

HAYDON WICK PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance & Policy Committee of Haydon Wick Parish Council held on Tuesday 19th November 2024 at 19.30 at Parish Council Offices, Thames Avenue, Swindon, SN25 1QQ.

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS: Councillors: V Manro (Chair), A Roupelis (Vice Chair), J Fuller, R Hailstone, S Heyes, J Jackson, A Jimmy, B Patrick-Okoh and R Worman

OFFICERS: Georgina Morgan-Denn, Chief Officer/Clerk and RFO
Jodie Smart, Finance Officer, Deputy RFO
Julie McMorrow, Meetings Administrator

FP 059 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor O Munagala (work commitments).
No apologies were received from Cllr S Fateru.

FP 060 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

FP 061 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were none.

FP 062 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lots of community Christmas events and activities taking place soon. Any help or donation requests received from the Office, kindly respond promptly to confirm your availability and/or items you can donate.

FP 063 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members reviewed the minutes of Finance and Policy Committee held on Tuesday 17th September 2024 and agreed they were a true record.

Proposed: Councillor S Heyes Seconded: Councillor J Jackson

Vote: Agreed with one (1) Abstention.

RESOLVED: To confirm as a true record the minutes of meetings held on Tuesday 17th September 2024 and the Chairman signed the minutes.

FP 064 COUNCILLOR REPORTS

Councillor R Hailstone – SBC (Swindon Borough Council) working on a new Code of Conduct policy and attending their working party. Will report back accordingly.

Councillor R Worman – Attended SBC cabinet meeting but nothing new to report.

Councillor S Heyes – attended the working party meeting regarding Tadpole Field and there is some traction which will be reported to Committee later during this meeting.

Councillor V Manro – Visited Enterprise Works, social enterprise organisation, launching their services to the Parishes in Swindon. Report they have good products, wood benches, bird boxes. All excellent workmanship. They would like to work with Parishes going forward and are currently offering trade rates.

No representation at Parish activities, meetings or events this month:

Councillor B Patrick-Okoh – Nothing to report

Councillor A Jimmy – Nothing to report

Councillor J Fuller – Nothing to report

Councillor J Jackson – Nothing to report

Councillor A Roupelis – Nothing to report

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FP 065 CHIEF OFFICER'S REPORT

National Insurance - Increase to the Council after the government budget increase to employer NI contributions on our existing staff is £21,802 – which is an additional 1.62%, / £2.43 on the Precept. On the aspirational staffing budget it will be approximately £20,471 (1.52%, £2.28).

ICO - The renewal of the Information Commissioners' Office (ICO) registration is being completed. This is a GDPR requirement.

Councillor Devices – Reminder for those Councillors who have devices to install the new protection software.

Grants – Our SSE's Powering Communities to Net Zero Fund – Low Carbon Technology grant application was unsuccessful. They received over 180 funding applications and fed back to us that we did not have enough evidence to demonstrate we were actively reducing our carbon emissions.

FP 066 ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Noted the report.

FP 067 FINANCIAL REPORTS

FP 067A Members noted the income and expenditure for October 2024.

FP 067B Members received the Bank Statements and Bank reconciliation for October 2024.

FP 067C Members approved expenditure under purchase daybook references 3729 – 3783 and cashbook reference 400. The payments total is £98,540.31.

Proposed: Councillor R Worman

Seconded: Councillor J Fuller

Vote: Agreed Unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve expenditure under purchase daybook references 3729 – 3783 and cashbook reference 400. The payments total is £98,540.31

FP 067D Members retrospectively approved the payments made using the credit card for payments made in September 2024 totaling £2,585.28 respectively.

Proposed: Councillor S Heyes

Seconded: Councillor A Roupelis

Vote: Agreed Unanimously.

RESOLVED: To retrospectively approve expenditure using the credit card for payments totaling £2,585.28 in September 2024.

FP 068 BUDGET

FP 068A Ear Marked Reserves (EMRs)

Committee noted the current balances of EMRs. It was explained that these existing funds are put in reserves for specific reasons and separate from General Reserves. This means they are separate from general funds when Council is calculating the future precept.

FP 068B Budget Aspirations 2025/26

Noted the consolidated list of aspirations received from Committees and Officers. It is a working document and will be discussed at the next Full Council. Explained there are longer term aspirations that haven't been added to next year's budget as they are longer reaching and will need the evidence/business plans to justify adding them to any future budget. There were comments regarding the size of budget allocated to the Outdoor Gym. It was explained the worst-case scenario has been added to the draft budget for now.

