



PEASEDOWN ST JOHN PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & Governance Committee held on Tuesday 22nd April 2025 at 7.00pm at Beacon Hall, French Close, Peasedown St John

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Jo Davis; Simon Kidd; Andrew Larcombe (Chair); John Ogilvie-Davidson; Kathy Thomas; Jonathan Rich.

In attendance: Joy Luxford, Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)

Absent without Apologies: Cllr Daniel Walker, Conor Ogilvie-Davidson (ex-officio member of the Committee).

The meeting started at 19:04

Public Session – There were no members of the public attending.

F&G001 – 22/04/2025 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&G002 – 22/04/2025 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Daniel Walker and Conor Ogilvie-Davidson were absent without apology. Cllr Conor Ogilvie-Davidson is an ex-officio member of the Committee so attendance is not mandatory.

F&G003 – 22/04/2025 Minutes & Actions

The minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee meeting held on 21st January 2025 had been circulated in advance of the meeting; **it was resolved that they be accepted as a true and correct record of that meeting, and it was agreed that these would be signed by the Chair accordingly.**

Councillors received a verbal update on the actions raised from the last meetings and it was confirmed that all actions had either been completed or were on the agenda for discussion within this meeting.

Cllr John Ogilvie-Davidson left the meeting for a few minutes at 19:08 to take a phone call.

F&G004 – 22/04/2025 Items for Urgent Report

There were no items for urgent report.

F&G005 – 22/04/2025 Banking Arrangements

Cllrs received an update on banking arrangements, including signatories and bank mandates, banking charges and fees. Bank mandates had been circulated in advance of the meeting and confirmed that all actions in relation to amendments had been completed.

Arrangements with Unity Bank were noted.

Cllr Larcombe also confirmed that he had performed the bi-annual business account review for NatWest via phone and online. It was noted that this highlighted 2 historical Significant Officers still listed on the bank account (John Bailey and Tanya West) who have now been removed. Cllr Larcombe also confirmed that he had added the RFO as a Significant Officer. It was noted that this was different to the mandate (those who can approve payments) which had already been updated as previously agreed to reflect current Cllrs / Staff members.

After discussions with NatWest, the RFO confirmed the following (which had been previously confirmed on the planner)

- 1) there is no automated payment approval limits in place on our business accounts (every authorised user can make payments up to £50k a day without a second approval). Therefore our financial regulations will need to be enforced manually (i.e., there are no automatic controls in place).

- 2) NatWest stated that an alternative is to transfer our accounts to NatWest Bankline (which is free for community bank accounts like ours), and with that type of account it is possible to apply automatic mandate rules. But they are not currently accepting new applications at the moment. The RFO will check monthly for this as an option as it sounds like a better solution for us.
- 3) In the meantime, as agreed in C089 - 28/01/2025 - it was resolved that we will apply the mandate manually, so any transfers will either be approved offline by three authorisers (RFO + 2 Cllrs) or by a specific resolution at a F&G Committee or Full Council meeting.

Cllrs discussed the above and confirmed that the additional visibility provided by having NatWest accounts online outweighed the disadvantages of not being able to enforce automatic controls. It was re-iterated that any transaction moving money outside of our accounts without approval, would be considered fraud and could be investigated by the appropriate authorities. It was noted that in future it may be prudent to undertake a credit check on Cllrs before granting access to Bank Accounts as a means to safeguard public funds.

To understand the risk better, **it was resolved that the RFO would check with NatWest the process for moving money from our 95 day notice account and whether that needed approval in line with our mandate (e.g. 3 signatures) and/or if an unauthorised withdrawal was made from that account what the impact would be (e.g. loss of interest / not possible without 95 day notice)**

Cllrs were also notified that Unity Bank had informed us that the Credit Card form was incorrect, so we will need to resubmit. This will be resubmitted once a new Clerk is in place.

F&G006– 22/04/2025 Review of Current Finances 2024/25

Cllrs considered the report on financial spend against budget for the 2024/25 financial year covering both operational and capital projects budgets and discussed actual income and expenditure both in full and committee allocation formats. Reports reviewed included:

- 'Contracted Amenities Works' and Staff Salaries budgets.
- 'Infrequent Operational Expenditure.'
- Persimmon land transfer income and expenditure and reconciliation since inception of project.
- Balance Sheet for bank account balances, credit card and petty cash. Cllr Larcombe also confirmed that he had reviewed the quarterly bank balances on the morning of 22nd April 2025 with all reports satisfactory.
- Reserves, Ear Marked Reserves and Committed Expenditure. It was noted that a report was circulated in advance of the meeting showing reserves at the year-end 2024/25 and up to date to show the movements approved at the last Full Council Meeting (post year-end).

It was noted that the surplus generated in the year was mostly due to unbudgeted income e.g., Permission Land Transfer income, WECA grant, CIL funding and Bank interest being more than budgeted. Expenditure was broadly in line with budget. Cllrs reviewed the financial year reports 2024/25 in detail and discussed each sub-section and rationale for under/over spend. It was noted that the Parish Council had operated in line with the approved budget and financial regulations.

