



PEASEDOWN ST JOHN PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Finance & Amenities Committee held on Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 7.00pm at Beacon Hall, French Close, Peasedown St John

Present:

Councillors: Gill Auld; Jo Davis (Vice-Chair); Simon Kidd; Andrew Larcombe (Chair); John Ogilvie-Davidson; Daniel Walker.

Cllrs. Conor Ogilvie-Davidson and Jonathan Rich were also present at the meeting, in their capacity as Vice-Chair and Chair of Full Council respectively. As the Committee was quorate, they did not utilise their voting rights.

In attendance:

Tanya West – Parish Clerk & RFO.

Public Session

Excepting Parish Councillor, Kathy Thomas, who was a non-committee member, there were no members of the public present at the meeting. Cllr Larcombe invited Cllr Thomas to take part in the discussions at the meeting but as she was not a committee member, she was unable to vote.

F&A063 – 23/01/2024 Attendance Roll Call and Declarations of Interest

The attendance roll call was undertaken (those present are detailed above).
No further interests to those already disclosed to the Monitoring Officer were declared.

F&A064 – 23/01/2024 Apologies for Absence

With all committee members present, there were no apologies for absence.

F&A065 – 23/01/2024 Minutes & Actions

- i. The minutes of the Finance & Amenities Committee meeting held on 10th October 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting; it was noted there was a typo (*budgets* in minute F&A052 – 10/10/2023 was missing the letter 't'). With this amendment it was **resolved** that they be accepted as a true and correct record of that meeting and were signed by the Chair accordingly.
- ii. The Clerk advised that the Actions Register on Planner was not fully up to date and would endeavour to keep it updated from here on in.

F&A066 – 23/01/2024 Items for Urgent Report

There were no items for urgent report.

F&A067 – 23/01/2024 Annual Independent Play Inspections

The annual independent play inspection (of all the play equipment at Beacon Field and the Recreation Ground) was undertaken by the Play Inspection Company on 15th December 2023. The reports from this inspection were circulated as pre-reading. It was noted that all items identified on the report are either 'low' or 'very low' risk and that the bulk of the works required are for equipment at Beacon Field. The Caretaker had reviewed the reports, and quotations were obtained for the parts required in order to resolve the issues raised on the reports. These had also been circulated as pre-reading. The Caretaker will undertake the repairs.

It was **resolved** to place an order with various suppliers from quotations obtained for the required play equipment parts to resolve the issues raised in the annual independent play inspection reports. The combined value of the orders to be no more than £4,000 plus VAT, to be deducted from the '608003 Beacon Field Play Equip. Maint.' operational expenditure budget, and for the Council to acknowledge that this will mean this operational budget will be exceeded for the 2023-24 financial year.

F&A068 – 23/01/2024 Tools, Trailers and Storage for Outside Services

The pre-reading report provided an update on tools owned by the Parish Council and additional tools required by the Caretakers (due to having more staff and some coming to the end of their useful lifespan). The report also detailed the requirement and costings for a new floor in the bowser trailer, which had not been replaced since it was purchased in 2014. Finally, it also provided costings and designs for some shelving and storage cupboards for the cemetery building and container. This was discussed and the following decisions were made:

- i. It was **resolved** to purchase a STIHL MS 181 C-BE 14" Chainsaw up to a value of £300+VAT to be deducted from the '602001 – New Machinery/Tools' operational budget.
- ii. It was **resolved** to authorise the Clerk to spend up to £700+VAT on additional hand tools for use by Caretakers to be deducted from the '602001 – New Machinery/Tools' operational budget.
- iii. It was **resolved** to place an order with Avon Trailer Towbar Centre Ltd. To replace the floor in the bowser trailer and to provide a full service of the trailer for a total cost of up to £1,000+VAT to be deducted from the '602900 - Infrequent Operational Expenditure' budget.
- iv. It was **resolved** to authorise the Clerk to spend up to £3,000+VAT on shelving and storage units for the cemetery lock up/container to be deducted from the '602900 - Infrequent Operational Expenditure' budget.

It was acknowledged that this expenditure would cause the '602001 – New Machinery/Tools' operational budget to overspend, however, other budgets would underspend, so it would balance out.