FP 068C GMF Public Works Loan Drawdown

The report was considered which had been scrutinised earlier in the Grounds Maintenance Facility Working Party. Council has permission to borrow up to £768,590.00 from the Public Works Loan Board to fund the build of the new Grounds Maintenance Facility. The deadline for the draw down of the loan is 17th December 2024. The interest rates have not come down as much as was hoped,

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despite there being a reduction in the Bank of England base rate. The rate is revised twice daily, so may alter slightly between the current recommendation, approval at Full Council and then the application for drawn down of funds.

The following items were noted during the appraisal:

1. The interest rate used to provide repayment sums and net present value calculations is 5.79%, which is the interest rate set by the Public Works Loan Board as at 12th November 2024. As mentioned above, this may differ slightly at the point of applying for the funds to be drawn down.
2. Net present value is an accounting calculation which uses a discount factor that takes into consideration the time value of money over the loan term of 30 years. This figure estimates what the value of the repayments or savings will be equal to in 30 years.
3. The build costs estimated at 12th November 2024 have been used. This may increase slightly depending on any additional requirements at the end of the build.
4. The Precept impact given is based on the 3-year budget set for loan repayments set in January 2024. This **does not** account for the precept impact of using existing funds to reduce the loan and how this will affect funding of alternative future projects.

Four comprehensive options were presented, and several questions were raised and answered by the Deputy RFO. The Deputy RFO advised that their recommendation was option 2 as this provided the balance of a slightly reduced loan amount whilst maintaining a subsidy for the first year repayment as planned in 2023 budget setting and provided a reasonable level of reserves for other capital projects in 2025/26. The Deputy RFO advised that option 4 included using projected underspends from the current year, which could not be confirmed until April 2025, which is four months after committing to the loan amount. Therefore, this option was deemed too risky by the Deputy RFO and not recommended. After a lengthy discussion, the meeting considered all four options and the Working Party's earlier recommendation to proceed with Option 2:

- Draw down a loan of £743,324.00.
- Utilise the full contingency EMR of £37,621.00 to reduce the loan value.
- Utilise the S106 income of £5,520.54 to reduce the loan value.
- Consider allocating the estimated surplus general reserves of £58,141.00 to alternative aspirations and/or supplementing the 25/26 precept.
- Supplement the 25/26 loan repayment by £37,500.00 to reduce the 25/26 loan repayment as planned.

The budget projections currently show that Option 2 is the safest with the current data that we have. It was confirmed that once the loan draw down has taken place, the interest rate at the time is fixed for the duration of the loan. This is an annuity loan which we have permission to borrow. There are no benefits to early repayments. The same amount with the interest will be payable regardless.

The Committee had multiple votes; however, Option 2 was carried with the most votes and will be taken as the recommendation to Full Council on the 26th November 2024.

Proposed: Councillor R Worman **Seconded:** Councillor B Patrick-Okoh
Vote: Six (6) against, Two (2) in favour and one (1) Abstention

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Resolved: To **not** recommend **Option 3** to Full Council.

Proposed: Councillor R Hailstone **Seconded:** Councillor A Jimmy

Vote: Six (6) against, Two (2) in favour and one (1) Abstention

Resolved: To **not** recommend **Option 4** to Full Council.

Proposed: Councillor S Heyes **Seconded:** Councillor A Roupelis

Vote: Agreed with one (1) Abstention and three (3) Against.

Resolved: Committee agreed to recommend **Option 2** to Full Council.

FP 069

COUNCIL REVENUE

Committee noted Council's revenue and encouraged Members to consider new revenue streams to pursue to reduce the impact on the precept.

FP 070

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

RECOMMENDATIONS/COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCE 2025-26

Members received recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel on the levels of Allowances for Parish and Town Councils in 2025-26 and a report to consider their Councillor Allowances for 2025-26. The Committee thoroughly discussed all the options presented. Option 3 was favoured to reconnect with historical decisions to align allowances with the employees' Cost of Living annual increase. For 25/26 this would be an uplift of 4.41%. It was noted that Swindon Borough Ward Members' had increased their allowances by 5.58% this year.

