

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held on Wednesday 12th October 2023 commencing at 6.00pm
This meeting was held at Four Marks Village Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT: IN ATTENDANCE:	Cllr Howard Briggs (Chairperson), Cllrs Smith, Pullen, McAllister, Gebbett Jo Tsigarides – Clerk Louise Steele – Locum RFO No members of the public
APOLOGIES:	None

23.34 FGP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

23.35 FGP OPEN SESSION/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No items were raised. The Open Session ended at 6.01pm and Standing Orders were applied.

23.36 FGP DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23.37 FGP MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was noted that there was an administrative error which was explained.

On the proposal of Cllr Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Smith, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 26th July 2023 as a true reflection of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.

23.38 FGP TO RECEIVE UPDATE ON SOFTWARE TRANSFER

The RFO explained to the Committee that they had been managing the migration to 'Scribe'. Due to transferring mid-year, some extensive administrative work had to be undertaken in that all transactions from the beginning of the financial year had to be manually entered. It is anticipated that within the next two weeks, all transactions on Scribe will be up to date.

The Clerk noted that this software will enable the RFO to work remotely and that the administrative assistant can be tasked with scanning in any invoices that need to be entered eventually.

23.39 FGP FOR APPROVAL

23.39.1 Purchase of projector

There was a discussion about purchasing a new, fit for purpose, projector. There are two projectors listed on the asset register, and this led to a broader discussion about reviewing the asset register which will be completed in January 2024. Councillors have offered to help with this task.

Cllr Pullen had been researching projectors and made some verbal recommendations to the Committee.

On the proposal of Cllr Smith, which was seconded by Cllr Gebbett, it was **RESOLVED** that a budget of £600 should be given towards a new projector and that the Clerk should liaise with Cllr Pullen to make the final decision when purchasing this item.

23.40 FGP TO REVIEW BANK ACCOUNT PROVISION

The Clerk, at the request of the Committee had contacted Unity Trust bank to investigate opening an easy access deposit account. The Committee accepted that this might not have a high interest rate (2.9%) but concluded that it would at least give some return on a working balance that could be kept there and then transferred into the Current Account easily.

It was noted that as per the Councils adopted Financial Regulations, a maximum amount of £10 000 could be transferred by Officers without Council approval but that this was not time limited. A discussion took place on an

appropriate amount to transfer into the new account and it was concluded that £100 000 would be transferred initially.

On the proposal of Cllr Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr Smith, it was **RESOLVED** to open the suggested deposit/savings account with Unity Trust bank and transfer an initial amount of £100 000 into it.

23.41 FGP INTERIM AUDIT

The Clerk gave an overview of the interim audit report regarding the internal audit which took place on the 3rd October 2023. A finalised report would be available before the Full Council meeting, but the brief points were communicated to the Committee. Various minor administrative points were noted by the auditor including the process of handling cheques, signing of some invoices and signing of staff contracts but the main observation was around recruitment. The auditor had concluded that due to the Clerk's workload, a separate, permanent RFO should be recruited for. The Locum RFO had indicated that they would remain in post until the end of the financial year if necessary and help with the recruitment process.

Any recommendations from the internal audit will be discussed at the meeting of the Full Council on the 18th October 2023.

23.42 FGP TO NOTE THE CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-2023

The Clerk advised that there were no outstanding matters or actions from the audit and the RFO gave some advice on the correct wording of the resolution when the report is confirmed at the next Full Council meeting on the 18th October 2023. Thanks were given to the previous Clerk, Sarah Goudie, and the RFO for the result.

23.43 FGP 2024-2025 BUDGET ARRANGEMENTS

23.43.1 To review 2024-2025 contracts

The standard contracts were reviewed and some action points were noted that Councillors wished to amend on a current contract. The Clerk advised that there were no planned fee increases for existing services.

23.43.2 Review of fees and charges

The current fees and charges schedule was considered and no amendments were suggested.

23.43.3 To Review Cemetery fees

A general discussion took place about the fees and how they compared with neighbouring cemeteries. It was concluded that the Committee would like further comparisons before it made a decision. This will be reviewed at the next meeting, with further information provided.

23.43.4 To prepare draft budget for 2024-2025 in preparation for approval by the Full Council

The RFO gave an overview of the budgeting process to the Council and several questions were asked. It was decided that a budget meeting will take place on the 13th December 2023 at 12pm. Notice of this meeting, which is not being held in the evening would be given to the community in advance.

Officers will work together from the 1st November 2023 to prepare a draft budget and Councillors were asked to include themselves in this process by making suggestions for next year's expenditure.

23.44 To review lease arrangements

As there were no members of the public present, the Committee reviewed a significant lease which had been recently reviewed and negotiated.

23.45 Next meeting 13th December 2023 – 12pm Benians Pavilion.

23.46 Meeting Closed at 7.59pm