It was noted that there was an opportunity to amend the sub-sections on the reports to improve review of financial reports in the upcoming year. In particular it may be beneficial to introduce a subsection for tree and hedge maintenance (combining budget lines) to allow the whole tree and hedge budget be used throughout the estate rather than having to ringfence it to one area. **It was resolved, that at the start of the financial year each committee should make a recommendation to the F&G Committee on the sub-sections they would like to see within their budget lines to enable ease of review and comparison of financial reports. This is to be reviewed annually.**

It was resolved and will be recommended to Full Council that

- **Contingency Reserves are increased to £100,000. This is slightly higher than the required 25% of FY25/26 Precept (£90,600) to cover unexpected events given the wider macro-economic climate.**
- **The remaining £44,449.11 Persimmon Money will be moved into an EMR called Land Maintenance Fund to be used to maintain the estate.**
- **A Caretakers Tools and Machinery EMR of £6,000 will be created to allow the caretaking team to purchase needed Tools and Machinery (to be purchased with oversight from the A&F Committee).**
- **Pension deficit is increased by a further £5,000, this is in addition to the £5,000 already in the FY2025/26 budget.**
- **The intention is to add to the Pathway Improvements EMR with the aim of repairing/replacing the pathways in Beacon Fields during the upcoming year. The increase should be based on the needed amount after quotes have been received.**
- **Any leftover surplus from FY2024/25 (after performing the above actions) should be added to General Funds.**

Cllrs noted that the C.I.L EMR is now £6,589.95 and that provided an opportunity to invest in the estate in line with the requirements of the funding. Cllrs will seek to propose options for the funding in upcoming F&G meetings.

It was noted that the latest VAT claim of £14,300.33 had been submitted in March and paid on 4th April 2025.

There was discussion about needed work at the Recreation Ground to fix the drains and at the allotments to mark plots. It was agreed that these items were already included as part of the operational budget.

It was resolved to pay up to £1,000 to fix the drain at the Recreation Ground based on the survey of required work provided by Roman Rod.

It was resolved that a link to the long version of the Annual Village Meeting Video would be added regularly to our social media accounts and on every newsletter to help residents learn about the Parish Council.

F&G007 – 22/04/2025 Review of Debtors and Creditors

Cllrs reviewed the financial debtors and creditors report which was tabled at the meeting. It was noted that we are awaiting the re-issue of cheques from the Co-Op Funeral Care and will continue chasing. This is a legacy issue and it is possible that we may need to write off the outstanding balance if the cheques do not materialise. Cllrs will be updated at the next meeting on progress.

It was resolved to write off the BT Business overpayment of £8.69.

F&G008 – 22/04/2025 Asset Register

Cllrs considered the two types of Asset Registers circulated in advance of the meeting (1) Assets within our ownership (2) Asset Register for AGAR. **In particular they considered and resolved to:**

- **create an up to date online Asset Register, once the new Clerk is appointed, to capture (photograph, categorise, list status) all assets within our ownership and perform an annual physical verification.**
- **Accept the updated Asset Register for the AGAR which has been amended to include purchases / disposal during the financial year 2024/2025.**
- **Take advice from Internal Audit on whether the valuation of land should be at historical value £120,000 or £1 (as no resale value). It was also noted that we should add the Persimmon Land into the table. It was delegated to the RFO to have a discussion with the internal auditor and apply their recommended treatment to the asset register for the AGAR.**

F&G009 – 22/04/2025 Financial Regulations

It was resolved to update the Financial Regulations under section 5.16 to clarify that (1) budgets should not be exceeded for sub-sections within budget lines (as has been customary practice) (2) that under delegated powers, a Committee can agree budget movements within a relevant sub-section, without further approval (3) if budgets are exceeded for sub-sections these need to be approved by Full Council or F&G Committee.

F&G010 – 22/04/2025 AGAR, Internal & External Audits

Cllrs received an update on the AGAR process (including that draft numbers are ready), Internal and External Audits for the end of the 2024/25 financial year and noted the next visit for Internal Audit is scheduled for 8th May 2025.

F&G011 – 22/04/2025 Community Infrastructure Levy and External Funding

Cllrs noted that the WECA Grant funding is now complete and the final project report has been submitted to WECA. No further action is expected.

F&G012 – 22/04/2025 Laptop and Ipad Purchases

Cllrs reviewed progress on the Cllrs device project as circulated in advance of the meeting. Cllr Davis handed her laptop in at the meeting. Cllr Walker had not confirmed whether the offered laptop was suitable, so no further action had been taken by the office team. It was noted that the project was now complete.

F&G013 – 22/04/2025 Date and Time of Next Meeting & Future Agenda Items

The next meeting of the next Finance & Governance Committee is scheduled to be held on Tuesday 17th June 2025 at 7.00pm at Beacon Hall.

It was agreed to add youth services to the June Full Council agenda and for Cllr Larcombe to discuss arrangements with Joy Fraser of the Hive to enable a proposal to be put forward.

Cllr Larcombe has also escalated the discussion with Taylor Wimpey about the purchase of their land and aims to be able to report back at the June Full Council meeting.

Meeting ended 21:12