

Burwell Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Meeting held on

26th September 2023

Present: Paul Webb (Chair), Linda Kitching, Brenda Wilson, Gus Jones, Chris O’Neil, Liz Swift, Michael Swift, and Yvonne Rix (Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer).

F&GP/26092023/01 Apologies for absences and declarations of interests

Apologies for absence had been received from Charlie Milner and Ian Woodroofe.

Paul Webb declared an interest in matters relating to Burwell Carnival.

F&GP/26092023/03 Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 30.5.2023

Chris O’Neill was formally welcomed as a member of the Finance and General Purposes Group.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th May 2023 were approved and signed as a true record. Proposed by Chris O’Neill and seconded by Michael Swift.

F&GP/26092023/04 Consideration of the Action Sheet

The Action Sheet was considered with the following being noted:

PROJECT	INFORMATION AND UPDATES
Local Council Risk System	Risk Assessments reviewed to date: Grass cutting Fire Risk – Open Spaces Remembrance Day Jubilee Tea Party Jubilee Family Picnic General Cleaning of Council Properties MVAS Units Employment of Staff Skate Park Public Toilets Water Supply War Memorials Planning and Development control Allotments Litter Litter Picking – Volunteers Public buildings/Halls Cemetery Street/Footway Lighting Winter Gritting Letting of Halls Repair Café (Document received) Newsletters Still to do: Street Furniture – Seats Car Parks at Halls/Recreation Ground Bus Shelters Clocks (Cemetery) Manual Handling Use of electronic devices Financial Management Meetings of the Council and Council Meetings Code of Conduct Nuisances

	Website Provision of Website/Internet Access Provision of Office Accommodation Data Protection Council Property and Documents Computing Open Spaces Working at Height Further Assessments required: Community Garden – Volunteers Community Orchard Social Media
CCLA Investment	Funds at 30.6.23 £104,270.32 The Clerk to provide an update to the total funds at the next meeting.

F&GP/26092023/05 Card Payment Machine - Update

The Clerk reminded the group that Council had previously agreed to purchase a Verifone card payment machine, but having placed the order for the machine, Verifone requested personal details from all Council members for credit checking purposes. There was also issues with getting funds transferred when the machine was used to the Council's bank Unity Trust Bank. The requirement for Councillors to provide personal details appears to be standard with all applications. The Clerk continued by explaining that initially a card payment machine had been talked about when there were concerns about being able to pay cash into the bank account via the Post Office, but this has now been resolved. Virtually all payments to the Council are now paid by direct bank pay. Being able to pay by card at the Repair Café would be beneficial, but at the last Café the bank details had been available and three people had paid using this method. It was agreed that the Clerk should approach other Parish Councils to see if any have a card payment machine. Chris O'Neill agreed to speak with his previous Council to see who they use.

F&GP/26092023/06 Engie – Energy Charges

The Clerk reported that she is currently in contact with Engie re the Allotments and Public Toilet energy charges. Gardiner Memorial Hall readings are approximately correct with Engie possibly slightly under the actual readings. The account is currently in credit.

The allotment account is also in credit, but invoices are still being issued with a high estimated use. The Clerk has asked Engie to reduce the estimated usage based on photos of the two meter readings, one taken on 21.9.23 and the older one in June 2021 which shows a usage of 44 KWH in total.

The usage for the Public Toilet has been overestimated every month since the contract started. The Clerk reported that she emailed Engie on 21.9.23 and had included current meter readings and meter changeover details. Engie has now come back and asked for further photos of the meter readings on 28th September 2023. The Clerk to ask for refunds for both the allotments and public toilet.

F&GP/26092023/07 Westhorpe Funding – EDF Community Fund

Paul Webb explained that due to likely changes in the way that the EDF Community Fund is likely to be administered, the £15,500 earmarked for the Westhorpe project may not be available. This will leave the project with an overall shortfall of £9,576.64. The Council currently has £1,677.31 of CIL funding available, and it was suggested that this should be used to cover some of the shortfall. Discussions with EDF are ongoing.

The Group recommends to Full Council that £1,677.31 of CIL Funding is allocated to the Westhorpe Play Area Project to cover some of the shortfall arising from the administrative changes involved with the EDF Community Fund.

F&GP/26092023/08 Sports Facilities – VAT

Paul Webb reported that following a couple of court cases HMRC has conceded that charges for sports facilities should be treated as a non-business activity. Courts ruled that local authorities do act under a legal compulsion when providing sports facilities and secondly, having accepted the court ruling, HMRC assessed that local authority sports provision is not subject to significant competition. As a result, we no longer need to charge VAT on sports lettings income. Currently both Football and Tennis have a VAT element within their charges. The Parish Council can request a refund of VAT paid over the last 4 years, although it is not known at this stage if claims will be successful. It was suggested that should a refund be received; this should be earmarked to the Recreation Ground Sinking Fund to support future work required. The following recommendation to be made to Full Council:

The Group recommends to Full Council that from the 1st October 2023 fees for the use of the Football and Tennis facilities will be treated in relation to VAT as non-business and that any refund received from HMRC will be earmarked to the Recreation Ground Sinking Fund to support future work on the site.

F&GP/26092023/09 Renewal of Contract for Photocopier

The photocopier contract is due for renewal. The current provider, Sharp, has provided a quotation for a five-year contract for a refurbished copier which will save the Council around £3,000 over the term of the contract. There may be a need for some assistance from Burwell Computers with connecting to the network, however it is thought that this is likely to be dealt with by Sharps when they deliver the machine.

The following recommendation to be made to Full Council.

The Group recommends to Full Council that a new 5-year contract is entered into with Sharps for a refurbished photocopier.

F&GP/26092023/10 Review of Council Policies

Most of the Council's policies have now been reviewed by at least one member of the Finance and General Purposes Group. The Clerk should be made aware of any changes required. The remaining policies to be reviewed by members of the group prior to the next Finance and General Purposes meeting at the end of November 2023. The Social Media Policy needs to be reviewed in greater detail.

F&GP/26092023/11 Any other business

Carnival Hiring fee for Pavilion and Recreation Ground

The Chair of the Carnival Committee has asked if the Carnival Committee could be invoiced prior to the event for the use of the Recreation Ground instead of making a donation to the Carnival after the event. Paul Webb suggested that a charge similar to the one proposed for the use of Margaret Field by the circus of £100 per day is made. Others in the group felt that the Carnival should not pay for the use of the facility, the use of the facility is the Council's contribution to the event. The Council has no expectation that a donation will be made. Chris O'Neill suggested that the Council could make a donation to the Carnival and then charge them the same amount for the use of the facility if there was a need to show that the field was being hired. The Group agreed that they would continue to allow the Carnival to use the Recreation Ground for free. It was noted that there are some energy costs involved in the use of the field. The Clerk to report back to the Chair of the Carnival Committee.

F&GP/26092023/12 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 28th November 2023.

The meeting closed at 8.29 pm.

Signed

Dated