

Local Government Act 1972



Local Government for Langton Green, Speldhurst, Ashurst and Old Groombridge

**Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 at 7.30pm in the  
Parish Council Office, Langton Green Recreation Ground**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Cllrs Rowe (Chair), Cleaver, Davies (7.35pm), Ellery (Vice-Chair) and Tarricone (7.40pm) with Curry and Lyle (ex-officio).

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the public present.

**OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

**1. To enquire if anyone present intends to record the meeting:**

The meeting was recorded by the Clerk for accuracy of the minutes. The recording would be deleted once the meeting minutes are signed off at the next Finance Committee meeting.

**2. To receive and approve apologies for absence**

There were none.

**3. Disclosures of Interest**

Councillors' ongoing disclosures were noted:

Cllrs Ellery and Rowe have shares in the original Speldhurst shop and post office.

**4. Declarations of Lobbying**

Cllr Curry had been lobbied regarding the Pavilion.

**5. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

**6. Public Open Session**

There were no members of the public present.

**7. Review of Action Points**

The Clerk reported that all action points had been completed or were closed.

## **8. Interim Payments**

**Unity Bank:** £756 Forvis Mazars LLP for External Audit; £315\* Kidman's Stihl Blower; £15,000 Langton Green Village Hall for grant towards solar panels; £17.67 DD Castle Water for Pavilion Water; £248.92 DD Veolia for Waste and Recycling Collections.

**Mastercard:** £9 Unity Trust credit card charges.

Starred items were made under delegated power.

## **9. Clerk's Report**

The Clerk reported that the bank reconciliations were up to date and had been checked and signed by a councillor which was noted by the committee, as required by the Internal Auditor.

The outstanding balance for the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) repayment notice for the office building was £10,833.25. The loan ends at the end of May 2026, and the interest is payable twice yearly in May and November.

The Clerk clarified the requirements of moving from Receipts and Payments (R&P) Accounting to Income and Expenditure (I&E) and reported on the recently attended Finance Conference. With regard to the change from R&P to I&E there are differences to the carried forward balances from the 2023/24 AGAR to the 2024/25 AGAR. It was agreed the Clerk would follow up with the auditors to ascertain how this should be processed.

## **10. Financial position to review expenditure vs budget at 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024:**

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk said that the figures included payments up until 16<sup>th</sup> September which was approximately mid-point in the financial year. The committee reviewed the figures which were in line with expectations.

## **11. Financial position to review expenditure for the Pavilion at 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk reported that the Pavilion energy costs for the year would be £8,800.

The planned maintenance report for the Pavilion was presented which showed potential costs to Speldhurst Parish Council (SPC) in the region of £19,000-£20,000. This figure did not include the annual running costs which were in the region of £18,500. Income from hirings (including the Community Hub) was only likely to reach £11,000-£12,000. In light of the findings in the planned maintenance report it was agreed the Council should take steps to put aside funds into an EMR (Ear Marked Reserves) account for pavilion maintenance.

Additional hours worked by the Assistant Clerk (CB) on pavilion bookings in the last 3 months totalled £223.44.

A lengthy discussion took place on the future maintenance costs for the pavilion.

## **12. Budget Virements**

There were no new budget virements.

## **13. Banking and reserves – to consider the present banking arrangements.**

The Clerk confirmed the terms and interest rates on the current bank accounts which councillors noted, along with the EMRs, ahead of the interim internal audit. The Playground EMR would reduce by around £16,000 from recently authorised work and there was nothing in the Pavilion EMR.

A discussion took place about how surplus funds should be managed and where they should be held. At present the Council uses Unity Bank for its current account (no interest) and uses a mixture of notice accounts with different notice periods and interest rates for surplus funds. All bank accounts are covered by Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS). Being limited to notice accounts only reduces the potential interest that can be earned and is problematic when large sums of money are received. With the imminent arrival of the second half of the Precept, the Clerk was requested to look into investing with Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA) Investment Management Limited who operate a Public Sector Deposit Fund which is a regulated Open-Ended Investment Company (OEIC). The fund is not covered by FSCS but is rated AAA by Fitch. It was agreed at the meeting that the Council should have the option to invest money into AAA rated funds which requires changes to the current Investment Guidelines. Council to be asked to approve a change to the Investment Guidelines and any other related Policy and/or Standing Orders to allow funds to be invested into AAA rated funds.

#### **14. Proposed/Planned/Planned Non-repeating Expenditure**

The **Highways Committee** had considered future expenditure at their recent meeting. The £1,006 design fee for Old Groombridge to install raised 30mph repeater signs on Groombridge Hill and near the entrance to Groombridge Place, agreed by Full Council on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024, had now been waived. No future expenditure was envisaged at this time, but councillors had requested that the Highways budget continue to be built up towards the HIP priorities. It was agreed EMR for Highways would be capped at current levels until Highways can present a financial proposal for specific expenditure requirements.