F&A069 – 23/01/2024 Football Club Liaison Advisory Panel

Councillors received a report from the Football Club Liaison Advisory Panel, considered their recommendations, and made any associated decisions as follows:

- i. **Improvements to facilities:**
 - a) **update on repairs to the pitch fence** – Miners' FC arranged for the painting of the rail around the pitch during October 2023. Since then, it has been noticed that a pink colour has started to show through the paintwork, which after investigation, appears to be due to the paint being diluted too much or the paint being applied when the weather is too cold. Miners' FC obtained a grant for some of these works and requested the Parish Council pay the balance, which was agreed (minute F&A017 – 13/06/2023 refers), although the Council had not yet been asked for the payment. Councillors agreed they were not prepared for the Council to pay half the invoice until the job is completed to a satisfactory standard, which it was not considered to be at present.
 - b) **plastering works required in the changing rooms** – Plasterers that came to inspect the site are being followed up for prices and availability. However, the Grounds & Maintenance Manager does have some plastering experience and it was therefore agreed that he undertakes these works later in the year when the weather is warmer.
 - c) **container doors** – The Grounds & Maintenance Manager had advised that he would check and monitor the container doors over the coming weeks to see if there are any issues or tweaking that is required to enable them to be opened/closed more easily. He had adjusted the main vehicle gate to the site so it can now be opened without having to lift it.
- ii. **Canteen and Toilet units and signage for allocated parking area.**

It was noted that the sign and posts for the designated parking area have now been installed, however there continue to be some issues with parking when the area is wet and muddy. Section 5 of the User Agreement states that parking is permitted on the designated matted parking areas only and it is at the Parish Council's discretion, whether to permit vehicles onto the Recreation Ground. One possible suggestion was that parking in this area is not permitted during certain months of the year, but this was not the preferred option. An alternative proposal was for the Grounds & Maintenance Manager (or another member of the Parish Council staff) to check the site on Friday and make a call as to whether the teams can use the site for parking at the weekend. The football teams would then be advised via WhatsApp in good time on Friday if they are unable to park there on Saturday and Sunday.

It was **resolved** for this rule to be added to the User Agreement and any club in breach of the rule would be prevented from accessing the car park for a period of time.

The Clerk explained that there had recently been a leak in the canteen due to recent freezing weather which had caused one of the pipes to freeze. It had not been possible to access the canteen immediately to resolve this, because the lock had also frozen. The leak had now been repaired.

It was noted that the canteen and toilet have been suffering with damp inside the units during recent wet/cold weather. A de-humidifier had been purchased and installed at the canteen to try to prevent it from becoming mouldy. Furthermore, with recent low temperatures, freezing of pipes was an ongoing concern. This was being monitored by the Caretaker and further insulation may be required or the toilet may have to be temporarily taken out of action if the low temperatures persist.

It was **resolved** to have an additional set of canteen and toilet keys cut (with funds taken from the operational budget), which could be kept in a key safe in the Referee's Changing Room for emergencies. The code for the key safe to be given to councillors and staff only.

- iii. **User Agreements and payments for the 2023-24 football season** – All teams had been contacted about any amendments to their fixtures in order to update their invoices, due to the second instalment of their donation/payments being due at the end of January. With the fixture changes notified so far it appears that one of the teams will need to pay an additional £600, another team an additional £275 and the remaining team has already paid in full. Updated invoices have been sent out to the teams. A breakdown of the income/expenditure for the Recreation Ground accounts was circulated in the pre-reading and the bank statements continue to be saved in the appropriate folder in MS Teams.

F&A070 – 23/01/2024 Braysdown Allotments Advisory Panel

Councillors received a report from the **Braysdown Allotments Advisory Panel** and made associated decisions as follows:

- i. **Waiting list numbers** (including those for accessible plots):

- 9 people on the waiting list for a plot within the parish
- 1 person on the waiting list for an accessible plot
- 10 people on the waiting list for additional space
- 8 people on the waiting list outside the parish.

There are 9 plots available to issue in the coming weeks and one accessible plot.