Committee acknowledged that allowances need to be reviewed annually as Councils need to encourage members of the public to join them and nominal allowances will help towards an individual's personal expenses such as childcare or care costs incurred whilst attending meetings.

Councillor R Worman proposed and Councillor A Roupelis seconded to freeze allowances for another year (Option 4) but this was then withdrawn.

Proposed: Councillor S Heyes **Seconded:** Councillor J Jackson

Vote: Agreed with two (2) Abstentions

Resolved: To recommend **Option 3 Full Council - an uplift of 4.41% on Councillor Allowances in 2025-26. This equates to a new rate of £78.28 per month for Councillors and £145.55 per month for the Chairman. The total cost is £15,837.00 per annum (for eligible allowances). Equivalent to an additional £2,309.22 (0.17%, £0.26 per annum per band D household) impact on the precept.**

FP 071

INTERNAL AUDITOR INTERIM REPORT 2025-25

Some very minor amendments and recommendations were shown in the report. An amended Financial Authorisation policy will be brought to a future meeting to formalise a scheme of delegation to give the Chief Officer and Deputy Clerk authority to set community event ticket prices. The next audit will take place in February 2025. *Action: Finance Officer to amend the Financial Authorisations/Scheme of Delegation and bring to February F&P.*

FP 072

ITEMS FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

To be sent to the Chief Officer in advance of the next meeting on 21st January 2025.

FP 073

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS

There were none.

FP 074

INSURANCE MATTERS

There has been a small flurry of potential insurance claims as shown in the confidential report. In all cases our insurance company has been informed of any

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potential claims whilst the Council continue to refute any liability and direct the residents to Swindon Borough Council instead.

FP 075

TREE SURVEY

Members received an addendum to the Tree Survey contract award which was taken to Parks and Open Spaces Committee on 5th November 2024. Since the meeting two (2) further quotes have been received. The Committee agreed to rescind the previous resolution and to appoint Contractor B at a cost of £2,800.00, subject to receiving two references. *Action: Deputy Clerk to inform contractor and arrange references.*

Proposed: Councillor A Jimmy Seconded: Councillor B Patrick-Okoh

Vote: Agreed with one (1) Abstention

Resolved: To rescind the POS resolution (POS 077) and to award the Tree Survey to Company B at a cost of £2,800.00, subject to receiving two references. Cost to be met from EMR 328 Arboricultural Works.

FP 076

LAND AT TADPOLE

Members received a verbal update following the working party which took place prior to this committee meeting. The meeting between railway representatives four (4) and the Working Party Councillors Manro, Heyes, Worman, Hailstone, Stevenson, covered several key areas of the potential railway partnership. The railway, having faced a setback with rejected lottery funding, has shifted focus to their own operations and expansion plans. Discussions concentrated on long-term lease arrangements and future funding, emphasising the need for sustainable planning.

A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to exploring a collaborative effort to create a joint-use car park, addressing both the railway's needs and the council's requirements for allotment parking. The team also discussed plans for expanding and improving existing facilities, including considerations for transportation, visitor access, and initial maintenance plans. Both parties agreed to explore the possibility of a joint-use car park for community benefit, rather than building separate parking facilities. It was noted that the railway is only likely to use the car park for up to ten to fifteen (10-15) events per year, leaving space available for parish council events such as markets, outdoor cinema etc.

Plans for the permissible path need to be considered factored into site layouts. The Council originally bought the land as agricultural, so no land searches have been undertaken. It is not envisaged to have lighting/electrics at the car park or to charge cars to park. The timeline is flexible but could aim for December 2025 completion. The Chairman offered to attend their monthly (1st Friday) Trustees Meeting to discuss the potential partnership further.

Tadpole Actions

- 1. Arrange a walk-around of the site to assess potential car park expansion and entrance planning (JM/VM)*
- 2. Improved access to the proposed car park will be made possible by removing part of the hedge to increase visibility, particularly for right-side views. (TBA)*
- 3. Provide railway with previous entrance planning application to check what local searches may be required (JM/GMD)*
- 4. Legal guidance on merits of a Memorandum or Understanding versus a Long-Term Lease (GMD)*
- 5. Explore possible grant funding for generating new allotment space at Tadpole (GMD/LM)*

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6. *Site layout to include permissible path and existing tree planting (VM/RH)*

The meeting closed at 21.00

Chairman Signed: _____

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