

Minutes of the Finance Committee

held in the Council Chamber, Emersons Green Town Council,

1900hrs on Thursday 29th September 2022.

- Present:** Councillors Christopher Edwardson, Colin Hunt, James Hunt, Caroline Johnson, Richard Nichols.
- Absent:** None.
- In attendance:** Town Clerk, Ian Lyons, and Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor).
- Apologies:** Councillor David Somers.
- Public:** One member of the public attended the meeting.
- Notes:** The meeting began at 1900hrs. All resolutions are unanimous unless stated otherwise.

FIN_2022.44 Welcome and Introductions.

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

FIN_2022.45 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_2022.46 Public Participation.

Minutes: One member of the public was present but did not wish to speak.

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

FIN_2022.47 Minutes.

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

Resolved: The Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 28th July 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_2022.48 Outstanding items from the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 28th July 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 meetings. As follows:

- The bank mandate change had now been completed to include Cllr James Hunt, and internet banking would be arranged shortly.
- Building repair work on the Town Council office has been commissioned. Work is expected to start on the 24th of October and will take approximately 5 working days.
- The office cleaning contract was commissioned and is working well.
- The Financial Regulations Policy is still under review and listed later in the agenda.
- The grant application for 2nd Mangotsfield Guides has been delayed due to the Full Council being cancelled.
- Gilt/Bond buying was investigated but may not be a practical solution. In the meantime, the savings account has been upgraded and is now gaining a small amount of interest. Alternatives, such as a treasury account are being investigated at the suggestion of the Barclays Relationship Manager, which has proved to be a valuable point of contact.
- The Council has now successfully completed the external audit with no problems or action points, and the results would be published shortly.

FINANCE

FIN_2022.49 Bank Reconciliations.

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

FIN_2022.50 Monthly Payments.

Minutes: Councillor Johnson raised a question about the additional payment of £64.40 to HMRC, and the Town Clerk explained this was due to a revision statement arriving from HMRC for Month 3 after the regular payment had already been made.

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

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

Minutes: The Chair signed the payments list.

FIN_2022.51 Budget Monitoring.

Minutes: To begin with, there were no questions from Councillors. At the invitation of the Chair, the Town Clerk explained that a journal entry had occurred to move £570 to cost centre 310 (events) for items relating to Operation London Bridge, which seemed more appropriate.

Next, The Town Clerk explained that the Full Council had resolved for the Finance Committee to allocate a budget for the Website and Calendar competition. However, whilst an appropriate cost centre could be created, it was agreed that it would be sensible to leave budgeting to a dedicated meeting.

FIN_2022.52 Financial Planning.

Minutes: Then, a short debate took place on the subject of the budget-setting process for 2023 and how to deal with any requests for significant projects to be included in the draft strategic plan, including the timeframe for events.

It was agreed that Councillors should be invited to pitch their proposals at a future meeting of the Full Council. After that, the budget could be set in response to the Town Clerk's proposal for the budget, and level of precept, at a subsequent meeting before the New Year.

Action: Town Clerk to invite Councillors to pitch ideas at a future meeting of the Full Council.

FIN_2022.53 Contract – Cleaning.

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

The current cleaning contract does not include all the Council's assets, such as bus shelters, notice boards, bike shelters, external windows, and shutters. Previously, the Council has outsourced these tasks. The Council has no employees with cleaning listed in their contract.

LEGAL POWER OR DUTY TO ACT

- Local Government Act 1972, s.133

- EGTC Risk Management Policy
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Finance Committee Terms of Reference.

RECOMMENDATION, CONDITIONS, AND OTHER CONTROLS

- Resolve that: “the Finance Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk to negotiate a new cleaning contract for the listed Council assets, copies having been circulated.”

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- To save money by outsourcing cleaning tasks at a lower cost – time is money.
- To prevent reputational damage from an unclean/unsightly building at public meetings.
- To protect the health of employees and public visitors.
- To comply with health and safety legislation, and Council risk assessments, including the care and use of substances hazardous to health, by using professionally trained experts.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council currently has a combined budget of £1266 for asset maintenance and cleaning. To date, £189 of this budget has been spent with the previous contractor. Over the next six months, this item will cost approximately £1296. For the following year, a budget in the region of £3000 is more realistic, assuming the Council does not wish to completely replace any assets. Of course, the Council currently has substantial reserves and a predicted underspend on the annual budget.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr Caroline Johnson, supported by Cllr Christopher Edwardson, and resolved that:

Resolved: The Finance Committee delegates authority to the Town Clerk to negotiate a new cleaning contract for the listed Council assets, copies having been circulated.