- ii. **Plot fees for 2024 and the issuing and payment of the associated invoices** – All invoices were issued before Christmas and at least half of the payments have been received. Under the allotment rules, plot-holders have until the end of February to pay.
- iii. **Plot inspections, probation period and letters** – The next plot inspection will take place in March 2024.
- iv. **To consider a request to erect a convex mirror on the RHS of the gateway to the allotment site to improve visibility of the highway when exiting the site** – Councillors discussed the pre-reading report on a suggestion from a member of the Allotments Advisory Panel that it would improve safety when driving out of the entrance gate to the car park if there were a convex mirror opposite or to the side of the gateway to give better visibility of oncoming traffic. It was noted the approximate cost for the mirror and fixings would be £200+VAT. B&NES Council Highways had been contacted about this and they advised they do not encourage the use of mirrors as the mirror can show a misleading image (particularly vehicle speeds), motorists can start to rely on the mirror instead of using traditional methods (looking, listening), cyclists are not always visible on the edges of the image, potential glare (for all motorists, not just those emerging from the exit) and vandalism. However, if a decision is taken to install a mirror and it is sited on private land the Council would unlikely intervene so long as it is off the public highway. In light of the negative comments received from B&NES Highways regarding safety mirrors, it was **resolved** to thank the committee member for their suggestion but (having taken advice from Highways) councillors think it would be better to improve visibility by other means, such as ensuring that the hedge is cut back on either side of the gateway.
- v. **Recent burglaries and associated damages** – A number of plot-holders had their sheds broken into and low-value items taken. There was some damage to the stock fencing between the allotment site and the adjoining field, which has now been repaired by the Grounds & Maintenance Manager. The damage/thefts were reported to the police.
- vi. **Signage improvements** – The Grounds & Maintenance Manager has recently cleared the area for manure deliveries and a new sign has been installed to make it clear what this area is for. He has also installed marker posts to clarify the plot boundary for those plots which are about to be re-issued.

- vii. **Future operational works to the entrances and extension to the Accessible Allotment plots** – The Grounds Maintenance Manager will be pricing up these works shortly.

F&A071 – 23/01/2024 Banking Arrangements

Councillors received an update on banking arrangements and made any associated decisions as follows:

- **Set up of new bank accounts and associated bank mandates and progress on signatories.**
 - The 95-day notice savings account with Nat West Bank has been created and £80k transferred.
 - The new current account with Unity Trust Bank for the Recreation Ground Charities has also been created.
 - The instruction to close down the old Nat West account for the Recreation Ground Charities has been submitted and a letter of confirmation was received today advising that the funds have been transferred to the Unity Trust Bank account and the account is now closed.

The progress of on the signatory status for both Nat West and Unity Trust Banks was discussed. Cllr Simon Kidd requested the Clerk get the online access letter resent to him for the new Charity Trust account with Unity Trust bank.

As Cllrs John Ogilvie-Davidson and Daniel Walker had still to set up their access for all bank accounts and felt they were unlikely to do so in the near future, it was **resolved** to remove them from the bank accounts as a signatory. The Clerk to update the banks accordingly.

Cllr Larcombe reminded the five remaining signatories; they will need to be timely regarding authorising payments.

- **Bank charges and fees** - There had not been any notification to changes in bank fees.
- **Monthly payroll and new payroll provider and associated Standing Order set up** - The new payroll provider, DCK, has undertaken the processing of the staff salaries, pensions and HMRC submissions since October 2023. Everything has been progressing well, without any significant issues and they have covered various changes to the wages and set up since appointment. The setting up of a Standing Order payment to the new provider was discussed as it was felt this process would be more efficient and wages payments would not run the risk of being missed.

It was **resolved** to raise a Standing Order payment of £14,000, to DCK Payroll, on the 17th of every month to cover staff wages. The balance of the payments to DCK to be reviewed on a quarterly basis as part of the bank reconciliation process and for the Standing Order amount to be amended as required, in line with the balance. Any amendments to the payment figure to be reported to Council.

F&A072 – 23/01/2024 Internal Audit

Councillors reviewed a copy of the Internal Audit report from the visit undertaken in November in respect of the financial year ending 31st March 2024. Cllr Larcombe reminded councillors it was important to note the many positive aspects of the report and not just the recommendations for things needing improvement. One of the recommendations was to further increase the fidelity guarantee insurance to cover the year-end balance plus half the annual precept. The fidelity guarantee is currently at £305,000 but it suggested a more appropriate level would be in excess of £350,000.

The Clerk had obtained a quotation from the insurance broker who had advised that to increase the FG cover (fidelity) to £400,000 with effect from 17th January 2024 until renewal at the end of September would create a pro rata additional premium of £84.28 including IPT. It was **resolved** to increase the Council's fidelity insurance cover to a level of £400,000 in line with recommendations from the Internal Auditor for a cost of £84.28 to provide sufficient cover until the annual insurance renewal.

The Clerk confirmed she had submitted the Annual Return to the Charity Commission for the Trust accounts.

It was also noted that those minutes missing from the website were due to be uploaded before the end of March 2024 as agreed by the Personnel Committee.

