

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 7.30PM AT FARNHAM ROYAL VILLAGE HALL, FARNHAM LANE, FARNHAM ROYAL, SL2 3AX

Present

Katherine Damsell (Chair)
Tony Birkett
Bob Milne
Marilyn Rolfe
Paul Rowley
Judith Hall (Clerk)

23/26/FC Apologies for absence

None

23/27/FC Elect a Chair

The appointment of Katherine Damsell was agreed.

23/28/FC Note amended Terms of Reference

The amended Terms of Reference was noted.

23/29/FC To approve minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2023

The minutes of the meeting were **confirmed** as a true and accurate record and they were then signed by the Chair.

23/30/FC Matters arising from previous minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

None

23/31/FC To consider September 2023 Management Accounts

The Chair reminded those present that at the parish council meeting held on 30 October 2023 it was agreed that the Finance Committee would review the management accounts. The Management Accounts were presented by the Chair and Clerk. It **was agreed** to recommend the acceptance of the management accounts at the November 2023 parish council meeting.

23/32/FC To discuss the 2024/25 budget

The Chair advised that she and the Clerk had prepared a draft budget for the purposes of this discussion and that this budget still had several unknowns that would require discussion and clarification.

32.1 Expenditure

The Chair advised that she would like to approach this year's budget by looking at the expenditure first.

Item	Comments
<u>Expenditure:</u>	
Open Spaces	
Contract (Woodlands & Grasslands)	This is held by Amersham Town Council and the figure quoted is based on the existing contract including the contractual annual uplift.
Contract (The Broadway & War Memorial Flowers)	This is held by Windowflowers and the figure quoted is the current agreed annual amount.
Contract (Kingsway Green &	1)The contract for Kingsway Green is held by Clarke's Gardening Services and the figure quoted is based on the work carried out this year to prepare the soil and

Rectory Close Flowerbeds)	supply and sow wildflower seeds on 4 of the 5 flowerbeds twice a year (early June and September). 2)The contract for Rectory Close is held by Amersham Town Council and the figure quoted is based on the work carried out this year to initially clear weeds, edge beds, apply wood chips and to prune the roses followed by ongoing weeding and pruning with an annual feed. The figure quoted assumes the same work for 2024/25.
Contract (Kingsway Green Grass Cutting)	This is held by Clarke's Gardening Services and the figure quoted is based on 14 cuts at the 2023/24 cost per cut.
Allotments	A small number of parishioners have allotments in Stoke Poges. The Parish Council pays £5 per allotment to Stoke Poges Parish Council.
Arboriculture Report	This is the cost of the annual report and includes a provision for further reports during the year if these are required due to weather events etc.
Arboriculture Work	This is an estimate based on previous years but will hopefully be confirmed prior to the January 2024 parish council meeting to agree the budget once the report and relevant quotes have been received.
Litter Picking	The parish council has two litter pickers and the figure quoted is based on the same hours as currently spent by the individuals but reflects the estimated increased in the national minimum wage.
Pest Control	The figure quoted is an estimate.
Waste (Dog Bags)	The figure quoted is based on previous years' usage.
Churchyard	
Contract	This is held by Amersham Town Council and the figure quoted is based on the existing contract including the contractual annual uplift.
Arboriculture Work	This is an estimate based on previous years but will hopefully be confirmed prior to the January 2024 parish council meeting to agree the budget once the report and relevant quotes have been received.
Street Lighting	
Contract (Maintenance)	This is held by Leigh Electrical and the figure quoted is based on the expired contract.
Electricity	The figure quoted is based on the average monthly cost for our streetlights since the contract started. The contract will end on 30 September 2024.
Play Equipment, Bus Shelters and Benches	
Contract (Physical Assets)	This contract is currently subject to tendering. The figure quoted is an estimate but the cost will be confirmed prior to the January 2024 parish council meeting to agree the budget.
Contract (Guide Hut Site & FC Playground)	The figure quoted is an estimate but once the new playground has been installed and the use of the Guide Hut site has been agreed, it is anticipated that a maintenance schedule will be agreed with the entity carrying out the Physical Asset contract above. This will hopefully be confirmed prior to the January 2024 parish council meeting to agree the budget but depends on when the relevant works are completed.
FC Playground (PWLB Repayments)	The figure quoted is the fixed loan repayments for the refurbished playground.
FR Ground Maintenance	This work is carried out by Farnham Park Sports Field Charities as per the licence agreement held with Buckinghamshire Council. The figure quoted is based on last year's cost.
Annual Playground Inspection	The inspection is carried out by The Play Inspection Company as per an agreement with our insurers. The figure quoted is based on last year's cost.
Highways	
Community Speedwatch	This is an estimate for purchasing any hi vis jackets or ID cards required by new

