

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 8 JANUARY 2024 AT 7.30PM AT FARNHAM COMMON VILLAGE HALL, VICTORIA ROAD, FARNHAM COMMON, SL2 3NL

Present

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

24/1/FC Apologies for absence

Tony Birkett

24/2/FC To approve minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023

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

24/3/FC Matters arising from previous minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

None

24/4/FC To consider December 2023 Management Accounts

The Management Accounts and accompanying notes were presented by the Chair and Clerk. Following a discussion, it **was agreed** to recommend the acceptance of the management accounts at the January 2024 parish council meeting.

24/5/FC To discuss the 2024/25 budget

The Chair advised that she and the Clerk had prepared a second version of the draft budget for the purposes of this discussion.

5.1 Expenditure (inc. Projects)

As with the November 2023 meeting, the Chair advised that she would like to look 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 & Rectory Close Flowerbeds)	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 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.
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	Arboriculture work is not scheduled at this site for 2024/25.
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)	The figure quoted is based on the quote received.
Contract (Guide Hut Site & FC Playground)	The figure is an estimate based on 14 cuts a year and a provision for checking/maintaining the new playground.
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 Initiative	This is an estimate for purchasing any hi vis jackets or ID cards required by new volunteers.
Projects	
Boundary Copse (Clearance)	It is assumed that this work will be completed during 2023/24 so no figure is included for 2024/25.
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. This is not a confirmed project as waiting for initial advice from BP Collins following preliminary work.
MVAS Stage Two (inc. training)	The figure quoted is based on purchasing two units with training at the prices provided in a previous quote. It is intended to apply for 50% match funding and this is reflected in an income line.
Woodland Management Plan	The arboriculturist preparing the plan has advised that the grant available will cover the cost of preparing the plan. So this item has a matching income item.
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.
Improvements to website	This is an estimated for creating some new pages and a reporting function.

Christmas Decorations / Lights / Switching On	This is an estimated based on initial discussions about a possible switching on event.
Kingsway Green	This has been removed on the assumption there will be no change to the current arrangements.
Community Orchard	It is assumed that this work will be completed during 2023/24 so no figure is included for 2024/25.
Community Organisation Grants	The figure quoted is based on previous years but the policy is under review.
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.
Christmas Lights - Replacements	This is an estimated based on initial discussions with the supplier about replacement Christmas decorations.
Christmas Lights - Electricity	Buckinghamshire Council now require us the arrange a temporary electricity supply for the light. This is an estimate of the cost.
Christmas Lights - storage	This figure is based on the cost in previous years.
Farmers Market (continued support)	This figure has been removed as the organiser has confirmed they will not be coming back and there are no other current plans.
Residents Association/Business Association	This is a budget for informal events to attract residents/businesses to engage with the parish council about community events in 2025.
D-Day 80 Event (June)	The figure quoted is an estimate.
Orchard Day & 130 th Anniversary (September)	The figure quoted is based on the cost in previous years with an increase to improve the stand and an allowance for material to celebrate the anniversary.
Annual Parish Meeting (inc. Audio Support)	The figure quoted is based on the cost in 2023/24.
130th Anniversary	This item is now included with Orchard Day.
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 based on the cost in 2023/24 with an estimate for periodic updates.
Clerk's salary / exp / pension and HMRC	This is an estimate as waiting for February 2024 inflation rate.
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.
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.

Following a discussion, the budgeted expenditure was **agreed** by the Committee.

5.2 Precept and other income

The Chair advised that the budget assumed a 5% increase to the precept, which matched the increase being applied to Council Tax by Buckinghamshire Council. The Chair continued to stress that other income possibilities such as advertising, sponsorship, grants and donations should be investigated and utilised where possible to enable the parish council to achieve more. Following a discussion, the budgeted precept and other income was **agreed** by the Committee.

5.3 Reserves (inc. Farnham Park Action Group)

The Chair summarised the discussion from the November 2023 Finance Committee meeting and following a further discussion the Clerk was asked to obtain advice on reducing the general reserve to three months from the Internal Auditor and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils as some members were nervous about such a reduction.

The 2024/25 budget, as presented was then **agreed** by the committee for presentation to the parish council at the January 2024 parish council meeting.

24/6/FC Policies for Review

6.1 Grants

Those present reviewed the amendments proposed to the policy that had been circulated and following a discussion it was agreed that Katherine Damsell and the Clerk would work on a new policy rather than trying to amend the existing policy. The new policy, once prepared, would be considered at a future parish council meeting.

6.2 Reserves

It was decided that the proposed reserves policy would be considered at a future parish council meeting once the requested advice from the Internal Auditor and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils had been received.

24/7/FC Any other business

Paul Rowley advised that the Farnhams Magazine was predicting a £4,000 loss for the financial year due to increased print and distribution costs. He confirmed that when he was approached by Jerry Houdret, he advised that the parish council was not able to provide funds to them and that they should draw down on their reserves.

24/8/FC Date and time of next Finance Committee meeting:

The meeting closed at 9.24pm. The next meeting is on 11 November 2024 at 7.30pm at a venue to be confirmed.