F&A073 – 23/01/2024 Review of Current Finances 2023/24

A balance sheet; a breakdown of the reserves and committed expenditure; a report on income and expenditure against budget for the 2023/24 financial year including a full breakdown of the Infrequent Operational Expenditure budget had been published to councillors for information. The following points were raised:

- Beacon Hall receipts still has approximately £5,000 to reach the estimated income budget. However, there is still three months of regular hire yet to invoice. The Clerk advised that some booking enquiries are not proceeding as conditions state they must book three hours minimum, and sometimes for simple meetings this is too costly. It was asked if the Administration Officer could use her own judgement on

such bookings, but this suggestion was rejected due to the amount of administration hours and hall running costs involved with each booking.

- Grit bins were raised, the Clerk to make arrangements for them to be checked again to ensure correct signage is on them all, including the green bin at Knightstone Close.
- It was noted although some expenditure had been agreed under minute F&A068 – 23/01/2024 the '602900 – Infrequent Operational Expenditure' would remain with a significant balance.
- The '603002 – Streetlighting Maintenance' budget would have more expenditure due to day-burning lights and the cutting back of vegetation.
- Cllr Larcombe explained that he and Cllr Davis had undertaken a full bank reconciliation with the Clerk on 11th January 2024. The bank reconciliation report had been circulated as pre-reading with balance details and both reconciled and unreconciled entries being reviewed (this can be found as appendix F&A073i).

Following discussion, it was agreed to accept the accounts as a fair reflection of the Parish Council's finances.

F&A074 – 23/01/2024 Review of Debtors and Creditors

The report on the financial debtors and creditors was tabled and reviewed at the meeting. It was noted that one hirer was late paying a number of invoices. The Clerk had been advised that the delay was due to the complex process involved in them arranging payment by a third party. Councillors requested evidence (in the form of copy emails) that these payments are being chased, otherwise the hirer may not be allowed to book the hall in future.

It was **resolved** that the hirer should not be allowed to use the hall after 31st January 2024, if they have not paid for 3 months.

F&A075 – 23/01/2024 Community Infrastructure Levy and External Funding

No further Community Infrastructure Levy payments had been received. However, funding from the Willson Grant for the Parish Map and Signage Project (Peasedown Heritage Trail) had referred the Parish Council's application to the 'Active Way' project which had confirmed they would be willing to contribute towards the signage board stands.

F&A076 – 23/01/2024 Budget Planning 2024/25

Councillors received an update on the Tax Base and reviewed the figures discussed at the Finance & Amenities Advisory Panel meeting in December.

A few minor increases had been made to the proposed operational budgets as more accurate pricing had been received from some suppliers. These were highlighted at the meeting. Following a review of these figures, it was **resolved** to put forward the following motion for vote as the Full Council meeting:

To resolve to accept the operational budget for the financial year 2024/25 based on a projected operational income of £279,693 and a projected operational expenditure of £311,236.

Proposed by: Cllr Kathy Thomas

Seconded by: Cllr Simon Kidd

Councillors also reviewed suggestions for projects and larger operational expenditure and items allocated for earmarked reserves with a view to making recommendations to Full Council for the setting of the precept at the meeting on 30th January 2024. All councillors had been contacted to review the current list of suggested projects, with a view to indicating whether or not they would support them being taken forward in the future. The aim to put together a ranked list of most popular project suggestions.

Following discussion, it was **resolved** to recommend maintaining a Contingency Reserve of at least 25%.

It was further **resolved** to recommend creating a project/infrastructure investment fund to be used for projects determined at a future date (including putting funds towards larger projects, such as maintenance of pathways, so they can be built up over a number of years).

Cllrs were reminded that it is possible to borrow money to fund larger projects.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to keep a register of all previous projects to know how much was allocated, who they were run by, and the amount of office time used. Projects can then become a rolling programme, rather than happening at one point in the year only.

F&A077 – 23/01/2024 Floral Displays

Pre-reading provided a report on the floral displays for 2023 and provided recommendations and quotations for the summer 2024 display.

It was **resolved** to purchase bedding plants from B&NES Council for the summer 2024 floral displays, similar to the displays for the previous year, for a sum of up to £1,700+VAT.

F&A078 – 23/01/2024 Beacon Hall & Field

To receive an update and make associated decisions on Beacon Hall bookings, requests from hirers and any works required.

Due to insufficient time remaining at the meeting it was agreed to defer this agenda item to the January Full Council meeting.

F&A079 – 23/01/2024 Christmas Related Activities

i. *To review the feedback from the Senior Residents Christmas Tea Party for 2023 and make any associated decisions.*

ii. *To review the Christmas lights and trees for 2023 and make any associated decisions [including consideration of purchasing an artificial or rooted Christmas tree for the Cemetery].*

Due to insufficient time remaining at the meeting it was agreed to defer this agenda item to the January Full Council meeting.

