



Birchington Parish Council
Finance Committee
Minutes of the meeting held on
10th December 2024 at 7.30pm
At the Parish Office, 2 Albion Road, Birchington

Present:

Cllr Bob Prebble, Chairman of Finance
Cllr Nick Blankley
Cllr John Tiley
Cllr Marcel Pooke
Cllr Max Houghton

Cllr Neville Hudson - Observer
Cllr Colin Brown- Observer

Jane Bevan- Parish Clerk

1 x Member of the public

F/2024/32 Apologies for absence

None.

F/2024/33 Declarations of Interest

None

F/2024/34 Minutes

The Minutes of the Finance meeting held on 3rd September 2024 were presented for approval and **agreed**.

F/2024/35 Chairman's Report and Public Participation

There was one member of public in attendance. The Chairman said that on 26th November he completed some online training covering insurance risk and responsibilities for Parish Councils. He conveyed some key points from the session including the importance to use risk assessments as these helped insurers repudiate claims; children's play areas e.g. on the MRG - inspections were required (preferably annually by an expert) and faults should be remedied within 30 days; Council owned land that was used by third parties, e.g. Dog Acre – there should be inspections with the hirer beforehand to identify any potential hazards; trees – these required regular checks by an expert, at least annually and a record maintained. Additional visual checks should be made following a storm. The Chairman said he had shared this information with the Clerk.

He reminded Councillors that the Parish did have a business account with Amazon so there was no need to generate orders on their personal account. He said by using the Parish account it was easier for the Clerk to recoup the VAT element. He added that all orders for goods or services must be originated by the Parish Clerk. He requested that Councillors used email for all financial matters.

Action

The Chairman referred to the agenda item for the community hub project and stated he was neither for or against it. He said he felt that maybe not all members had given the item sufficient consideration and he hoped the SWOT analysis he had circulated would assist in better understanding the issues.	
<u>F/2024/36 Finance update/RFO report</u>	
The Clerk provided an update on finances. The Clerk said the budget for the current year was £254,513 and the spend was £112,707. The reserves were £60,000 including £30,000 carried over.	
The Chairman said that arising from the Environment Committee meeting there was a request to replace the lawn mower for the allotments. The estimated cost was £230.00.	Clerk
Agreed.	
The Chairman said also arising from the Environment Committee was the opportunity to adopt the KCC streetlight on Dog Acre with associated maintenance costs although KCC would continue to provide the maintenance. The Clerk said the estimated costs would cover unmetered supply, general maintenance etc including call outs, replacement/upgrade of equipment as and when required, electrical testing, structural testing and load testing as and when when required. The costs would be £13 per electrical test, £21 per structural test, and energy supply would be £25.00 per annum. The lantern was LED which could be retained or returned to KCC and replaced at a cost. The Clerk said the adoption of the street light was a significant reduction in costs to any alternatives. It was agreed to adopt the streetlight from KCC.	Clerk
The Chairman said arising from the Planning Committee there had been ongoing concerns about the dangerous bend and junction of Park Lane and Brunswick Road. Although it was on the Highways Improvement Plan, it would be very expensive to install warning signs by KCC which the Parish Council would have to pay for. It was now proposed to place a large sign/or temporary banner on the Allotments fence by the Parish Council. The cost would be between £100-£500. It was agreed to opt for the banner sign initially at an estimated cost of £100.00.	Clerk
Cllr Houghton asked if there were no more quotations received for the notice boards could the Parish Council go ahead with the original quotation. The Chairman agreed if there were no more quotations received by the end of December 2024.	
<u>F/2024/37 Budget 2025/26</u>	
The Clerk referred to the budget planning meeting on 9th November 2024. The next stage would be a meeting with the budget working party to go through the first draft. The Clerk reported that she recently attended the Parish Forum and was informed by a TDC Finance officer that there was a delay in sending out the tax base to Parish and Town Councils due to KCC waiting to find out from KCC if they are still going to receive their annual grant of £300,000 which was used for resources to collect Council Tax from non-payers. She said a further meeting of the budget working party should be held in early January.	Clerk
<u>F/2024/38 Birchington Memorial Recreation Ground</u>	
The Chairman referred to the requirement of having a toilet block container installed. A quote had been received for £2000 plus £250 transport costs. Cllr Tiley said delivery would need to be deferred for a while while the groundworks were prepared and there might be small charge for storage by the providers. The Clerk said that £24460 had been spent at the MRG. £3000 had been returned for the previous toilet, and that £2400 had been received from the Football Federation and a grant of £2000 had been received from TDC. Net expenditure had been £17060. The Clerk said the	

original budget was £10000 with a subsequent virement of £7500. The Clerk said that future expenditure might require further virement.	
<u>F/2024/39 Parish Council Office Premises</u> The Chairman said he had previously circulated a document about the office premises. The Clerk said that the previous week SAMS Ltd had been invited in to undertake a Health and Safety assessment. Their report and recommendations had been circulated to members. Cllr Hudson said there needed to be a financial assessment of what was required to be done. Cllr Tiley agreed and asaid there should be a review for improving the office accommodation. Cllr Pooke invited the member of the public present who raised concerns about the offices to comment on the report. The member of the public said the report highlighted his concerns and that there were short term measures that needed to be addressed. It was agreed to address the immediate issues raised in the report.	Clerk
<u>F/2024/40 S.W.O.T. Analysis Proposed Community Hub Project</u> The Chairman referred to his analysis which he had circulated to members. Cllr Blankley said it was a good and balanced analysis but asked how it would be taken forward. The Chairman said that weightings would need to be built in. There then followed discussion about implications of buying the library should it become available and its future use. A member of the public said that if the Parish Council was to have the Library valued it should be valued in its current use as a library and not e.g. an office block. From the Heritage Trust point of view more storage facilities were required which, at present, was not available. The member of the public said more clarity was required as to what the Parish Council was intending the future use of the Library to be. Cllr Hudson said it was important to preserve a public building and the heritage of Birchington. Cllr Pooke agreed it was important to preserve the library but as it was only open at certain times there was potential to use the building for other community activities at other times. Cllr Blankley said there were other stakeholders not present who would have an interest in the future of the library. There followed debate over whether or not to have a valuation and the implications of the outcome of the valuation. It was agreed to go ahead with the valuation in January 2025 and to set up a Library Project Group from January 2025.	Clerk
<u>F/2024/41 Review of Charges For Hire of Parish Council Land</u> The Clerk provided a background to the hire of Parish Council owned land and in particular the hire of Dog Acre and charges. The Clerk then provided details for the hire of football pitches at the Memorial Recreation Ground. Currently the charge was £60 per match for adults. At present the youth teams were not being charged. Cllr Prebble suggested that youth teams were charged £40 per match. It was agreed to research what the average hire charge was elsewhere.	Clerk
<u>F/2024/42 Purchase of IT Equipment</u> The Chairman said his aim was to get members to use their laptops at meetings to save on paper. The Clerk said there was not funds in the current budget to purchase new IT equipment so it would have to be considered for next years budget.	
<u>F/2024/43 Date and Time of Next Meeting</u> Tuesday, 4th March 2024 at the Parish Office, 2 Albion Road, CT7 9DN. The Meeting closed at 9.20pm	

Signed by the Parish Clerk Jane Bevan Date: 17 th December 2024	
--	--