FIN_2022.54 Financial Regulations.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk explained that the Draft Financial Regulations Policy (Nov 2022) had now been amended to incorporate the suggestions and comments from the last meeting. No further comments or suggestions were made.

Motion: It was moved by Cllr Richard Nichols, supported by Cllr Christopher Edwardson, and resolved that:

Resolved: The Finance Committee defers the Draft Financial Regulations Policy to a future meeting of the Full Council.

FIN_2022.55 Grant Application – Emersons Green Village Hall.

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk provided the following advice on a grant application from Emersons Green Village Hall for £2705 for a Health and Safety Upgrade Project:

LEGAL POWER OR DUTY TO ACT

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976 s.19).
- Local Government Act 1972, s.133.
- Finance Committee Terms of Reference, function 7.

RECOMMENDATION, CONDITIONS, AND OTHER CONTROLS

- Resolve that: “the Finance Committee approve a grant payment of £2705 to Emersons Green Village Hall for a Health and Safety Upgrade Project.”

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- To meet draft corporate priority 5, “strive for continuous service improvement and efficiency, support our economy and the town”.
- To meet draft key objective A1, “consult to determine what community groups and residents aspire to and need and formulate a plan to deliver that support”.
- To meet draft key objective A2, “reach out and facilitate additional resident/friends groups to assist with enhancing standards”.
- To meet draft key objective E1, “increase rapport and communications with residents, local clubs, and stakeholders”.
- In sum, the Council has committed to working in partnership with other organisations and stakeholders to improve services and deliver value for money for the Emersons Green Town Council and the taxpayer. This is an excellent opportunity to do that.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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 s.137. The level of grants awarded year to date, including liabilities, is currently at £8414, of which £7164 is s.137 spending. Therefore, the remaining balance is £31,586 in total, £12,836 for s.137, and £18,750 for regular grants.

Minutes: After this, Cllr Richard Nichols questioned the level of reserves held in the bank accounts of Emersons Green Village Hall. After a short delay, the Town Clerk clarified the exact amounts that had been submitted during the Grant Application process and confirmed that all the paperwork was in order and met the Council’s guidelines.

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

Resolved: The Finance Committee approve a grant payment of £2705 to Emersons Green Village Hall for a Health and Safety Upgrade Project.

FIN_2022.56 Grant Application: Friends of Emersons Green Park

Minutes: At the invitation of Cllr James Hunt (Chair), the Town Clerk provided the following advice on a grant application from Friends of Emersons Green Park:

LEGAL POWER OR DUTY TO ACT

- Public Health Act 1875, s.164.
- Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9-10.
- Finance Committee Terms of Reference, function 7.

RECOMMENDATION, CONDITIONS, AND OTHER CONTROLS

- Resolve that: “The Finance Committee approve a grant payment of £450 to Friends of Emersons Green Park for a toolbox.”

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- To meet draft corporate priority 5, “strive for continuous service improvement and efficiency, support our economy and the town”.
- To meet draft key objective A2, “reach out and facilitate additional resident/friends’ groups to assist with enhancing standards”.
- To meet draft key objective E1, “increase rapport and communications with residents, local clubs, and stakeholders”.
- In sum, the Council has committed to working in partnership with other organisations and stakeholders to improve services and deliver value for money for the Emersons Green Town Council and the taxpayer. Similarly, the Council has a responsibility to manage and maintain our green spaces to the highest standards possible. This is an excellent opportunity to do all of that.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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 s.137. The level of grants awarded year to date, including liabilities, is currently at £8414, of which £7164 is s.137 spending. Therefore, the remaining balance is £31586 in total, £12,836 for s.137, and £18,750 for regular grants.

Minutes: Cllr Simon Budd (Mayor) asked the Town Clerk to clarify the security arrangements for the toolbox, and the following section of the grant application was read aloud:

“Our working parties have so far relied on the sharing of tools by members, but this is now proving unsatisfactory. We are therefore applying for £450 to cover the cost of materials for a wooden toolbox that can be placed out of sight behind our compost heap in the orchard area and secured by a combination lock plus the provision of some tools. We will supplement this with second-hand tools that will be donated.”

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

Resolved: The Finance Committee approve a grant payment of £450 to Friends of Emersons Green Park for a toolbox.

FIN_2022.57 **Dates and Timings.**

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

Thursday 27th October 2022 at 1900hrs in the Emersons Green Town Council Chamber.

Cllr James Hunt (Chair) concluded the formal business of the meeting at 1940hrs and announced that an informal 'round-table' discussion would take place afterward.