Initiative	volunteers.
Projects	
Boundary Copse	The figure quoted is an estimate of the costs of clearing the copse to provide a more open community wood. It is envisaged that the wall repairs and repointing would have been carried out during 2023/24.
Protecting Physical Assets (FCSC Covenant etc.)	The figure quoted is an estimate of legal and other fees that may be incurred in protecting community open spaces for future generations.
MVAS Stage Two	The figure quoted is based on purchasing two units at the prices provided in a previous quote.
Woodland Management Plan	The arboriculturist preparing the plan has advised that the grant available will cover the cost of preparing the plan.
FR Playground Licence Renewal & Future Plans	The figure quoted is an estimate. The current licence can be terminated by either party with six months' notice after 15 th anniversary (23 December 2025). This would need to be reviewed and more security obtained before any significant investment in the playground.
Kingsway Green	The figure quoted is an estimate for improving the ground surface for the benches and connecting a water supply to respond to residents' requests for seasonal planting. This could be partly funded through ringfenced reserves.
Community Orchard	The figure quoted is an estimate for replacing trees/hedges and other remedial works and improvements. This would be funded through ringfenced reserves.
Community Organisation Grants	The figure quoted is based on previous years but it is felt that the policy should be reviewed.
Neighbourhood Plan	The figure quoted is to provide a budget for publication of the final plan, if adopted.
Public Conveniences	The Parish Council pays to clean the toilets under an agreement with Buckinghamshire Council and the figure quoted is based on previous years costs.
Decorations/Community Events	
Flag Poles and Flags	This figure is an estimate based on the cost of last year's annual service, one new flag and the amount paid to the resident who assists with flying the flag in Farnham Royal.
Remembrance Day Posies	This figure is based on the cost in previous years.
Christmas Lights - repairs	This figure is based on the cost in previous years.
Christmas Lights - display	This figure is based on the cost in previous years but new equipment may need to be purchased in 2024/25, which is not included.
Christmas Lights - storage	This figure is based on the cost in previous years.
Farmers Market (continued support)	The figure quoted is an estimate for more/renewing publicity materials if the market continues.
Spring 2024 Event (April/May)	The figure quoted is an estimate based on the total cost of previous Christmas events and King Charles III's Coronation. A working group is needed to formulate a costed plan for the event before the next Finance Committee meeting.
D-Day 80 Event (June)	The figure quoted is an estimate. A working group is needed to formulate a costed plan for the event before the next Finance Committee meeting.
Orchard Day (September)	The figure quoted is based on the cost in previous years with an increase to improve the stand.
Annual Parish Meeting (inc. Audio Support)	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
130th Anniversary	No figure is currently included for this as the parish council needs to decide how it would like to mark the anniversary, if at all.
Administration	
Village Hall Meeting Hire	This figure is based on the cost in previous years.
IT Systems	The figure quoted is based on the existing cost including a 3% uplift.

IT Software Subscriptions	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
Website	The figure quoted is an estimate to allow for amendments and updates.
Staff costs inc. expenses, pension and HMRC	This is an estimate which will be recalculated prior to the January 2024 parish council meeting to agree the budget to take into account the inflation rate at the time.
Office - Utilities	The figure quoted is an estimate based on previous years and assumes that the service charge will include electricity, gas, water, cleaning, security, telephone, broadband etc.
Office - Rent	The figure quoted is as agreed in the draft lease.
BT - office telephone	No figure is quoted as it is anticipated that this will be included in the service charge for utilities.
Office supplies	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
Insurance	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
Training (Clerk)	The figure quoted is an estimate.
Training (Councillors)	The figure quoted is an estimate.
PAT Testing	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
Councillor Mileage (General)	The figure quoted is an estimate.
Councillor Mileage (Contract Performance Management)	The figure quoted is an estimate.
Subscriptions and DPA registration	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
Accounting & Audit Fees	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24 with a small increase for inflation.
Other Expenses	
Contingency	It was agreed last year that individual contingencies should be removed and that an overall contingency is included at the bottom of the budget sheet.

The Chair summarised that there are several figures that need to be confirmed once the parish council has agreed how it wants to proceed in a number of areas. Those present felt the first draft was a good starting position and thanked the Chair and Clerk for preparing the document.

32.2 Precept and other income

The Chair advised that the budget did not include any potential income from match funding or sponsorship and stressed that these opportunities should be investigated and utilised where possible to enable the parish council to achieve as much as possible.

32.3 Reserves

The Chair highlighted the position regarding ringfenced reserves as follows:

Ringfenced Reserves	Comment
Ringfenced Reserves - The Orchard	It is proposed that these funds will be used to facilitate replacement trees/hedges and other agreed remedial works and improvements.
Ringfenced Reserves - Kingsway Green	It is proposed that these funds will be used to facilitate some improvements on Kingsway Green.
Ringfenced Reserves - Farnham Park Action Group	The Chair is reviewing the Group's documents to ascertain how the funds can be used for the benefit of the parish.
Ringfenced Reserves - Emergency Traveller Fund	It is proposed that these funds continue to be held but no further funds are allocated to the fund.
Ringfences Reserves - Election Expenses	These funds are held in line with national recommendations and no change is proposed.

Looking at the General Reserves, the Chair advised that she and the Clerk had reviewed the national guidance for reserves. The Good Councillor's Guide to Finance and Transparency 2018 (a NALC publication) states that 'A council should typically hold between 3 and 12 months expenditure as a general reserve.' In addition, the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide March 2023 (a NALC publication) states 'The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months. In practice, any authority with income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 should plan towards 3 months equivalent general reserve. It was therefore felt that the suspended reserves policy should be revised in line with this guidance.

23/33/FC Any other business

None

23/34/FC Date and time of next Finance Committee meeting:

The meeting closed at 9.15pm. The next meeting is on 8 January 2024 at 7.30pm at Farnham Royal Village Hall