F&A080 – 23/01/2024 Policies – Financial Regulations

The Internal Auditor advised there had been some changes to legislation regarding public sector procurement and recommended these changes were made to the Council’s Finance Regulations and Standing Orders.

The pre-reading report highlighted the changes to the legislation which was basically the thresholds that determine if works must be published on Contracts Finder. The Clerk reported that the thresholds had increased again from 1st January 2024 and so these new figures, as detailed below, would now need to be applied.

- *Subsidised services contracts & Subsidised supplies contracts - All bodies £214,904 (was £213,477)*
- *Works (including subsidised works contracts) - All bodies £5,372,609 (was £5,336,937)*

It was **resolved** to make the necessary amendments to Financial Regulations and Standing Orders on the monetary threshold limits in accordance with legislation changes. The Clerk to update and publish the documents accordingly.

A draft income handling process had been circulated as pre-reading with a view to linking it to the Financial Regulations document. It detailed the processes involved for card, cash and cheque payments made to the Council. The document was reviewed by councillors, and it was **resolved** to adopt the process subject to inclusion of the word ‘bank’, so the cash payment process reads ‘cash is paid into the Post Office/bank’.

F&A081 – 23/01/2024 Risk Register

The updated sections of the Risk Register associated with Beacon Hall had not yet been published in pre-reading, so this agenda item was deferred until the next meeting.

F&A082 – 23/01/2024 Date and Time of Next Meeting & Future Agenda Items

The date of the next Finance & Amenities Committee meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 30th April 2024 at 7.00pm at Beacon Hall.

The date of the next Finance & Amenities Committee Advisory Panel meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 12th March 2024 at 7.00pm at Beacon Hall.

The meeting closed at 9.27pm

Signed..... Date.....

Appendix F&A073i – Quarter 3 bank reconciliation report for year ending 31st March 2024 accounts.

A/C	Name	Balance	Frequency	Actioned	Checked By
1200	Unity Trust Current Account	£9,669.53	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1200	Unity Trust Current Account - Unreconciled	£483.72	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1210	Unity Trust Deposit Account	£153,566.44	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1210	Unity Trust Deposit Account - Unreconciled	£0.00	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1220	Nat West 95-Day Notice Account	£70,000.00	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1220	Nat West 95-Day Notice Account - Unreconciled	£0.00	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1225	Nat West Current Account	£78,062.62	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1225	Nat West Current Account - Unreconciled	£70,000.00	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1230	Petty Cash - Total of receipts	£214.72	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1230	Petty Cash - Cash reming in tin	£35.28	Quarterly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1240	SumUp Card Machine - Paid to Current Account - Oct 23	£58.99	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1240	SumUp Card Machine - Fees Paid on Above	£1.01	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1240	SumUp Card Machine - Paid to Current Account - Nov 23	£196.61	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1240	SumUp Card Machine - Fees Paid on Above	£3.39	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1240	SumUp Card Machine - Paid to Current Account - Dec 23	£186.79	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1240	SumUp Card Machine - Unreconciled	£0.20	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1250	Credit Card - Lloyds Corporate - Oct 23	-£1,327.20	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1250	Credit Card - Lloyds Corporate - Payment	£1,327.20	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1250	Credit Card - Lloyds Corporate - Nov 23	-£1,071.67	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1250	Credit Card - Lloyds Corporate - Payment	£1,071.67	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1250	Credit Card - Lloyds Corporate - Dec 23	-£91.40	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
1250	Credit Card - Unreconciled	£91.40	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
N/A	Payroll - November 2023	£15,200.31	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
N/A	Payroll - December 2023	£9,957.15	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW
N/A	VAT Claims - Submitted	£0.00	6-Monthly	N/A	N/A
N/A	VAT Claims - Received	£0.00	6-Monthly	N/A	N/A
N/A	Allotment Fee Payments vs. Allotment Plots	N/A	Annually	11/01/2024	AL & TW*
Also:					
N/A	Nat West - Recreation Ground Trust Account - Oct 23	£4,354.01	Monthly	N/A	N/A**
N/A	Nat West - Recreation Ground Trust Account - Unreconciled	£0.00	Monthly	N/A	N/A
N/A	Unity Trust Bank - Recreation Ground Trust Account	£0.00	Monthly	11/01/2024	AL, JD & TW

*Checked invoices have been raised for every plot that has been issued (some plots are still vacant to be issued)

**No statement has been produced since the last reconciliation.