

NEWTON POPPLEFORD AND HARPFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee which took place at 7.00pm on Monday 15th January, 2024 at the Pavilion, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford.

Committee Members present: Cllrs. Walker (Chair), Carpenter, Lipczynski and Tillotson (quorate)

In attendance:

Jacqui Baldwin, Parish Clerk and RFO

Cllr. Chris Burhop, Ward Councillor

Cllr. Robert Compton

Cllr. Howard Hughes

Chair welcomed attendees and outlined the Fire Regulations and evacuation procedure prior to opening the Public Forum.

Public Forum

Questions and Representations from residents/parishioners:

Cllr. Burhop acknowledged that the Parish Council had faced exceptional costs in the current financial year but suggested that this should not be used as a reason to cut services and close parish amenities i.e. the public WC. Chair advised that a Working Party had been asked to revisit the costs of upgrading/refurbishing the WC and no decisions would be made until Council had reviewed their findings.

Cllr. Burhop noted that Council had made no progress in amending the restrictive covenant on the former surgery building which prevented it being leased out. What should be a parish asset has become a drain on parish resources. Chair stated that Council had been threatened with legal action if it proceeded with an application to the Lands Tribunal to modify the restrictive covenant and Council was concerned that the cost of defending such an action would exceed the sum budgeted. It was agreed that Council should revisit this matter at its next meeting. Clerk was asked to brief new Councillors and place the matter on the Agenda for the Council meeting to be held on Monday, 29th January 2024.

Chair closed the Public Forum at 7.10pm.

		Action:
FC23/60	To consider apologies for absence and approve if accepted:	
	Apologies received from Cllrs. Tribble and Dalton were noted and approved.	
FC23/61	Declarations of interest from members / Dispensations afforded	
	Cllr. Tillotson was afforded a dispensation to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to Parish allotments at the Annual Meeting held on 22 nd May 2023. This dispensation applies until May 2027 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and is afforded in respect of her personal and disclosable pecuniary interests as Allotment Manager and an allotment tenant.	
FC23/62	To consider and, if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Council held on 11th December 2023: Chair proposed that the Minutes which had been circulated in advance of this meeting be approved. Seconded by Cllr. Carpenter and unanimously resolved. To consider Matters Arising from those Minutes not dealt with elsewhere on this Agenda:	
	Cllr. Carpenter confirmed that he is now an authorised signatory to the Lloyds Bank account.	
FC23/63	To consider and, if thought fit, approve the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Council held on 18th December 2023:	

		Chair proposed that the Minutes of this meeting which had been previously circulated be approved. Seconded by Cllr. Lipczynski and resolved unanimously. To consider Matters Arising from those Minutes not dealt with elsewhere on this Agenda: None so considered.	
FC23/64		BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED:	
	A	To review Cemetery Fees to be charged by Council for the financial year 2024/25: Councillors discussed a document circulated by the Clerk detailing the current NPHPC cemetery fees and the 2024 fee scale published by East Devon District Council. Chair proposed that the Finance Committee should make a recommendation to Full Council that NPHPC fees be increased by 10% from 1st April 2024. Seconded by Cllr. Carpenter and resolved unanimously. Clerk to add to the Agenda for the January Council Meeting for ratification.	Clerk
	B	To note the Internal Auditor's Terms of Engagement for the financial year 2023/24: Noted.	
FC23/65	A	To review and, if thought fit, approve payments for January 2024: Chair proposed that invoices totalling £47,958.57 be approved for payment. Seconded by Cllr. Lipczynski and resolved unanimously. Clerk to note and make payments on the due dates.	Clerk
	B	To receive financial reports to the end of December 2023: i) Cashbook Summary ii) Cashbook Analysis iii) Budget Monitor	
	C	Questions to RFO on the financial reports: Clerk confirmed that the cost of repairs to the Multi-Use Games Area had been paid by insurers exclusive of VAT. The VAT paid by Council will be reclaimed at the beginning of February.	
	D	To note Budget comparisons 2019/20 to 2023/24 and consider Budget Forecast for 2024/25: Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow representations from members of the public. Seconded by Cllr. Tillotson and resolved unanimously. All those present discussed ways in which it might be possible to leverage assets to increase income and areas where it might be possible to reduce expenditure. The importance of turning the former surgery building from a drain on resources into a source of income was acknowledged. The future of the Public WC was discussed at length and Cllr. Burhop suggested that Council consider charging for use to offset running costs. Cllr. Tillotson felt that, despite public consultations on this matter being poorly attended, all parishioners should be consulted on the way forward and a public vote taken. At 8.00pm Chair proposed that Standing Orders be reintroduced to preclude any further public participation. Resolved unanimously.	
FC23/66		Matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion only: None so considered.	
FC23/67		To agree date, time and venue of next meeting 7.00pm on 19 th February 2024 at The Pavilion, Back Lane, Newton Poppleford.	
FC23/68		It is proposed that, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. Proposal not made as there was no such business to discuss.	

With no further business to consider the Chair declared the meeting closed at 8.05pm.