



EMERSONS GREEN
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee

held in the Council Chamber, Emersons Green Town Council

1900hrs on Thursday 28th July 2022

- Present:** Councillors Christopher Edwardson, Colin Hunt, James Hunt, Sally Hill, Caroline Johnson, David Somers, Roberta Sunderland.
- Absent:** None.
- In attendance:** Town Clerk, Ian Lyons.
- Public:** No members of the public were in attendance.
- Apologies:** Councillor Richard Nichols.
- Notes:** The meeting began at 1900hrs. All motions are unanimous unless stated otherwise.

FIN_2022.30 Welcome and Introductions.

Minutes: Cllr James Hunt (Chair) welcomed everyone present at the meeting and explained the emergency procedures.

FIN_2022.31 Declaration of Interest – Localism Act 2011.

Minutes: Cllr James Hunt (Chair) reminded members of the requirement to declare an interest. No interests were declared.

FIN_2022.32 Public Participation.

Minutes: No members of the public were present.

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

FIN_2022.33 Minutes.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr James Hunt, supported by Cllr Colin Hunt, and resolved that:

Resolved: The Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 23rd June 2022, copies having been circulated, be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

Minutes: The minutes were signed at the meeting by Cllr James Hunt (Chair).

FIN_2022.34 Outstanding items from the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 23rd June 2022.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk delivered a summary of the work undertaken as a result of the resolutions and action points from the previous meeting.

To begin with, it was discussed that internet banking access had proven difficult to arrange for Cllr James Hunt. At this point, Cllr James Hunt (Chair) briefly intervened to explain that the bank had made an error with the mandate, and it was agreed to meet with the Town Clerk in the following week to call the bank and resolve the matter.

Secondly, as requested, options for savings accounts with a higher interest rate had been investigated. In sum, the Town Clerk advised the committee that the Council's preferred option should be to spend excess capital on a project that meets the Council's strategic aims, such as a facility for young people, particularly when inflation was so high. However, if a temporary solution is required then a simpler solution may be the direct purchase of government gilts, and preliminary inquiries had already been made. After this, The Town Clerk provided a brief outline of gilts. As a result, Cllr James Hunt volunteered to work on a motion with Cllr Colin Hunt, for consideration at a future meeting.

Thirdly, as requested, it was reported that a committed expenditure report for the professional and legal fees budget heading had been produced, and the details were circulated. This was mainly the funds earmarked for an invoice related to the production of a strategic plan, which had not yet been paid.

After this, as requested, it was reported that three building repair quotes had been sought and received. As a result, a motion was listed on the agenda for this meeting.

After that, it was noted that the contract with Nebula IT had been renewed.

Next, it was reported that the Financial Regulations Policy is still under review and would be discussed later in the meeting.

Notably, the meeting was then informed that a refund for business rates of £19545.34 from South Gloucestershire Council had now been received into the Council bank account.

Finally, as requested, a budget heading had been created for relocation expenses and is being funded from general reserves.

FIN_2022.35 Bank Reconciliations.

Minutes: The committee read the circulated documents and they were signed by the Chair.

FIN_2022.36 Monthly Payments.

Minutes: The Town Clerk highlighted a late entry on to the payments list, which was an invoice from Nebula IT. A decision was taken to include this so that work could start quickly on the website upgrade, which would prevent a lengthy delay in the EGTC Calendar project.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr James Hunt, supported by Cllr Colin Hunt, and resolved that:

Resolved: The monthly payments list, copies having been circulated, be approved, and signed by the Chair.

FIN_2022.37 Budget Monitoring.

Minutes: To begin with, the committee received the circulated document, *Detailed Income, and Expenditure by Budget Heading 01/07/2022 Cost Centre Report*.

After this, Cllr Roberta Sunderland raised several questions from an email, which was circulated at the meeting:

“4000 Net salaries Clerk - if £11,328 is for four months this line is going to be seriously over budget as only £15k left for next 8 months?
4075 Mileage Again 4 months have taken this over budget- have we changed how we work - do we need more budget here?
4330 Stationery - already over budget - similar question as for mileage.
4340 Misc - receipt of £1100 - just wondered what this is.
4431 - Climate and Environmental - budget £1.5k - is this the budget allocated to CEWG ?”

At the invitation of the Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk circulated a detailed nominal ledger report for each of the cost centres in question, displaying each transaction. For code 4000, it was explained that the use of a Locum Clerk had temporarily increased salary costs. Similarly, for code 4075, the use of a Locum Clerk had temporarily increased mileage costs. For code 4330, one-off costs for Op London Bridge had been approved by the Mayor and the Town Clerk. For code 4340, an expected invoice for hedgehog houses, from the previous financial year, had not arrived or been written off. Finally, it was agreed that the intention of code 4331 was to allow a budget for CEWG.

