



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

Minutes of a Finance Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 5th January 2022 at
7.30pm in the Gallery Room, Langton Green Village Hall

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cllrs Ellery (Chairman), Barrington-Johnson, Rowe, Scarborough, Mrs Woodliffe and Mrs Lyle (ex-officio).

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mrs K Neve – Clerk and Mr C May – Finance Officer (RFO).

1. Covid Compliance

Councillors were asked if they were comfortable with the arrangements for the meeting, which they confirmed. There were no other specific items relating to covid compliance.

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

No-one present intended to record the meeting.

3. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Mrs Soyke (covid-related) and Rajah (prior engagement)

4. Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

5. Declarations of Lobbying

There were none.

6. Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting dated **18th October 2021**, copies having previously been forwarded to Members, be approved, and signed as a correct record.

7. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

8. Interim Payments

These are payments made during the month that were not approved at the last Full Council Meeting:

- Unity Bank: £100 Toy Appeal donation; £36.56 Eon streetlighting £174.74 BT quarterly DD and Telephone; £128.70 Initial – annual pavilion contract; £25.08 mobile; £32.55 UTB quarterly bank charges.
- Mastercard: £9.00 Bank charges; £13.91 Petrol for tools; £54.85 Van MOT; £277.50 Van tax; £51.71 Van petrol; £74.44 Groundsman Hi Viz; £9.00 badge and £17.97 bin liners.

Councillors asked that the van be serviced.

9. Financial position to review expenditure vs budget at 31st December 2021:

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. Councillors noted some anomalies which included 4003 pension contributions (previously explained) which would be over budget due to an increase in contributions by SPC, and the new clerk. The RFO said that it was likely that there would be savings under 4206 LGRG maintenance, due to no unexpected expenditure this financial year.

10. Financial position to review expenditure for the Pavilion at 31st December 2021

Summary sheets and detailed reports had been circulated prior to the meeting which were considered in detail. The RFO confirmed that the income from the café would exceed budget projection by about £5,000 which meant that the pavilion would break-even this financial year, rather than the predicted shortfall. Items 1031 (Café Rental) and 1032 (Pavilion Rental) would be combined and renamed Café Rental for the future as the income streams are combined under the new pavilion contract.

11. Budget Virements

The RFO reported that there were no budget virements at the current time but that a virement of £2,000 from the contingency budget would need to be considered at the next meeting to cover the cost of the new Defibrillator, agreed at the Full Council meeting on 6th December 2021.

12. Banking and reserves

The RFO advised that HSBC had written to SPC advising that the account would be classified as inactive and closed unless a transaction was made. He suggested that a quarterly payment from this account to Unity be made and repayment be made back to HSBC. The RFO advised that he would be looking at other banks to see if a better interest rate could be achieved. **RESOLVED** – That an initial £1,000 be transferred to HSBC from the Unity account and that a quarterly standing order be set up to and from each account going forward.

13. Public Works Loan

The RFO reported that, since the last meeting when early repayment was discussed, a second payment had been made, reducing the balance further. He advised that there would be a penalty of approximately £2,169 for early repayment. Councillors agreed there would be no financial benefit in early repayment.

14. Terms of Reference

The RFO presented the amended Terms of Reference, referring to the Grant Awarding Guidelines, for consideration. Councillors requested that the Grant Awarding Guidelines be reviewed at the next Governance Working Group. **RESOLVED** – That the Finance Committee Terms of Reference as amended, be approved.

15. Committee and Working Group expenditure

The RFO presented the following expenditure recommended by committees and working groups to be made under delegated authority:

- a) **New contract from Landscape Services for the year 2022** – Landscape Services, previously part of KCC, continue to be the cheapest service provider. Their current price increase was 4%. **RESOLVED** – That the new contract from Landscape Services for the year 2022 be agreed in principle subject to the confirmation of the increase in price being 4% from the 2021 costs.
- b) **Pavilion Pest Control** – Mice had entered the Pavilion which is a common occurrence for buildings in rural areas. In addition, one of the ceiling panels inside the building had been missing for a short period but, once fixed, and together with the pest control visit, the pest issue no longer exists. **RESOLVED** – That the Pavilion Café be reimbursed for the cost of £285 for the pest control visit and that the Pavilion be added to the current pest control contract to give further safety.
- c) **Financing a lunch at the Pavilion for the monthly lunch club** – This item was deferred to the next meeting.
- d) **Renewal of the Pavilion contract for the café** – A decision on this item was deferred as it would be discussed at Full Council on 10th January 2022. However, a thorough discussion on the details of the contract took place including the addition of pest control within the contract, the rising cost of utilities, the increase in hire charge, a 6-month review period and clarification of other issues. Any further questions should be submitted to Cllr Mrs Lyle who would be amending the contract prior to submission to Full Council.
- e) **Setting up a direct debit with Cloudy IT** – The RFO requested that a direct debit be set up to cover the monthly payments to Cloudy IT. **RESOLVED** – That the RFO be authorised to set up a monthly direct debit to Cloudy IT.

