant awards as set out below:

APPLICANT	AMOUNT REQUESTED	TOTAL PROJECT COST	AMOUNT APPROVED
Cricket Club	£500	£600	£500
Community Library	£1,000	£1,000	£600
Fountain Café	£500	£1,800	£350
Friends of FO Infant School	£1,000	£5,200	£900
Fair Oak Squash Club	£500	£960	£350
St Toms Church	£500	£1,000	£500
Fair Oak Village Hall	£750	£1,000	£700
Victim Support	£100	£1,000	£100
Total	£4,850		£4,000

16 BUDGET TASK & FINISH GROUP (REPORT C)

The Committee discussed the budget and precept setting recommendations from the Budget Task & Finish Group.

Whilst the Group had recommended a 6% uplift in the precept for 2024/25, several budget adjustments were needed due to receipt of last-minute quotes for goods and services. With these adjustments, the precept requirement was an increase of 6.2%. This represented a 13p per week or £6.84 per year increase for band D properties. Members supported the proposed revised budget of £645,438 and precept of £530,338 for the 2024/25 financial year.

Members of the Budget Task & Finish Group commented that they had been prudent and reduced 'wish list' projects in order to keep the end precept/council tax to a minimum.

Members expressed the view that the budget was a reasonable balance between maintaining the service provision of the Council and delivering essential projects whilst also safeguarding the impact on the resident during the continued financial pressures.

Members were informed that the minimal wage increase would not impact the Council as all employees were paid above that rate.

Members wished to remind Officers that they would not look favorably on in year supplementary requests as they felt that this reflected poorly on the Council in its budget forecasting and management, the only exception would be emergencies works.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council: -

- a) Approves the proposed budget attached at Appendix 1;
- b) Approves the precept allocation of £530,338;
- c) Approves the 6.2% increase in the 2024/25 precept representing a £6.84 increase per year for a Band D property;
- d) Approves the 6% increase of the fees and charges attached at Appendix 2;
- e) Approves the increase of staff salaries by 2%;
- f) Approves the staff budget set out in Appendix 3 be approved (confidential paper) to include an additional seasonal grounds post and increase in 2 hours per week on the relief caretaker role; and
- g) Approves the use of Ear Marked Reserves, as set out in Appendix 4.

17 WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT D)

RESOLVED:

That the work programme is noted.

18 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

RESOLVED:

“That, under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies Admissions to Meetings Act 1960, the public and the Press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information which would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of its confidential nature (staffing matters)”

19 STAFF SALARIES (REPORT E)

The Committee considered the proposed staff salary increases for 2024/2025 as well as the proposal to appoint a new full time seasonal grounds operative and increase the relief caretaker resource by 2 hours per week.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council: -

- a) Approves the proposal to increase staff salaries by 2% in the 2024/25 financial year (as set out in Appendix 1 to Report E);
- b) Approves the appointment of a full-time seasonal grounds' operative, on a salary of £13.49 per hour, effective April 2024; and
- c) Approves the increase of the relief caretaker hours by 2 hours per week.

Signed.....Chairman

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