Cllr James Hunt (Chair) thanked the Town Clerk for the detailed reports, and it was noted that this would be a useful format for queries at future meetings.

FIN_2022.38 Financial Planning.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk delivered a briefing on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and how it could be spent.

In particular, the Town Clerk highlighted that the Council had large sums of money in earmarked reserves that could be reclaimed if it was not used.

After this, several suggestions were made on how to use CIL funds efficiently, and how that might affect the Council's budget in January.

After that, a short discussion took place about the employee pension scheme and potential liabilities for the Council to note.

FIN_2022.39 Contract – Building Repair.

Minutes: At the invitation of the Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk provided the following advice:

The exterior of the Town Council building urgently requires a replacement of the soffits, fascias, and guttering.

LEGAL POWER OR DUTY TO ACT

- Local Government Act 1972, s.133
- Finance Committee Terms of Reference.

RECOMMENDATION, CONDITIONS, AND OTHER CONTROLS

- Resolve that: "That the Finance Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk to commission a repair project for the Town Council Office building, copies having been circulated, from General Contingency, earmarked reserves.
- Consider if a specific earmarked reserve for Building Repairs and Maintenance is necessary.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- To save money by preventing further damage to the property from accelerated wear and tear (weather), insects, and nesting birds in the loft cavity.
- To prevent reputational damage from an unsightly building.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council currently has no specific budget heading for 'building/property maintenance'. However, the current budget for 'office maintenance' is £760 per

annum, of which £595 remains. Similarly, the Council has a budget for 'asset maintenance' of £469, with no expenditure to date. At the time of writing, the Council has substantial reserves held in General Contingency, earmarked reserves, of £175,614.12, which could be used to fund this project. To note, there is still an outstanding request from Full Council to create a budget from General Reserves for a website (£3575 ex VAT) and a calendar (TBC by CEWG), which is not included in this balance.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr James Hunt, supported by Cllr Colin Hunt, and resolved that:

Resolved: The Finance Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk to commission a repair project for the Town Council Office building, copies having been circulated.

FIN_2022.40 Contract – Cleaning.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk read aloud the correspondence received by Cllr Richard Nichols on this matter, and the following grant application, as requested by email.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr James Hunt, supported by Cllr Colin Hunt, and resolved that:

Resolved: That the Finance Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk to negotiate a new cleaning contract for the Town Council Office building, copies having been circulated.

FIN_2022.41 Financial Regulations.

Minutes: At this point, the Finance Committee took part in a detailed, line-by-line, review of the Financial Regulations. In sum, the Town Clerk and every member of the committee provided their opinions on highlighted areas of the current Financial Regulations policy document, many of which were either considered irrelevant or out of date. As a result, it was agreed that the Town Clerk would collate this information and provide an updated version, with tracked changes, for consideration at a future meeting.

FIN_2022.42 Grant Applications.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk provided the following advice on a grant application from the 2nd Mangotsfield Guides for £3000:

LEGAL POWER OR DUTY TO ACT

- Local Government Act 1972, s.137.
- Standing Order 10a iv.
- Finance Committee Terms of Reference.

RECOMMENDATION, CONDITIONS, AND OTHER CONTROLS

- Decide on the merits of the grant application.
- *If necessary:*
- Resolve that: “That the grant application from 2nd Mangotsfield Guides, copies having been circulated, be referred to the Full Council for a decision.”

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- To fulfil the committee terms of reference by making recommendations to the Full Council on s.137 grant applications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This meeting represents the third round of applications for the fiscal year 2022/23. If the Council decides to award this grant, it can easily be achieved within the current budget of £40,000, which includes £20,000 for S137. The level of grants awarded year to date, including liabilities, is currently at £8395.73, of which £4914 is s.137 spending.

After this, several Councillors highlighted the pros and cons of this application.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr Colin Hunt, supported by Cllr James Hunt, and resolved that:

Resolved: The grant application from 2nd Mangotsfield Guides for a £3000 trip to Paris, copies having been circulated, be referred to the Full Council with a motion to approve the full amount.

FIN_2022.43 **Dates and Timings.**

Minutes: Cllr James Hunt (Chair) announced that the next meeting of the Finance Committee was scheduled to take place:

Thursday 29th September 2022 at 1900hrs in the Emersons Green Town Council Chamber.

Cllr James Hunt (Chair) concluded the formal business of the meeting at 2025hrs and announced that an informal ‘round-table’ discussion would take place afterward.