16. Grant requests

The RFO presented the following grant requests, which were discussed in detail, for consideration:

- a) **Speldhurst Lunch Club** for the cost of the hall rental. **RESOLVED** to grant £220 towards the costs subject to clarification on the organisational structure of the lunch club, numbers of local residents assisted and payment being made to the applicant.
- b) **St John's Church** for churchyard maintenance. **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 towards the costs.
- c) **St Mary's Church** for churchyard maintenance. **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 towards the costs.
- d) **TW CAB.** **RESOLVED** to grant £1,000 towards their costs, subject to the completion of a grant request form and confirmation of the number of residents from our parish that they were helping.

e) **TW Counselling Centre. RESOLVED** to grant £250 towards the costs.

17. Staff and Training

The RFO reported that there would be expenditure of £300 for planning training and the Clerk would be commencing CiLCA in January at a cost of approximately £400.

18. Precept 2022-23

The RFO had reviewed the financial requirements for the following year and had prepared figures based on an increase in the precept of 5% and also 7.3% for comparison. He highlighted some points which were important in considering the precept. Of the 16 Parish and Town Council in the TW Borough, only 3 had a lower band D rate (SPC's was currently £65.59) which showed that SPC were providing good value to the community. If an increase of 5% was agreed the Band D would be £67.62 and if an increased of 7.3% was agreed it would be £69.11. He confirmed that, having consulted other councils, they were all increasing their tax base. The new homes being built in the Borough were having an effect and this would reduce the impact of any increase. The increase in precept needed to be formally decided at the next Full Council meeting on 10th January.

Councillors assessed the current financial position and reviewed the precept priorities for 2022-23. There was general agreement that the increase should leave no deficit and further discussion took place leading to a proposal to increase the precept by 7.3%, which was the increase required to balance the books in the budget, there having been no increase last year. The RFO would make changes to the projected figures and a new spreadsheet would be available for the Full Council meeting.

RESOLVED – That the RFO be authorised to present the figures based on an increase of 7.3% for approval at Full Council in January.

19. Items for Information

There were none.

There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting closed at 9.03pm.

Chairman

Finance Committee Action Points

Action Number	Action	Owner	Date created	Status
1/22	Register for renewal reminder of MOT for SPC van on the Government website.	Clerk / RFO	5/1	
2/22	Put Covid Compliance item at the start of future agendas.	Clerk / RFO	5/1	
3/22	Add onto next agenda the virement for the Defibrillator of £2k from the Contingency budget.	Clerk / RFO	5/1	
4/22	Transfer £1k from HSBC to Unity and set up quarterly standing order between both accounts to keep activity on HSBC account to prevent closure.	RFO	5/1	
5/22	Look at other bank accounts to see if a better interest rate can be achieved.	RFO	5/1	
6/22	Review Grant Awarding Guidelines at next Governance WG/Finance Committee.	Clerk / RFO	5/1	
7/22	Set up a folder of all policies and terms of reference relating to Finance Committee under “Finance Committee”.	Clerk / RFO	5/1	
8/22	Combine 1031 and 1032 and rename Café Rental under Pavilion budget.	RFO	5/1	
9/22	Check the 4% increase in costs for the Landscape Services contract for 2022 refers to an increase from the 2021 figures.	RFO	5/1	
10/22	Pay the pest control bill for the Pavilion and include this within our current pest control contract going forward.	RFO	5/1	
11/22	Put Pavilion monthly lunch club grant request on the next Finance Committee Agenda.	RFO	5/1	
12/22	Set up a direct debit with Cloudy IT	RFO	5/1	
13/22	Pay the following grants: Speldhurst Lunch Club (subject to conditions) £220 St John’s Church £1k St Mary’s Church £1k TW CAB (subject to completion of form) £1k TW Counselling Centre £250	RFO	5/1	
14/22	Request the completion of a grant request form from CAB (before payment of their grant)	RFO	5/1	
15/22	Subject to Full Council approval on 10 th January, notify TWBC of our Precept for 2022-23 being set at 7.3%	Clerk / RFO	5/1	
16/22	Organise a Service for the SPC Van	Clerk / RFO	5/1	