

Minutes of the **FINANCE & HR COMMITTEE** meeting held in the Parish Office, Lower Green Road, Pembury on **Friday 17 November 2023** at 2:00pm.



**Councillors Present:**

Cllr N Stratton (Chair)  
Cllr A Birch

Cllr K Brooks (Vice-Chair)

**Also in attendance:**

Helen Munro (Clerk)

- 23/269. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.** There were none.
- 23/270. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.** There were none.
- 23/271. **MINUTES.** The minutes from the committee meeting held on 18 August 2023 were approved and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.
- 23/272. **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.** The Chair welcomed Cllr Birch to the Committee meeting as a new member of the committee. Sammy Harris had resigned from the Parish Council and therefore this committee.
- 23/273. **CLERK'S REPORT.** The following report was **noted**:
- a. Computer Software. The introduction of the Rialtas Omega software has gone well and has streamlined many aspects of the accounts system.
  - b. Recent problems with the Edge Epitaph Cemetery Software have been resolved. Historical data still needs to be input to make the system effective.
- 23/274. **OPEN SESSION.** There were no members of the public present.
- 23/275. **AUDIT.** The interim internal audit was scheduled on 29 November 2023.
- 23/276. **SALARY INCREASES 2023/24.** The increases to the national pay spine and backdated pay owed from 1 April 2023 were noted. The changes would be implemented in the November 2023 payroll.
- 23/277. **FINANCIAL INFORMATION.** Reports to 30 September 2023 were reviewed. It was **RESOLVED** that they be recommended to Full Council:
- a. Income and expenditure report. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that any donations from the Carols on the Green event fund additional leads for the PA system.

- b. Bank reconciliations.
- c. Reserves. It was **RESOLVED** that the following changes to Earmarked Reserves (EMR) would be recommended to Full Council:
  - £2,500 from tennis court refurbishment EMR to tennis court sinking fund.
  - £1,000 from tennis court refurbishment EMR to a new EMR for a replacement defibrillator.
  - £108.97 from tennis court refurbishment EMR to a new EMR for a gazebo.
  - £313.64 from Community deed of release EMR to a new EMR for a gazebo.

23/278. **EARMARKED RESERVES.** A comparison of neighbouring local council's EMR and sinking fund strategies was discussed. Other local council's allocate money towards their sinking funds on an ad hoc basis. They also have significantly more general reserves than Pembury Parish Council (PPC).

A calculation of how EMR could be built up was circulated. It was **RESOLVED** this method of calculating the EMR be used in future to aid transparency.

23/279. **BUDGET, PRECEPT & BAND D EQUIVALENT 2024/25.** The following items were considered for recommendation to Full Council:

- a. The committee's wish lists were reviewed. Trees for the playground would need to be grant funded.

There was concern about any spending for the Polley Close bus shelter as it was not owned by PPC. The existing shelter also acted as a retaining wall to the garden behind it. Consideration of asking a local surveyor to look at the shelter free of charge would be investigated.

It was **RESOLVED** to make a recommendation to fund changing the streetlights to LED lanterns from existing EMRs rather than by a loan to Full Council. This was not included in the budget as it had a net zero effect on the budget / precept.

- b. Staff budgets were considered. The draft budgets included an increase of 3%, however it was agreed that a 4% increase was more prudent. The draft budget would be re-calculated.
- c. It was **RESOLVED** that burial, allotment and sports pitch hire charges as recommended by the Open Spaces Committee would be

recommended to Full Council and included in the draft budget calculations.

- d. It was **RESOLVED** that newsletter advertising charges as recommended by the PVN Working Group would be recommended to Full Council and included in the draft budget calculations.
- e. The draft consolidated budget was reviewed, and changes discussed previously during the meeting made. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend a budget with expenditure of £295,789 and non-precept income of £43,850 to Full Council.
- f. Earmarked reserves required for 2024/25 were reviewed. The draft calculations showed that £17,625 was required. As the basis on which EMRs were calculated had changed, it was felt that the projected increase for 2024/25 should be phased over a number of years to smooth out the increases. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend that £5,000 of the EMRs be phased to Full Council.
- g. It was **RESOLVED** to recommend a draft precept of £264,564 to Full Council. Using the previous year's tax base, the Band D equivalent would be £113.52. When the new tax base was notified, the Band D equivalent would be recalculated and taken into account when the final precept was agreed.

23/280. **RISKS.**

- a. There were no new risks.
- b. The risk assessment for Fireworks Display and Carols on the Green was noted.
- c. The quarterly strategic risk register was reviewed and noted.

23/281. **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS OR AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS.** There were none.

23/282. **NEXT MEETING DATE.** Monday 22 January 2024 at 11:30pm in the Parish Office.

23/283. Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 it was **RESOLVED** to excluding the public and press from the meeting for the next items of business on the grounds that it will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information at 15:34.

23/284. **OFFICE WORKLOAD.** The significant workload was noted. Steps were suggested to assist staff.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 15:56m.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chair