The **Governance Committee** would be considering future expenditure on salaries, pensions, IT equipment, CCTV, internal and external auditing at their meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November.

The **Amenities Committee** would consider future expenditure at their meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September. The costs in the Planned Maintenance report for the **Pavilion** was noted.

Items for future spending would be fully considered alongside the budget proposals for the Precept at the next Finance Committee meeting.

#### **15. Committee and Working Group expenditure** – to consider expenditure recommended by committees and working groups and be notified of expenditure made under delegated authority. There was nothing specific to consider at this time.

#### **16. To review the following policies:**

- **Finance Committee Terms of Reference** – The terms of reference were reviewed, and an additional paragraph was included to explain the role of the committee. **RESOLVED** - That the Finance Committee recommend approval of the updated Finance Committee Terms of Reference at the next Full Council meeting.

#### **17. Grant Requests** – There were none. The updated Grants List was noted.

#### **18. Update on the Speldhurst Chapel PWLB** – Councillors noted the latest interest rate of 5.06% on an EIP (Equal Instalments of Principal) basis on £325,000 over 25 years which would be £16,445. This meant the initial annual repayments would be £29,445 (£13,000 capital, the rest interest, which would decrease over time). Interest is payable twice yearly (May and November). The loan approval ends in January 2025, but Cllr Rowe said the purchase must be completed by end of November 2024 at the latest to avoid any difficulties associated with the December/January period. The total of legal fees paid to date was £10,254.72.

**19. Budget 2024-25** – The Clerk presented a budget report and predictions for the next financial year for consideration in advance of the budget setting for the 2024-25 Precept. The committee noted the draft figures which would form the basis of the discussion at the next meeting when setting the budget for recommendation to Full Council.

The Precept for the current financial year was £225,680, which included the increase for the Speldhurst Chapel PWLB. An 8% increase would achieve just over £18,000. Councillors will need to decide what increase will be required to cover the ongoing maintenance costs of the Pavilion and the void between income and running costs.

**20. Governance Risk Assessment – Fraud**

Cllr Curry volunteered to carry out the Risk Assessment on Fraud and would present his findings to the next Finance Committee meeting for agreement before submitting to the Governance Committee.

**21. Staff and Training**

It was noted that the Clerk had attended the Finance Conference on 17<sup>th</sup> September (£84 incl VAT) and the Clerk and Assistant Clerk (KH) would be attending the Clerks' Conference next month (£84 incl VAT per person).

**22. Items for Information**

- Date of forthcoming meetings:
  - Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (Budget and Precept setting meeting)
  - Monday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025
  - Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2025
  - Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025
  - Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025
- Cllr Curry was liaising with TWBC regarding funding for the Community Hub.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.24pm.

**Chair**

**Finance Committee Action Points**

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
11/24	Ask each Cttee/WG to include item on their agenda for Proposed/Planned/Planned Non-repeating expenditure.	Clerk	24/06	Complete
12/24	Add the following on the July Full Council agenda: Expenditure for Rialtas Accounting System Conversion. Financial Regulations. Ashurst Broadsheet Grant Application. Baby Umbrella Grant Application.	Clerk	24/06	Complete

13/24	Confirm and pay the agreed grant applications and update Grants Approved List.	Clerk	24/06	<b>Complete</b>
14/24	Confirm and pay insurance renewal.	Clerk	24/06	<b>Complete</b>
15/24	Add Governance Risk Assessment – Fraud and Terms of Reference to next Finance Committee meeting agenda.	Clerk	24/06	<b>Complete</b>
16/24	Notify Governance Committee to review salaries & pensions and provide budget recommendations for the next financial year at their November meeting.	Clerk	24/06	<b>Complete</b>
17/24	With regard to the change from R&P to I&E there are differences to the carried forward balances from the 2023/24 AGAR to the 2024/25 AGAR, follow up with the auditors to ascertain how this should be processed.	Clerk	23/09	
18/24	Look into investing with CCLA Investments Ltd and review Internal Financial Control System and Investment Policy to clarify the investment protection requirements	Clerk	23/09	
19/24	Put Finance Committee Terms of Reference on Full Council Agenda.	Clerk	23/09	
20/24	Present draft budget at the next Finance Committee meeting.	Clerk	23/09	
21/24	Carry out Governance Risk Assessment on Fraud.	Cllr Curry	23/09	
22/24	Send meeting invitations to councillors for dates of forthcoming Finance Committee meetings.	Clerk	23/09	