

FELSTED PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

held on 13th November 2023 at 6.00 pm in the Committee Room at the URC Hall.

Present Councillors Roy Ramm (Chair), Frances Marshall, Graham Harvey, Richard Silcock, John Moore and the RFO (Daniel Plunkett).

F23/47 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

No apologies were received and there were no Declarations of Interest.

F23/48 Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2023

The Minutes of the meeting were approved and signed by the Chairman.

F23/49 Matters arising from the previous Minutes (not covered elsewhere on this Agenda)

F23.36 – Felsted Village Events Committee

The RFO noted that the bank account for the donation of funds from the Felsted Village Events Committee (FVEC) had now been opened. The RFO also noted that he had produced a draft set of regulations for a Parish Council Events Committee which he would share with the FVEC for their input before coming back to Full Council with a final draft for consideration.

F23.40 – Review of Accounts for the current year to date

Councillor Richard Silcock asked if the RFO had spoken to Councillor Andrew Parker and the Clerk regarding the Nature Area funds available. The RFO confirmed that he had and that the Nature Area working group were currently waiting for the environmental report on the Nature Area that was due shortly.

F23/50 Bank Reconciliation and PAYE Records

The bank reconciliations and PAYE records were reviewed and signed by the Chair and Councillor Frances Marshall.

F23/51 Review of Accounts for the current year to date

Members studied the budget comparison prepared by the RFO (appended on page 4) and noted the following items:

The Estimated actual vs budget for the year end was for a £14,850 deficit. This represented a £7,400 higher deficit than the previous comparison on 11th October 2023.

The RFO noted that the following variances on several budget lines that were the main drivers:

- Magazine Advertising and Donations were projected to come in £2,510 above budget.
- Salary and Expenses costs were projected to come in around £7,311 above budget because of increases in pay scales for officials in January and June and an increase in the RFO's hours from 5 to 7 per week to reflect actual time worked.
- Street lighting electricity costs were coming in £3,278 below the budgeted amount with the current reduction in electricity prices and this was likely to reduce further with the new electricity contract.
- Maintenance was coming in £10,755 higher than budgeted due to higher cost on the cleaning and maintenance of the playing field toilets. The members considered that the expense was worthwhile given the improvements in the condition of the toilets. Expenses in the maintenance of the church yard were also higher than budgeted.
- Sundry expenses were above budget by £9,855 due to the donation of £11,000 to the Felsted Community Trust which is partially offset by lower cost of insurance obtained via the 3-year long term agreement with the new insurers.

Cllr Roy Ramm noted that recent correspondence from the NHS Integrated Care Board had generally been of a more positive tone but that further consultant expenditure may be required in the current financial year. Cllr Roy Ramm further noted that the car park for the surgery had been completed and that the building was awaiting specifications from the NHS and would be constructed by a builder specialising in doctors' surgeries. Further the Section 106 agreement limited the number of houses that could be occupied before the surgery was complete and as such the developer was also keen for the completion of the surgery.

The RFO also provided an update on the year-to-date expenditure of the Nature Area funds (held separately under the S106 agreement and appended on page 4). It was noted that year to date expenditure was £2,520.

F23/52 Final Consideration of the 2024-25 Budget and Precept for proposal to Full Council

The RFO presented an updated draft budget for 2024-25 (appended on page 5) which reflected amendments agreed to the previous draft and this was considered by members.

The RFO noted that the Clerk had made him aware that the planning permission for the churchyard wall to replace the hedge adjacent to the Estate Agents on Braintree Road would expire in 2024. The previous quote for the construction of the wall had been £15,625 (Minute Ref 21/62) and would likely be more than £20,000 currently. The members discussed the possibility of including the cost for the works within the 2024-25 budget but unanimously agreed that given the current budget constraints the permission must be left to expire, and the matter be reconsidered in 2-3 years.

The members discussed the likely extent of further donations to the Felsted Community Trust to assist with the setup and opening of the surgery building. Cllr Roy Ramm noted that it was hoped that the surgery would be built and operational during the 2024-25 financial year, but it was agreed that considering the difficulties to date in dealings with the NHS Integrated Care Board it would be prudent to retain the budgeted amount of £10,000 for such donations.

The RFO noted that with the installation of the new CCTV system the budget for the CCTV maintenance had been reduced to £205 p.a., being the cost of the annual maintenance contract and the cost of the sim card for the CCTV router.

There being no further items for discussion the recommendation of the budget for Full Council consideration and approval at the 6th December Full Council meeting was proposed by Cllr Frances Marshall and seconded by Cllr John Moore and unanimously approved.

Members carefully considered the Precept requirement given the proposed budget and the need to rebuild the Councils long term reserves and felt that a precept increase of 13% for the 2024-25 Financial Year was appropriate. This would allow the Council to cover the budgeted expenditure with a small surplus to retain towards the reserves. The RFO noted that although the tax base figures were not yet finalised by Uttlesford District Council he had obtained an estimate, based on which the Band D increase would equate to 12.5% given a 13% increase in the Precept. The recommendation of the Precept for Full Council consideration and approval at the 6th December Full Council meeting was proposed by Cllr Roy Ramm and seconded by Cllr John Moore and unanimously approved.

F23/53 CCTV Completion and Payment

The RFO informed members that the new CCTV system had been installed following approval at the previous Finance Committee (F23/42). One of the cameras was currently not working and MSS Alarms was in the process of investigating and repairing the issue and had said that they would not be submitting an invoice until the repair was complete. Access to the system was currently available to the RFO and Clerk and had already been used following vandalism at the playing field toilets.

- F23/54 **Consideration of repairs to Playing Field Toilet doors and approval of works**
Members considered the quotes obtained by the Clerk for the replacement of the playing field toilet doors, including removal of existing door frames and replacement with new frames and rehang of the men's toilet door to open outwards. It was agreed that given the substantial cost that further quotes should be obtained and brought for consideration at the coming Full Council meeting.
- F23/55 **Review of Conduct of future Finance Committee Meetings**
It was agreed that the 28th February 2024 Finance Committee Meeting would take place at 5pm in the Committee Room of the URC Hall (subject to availability).
- F23/56 **Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items**
Cllr John Moore noted that the Council currently has substantial funds, although below the amount covered by the FSCS, deposited with Metro Bank. It was agreed that no action should be taken at present but that the stability of Metro Bank should be monitored.
- F23/57 **Next meeting**
The meeting closed at 7.00pm.

The next meeting will be held on 28th February 2024 at 5.00pm in the Committee Room at the URC Hall, Stebbing Road, CM6 3JD.

..... Chairman Dated

F23/51 - Review of Accounts for the current year to date



FPC - Budget Comparison to 07 November 2023

	Budget 2022-23		Actual 2022-23		Year End Estimate		YE Estimate - Budget	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Opening Balance		55,161		55,161		55,161		
INCOME								
Precept	113,950		113,950		113,950		0	
Allotments Rents	1,700		2,015		2,200		500	
Playing field rent	500		1,050		1,050		550	
Grants	0		1,772		1,772		1,772	
Sundry other receipts	0		1,313		1,313		1,313	
Magazine advertising & donations	2,150		4,060		4,660		2,510	
Total Income		118,300		124,159		124,944		6,644
EXPENSES								
Salary and Expenses		42,013		27,782		49,324		7,311
Street Lighting		12,799		5,381		9,521		-3,278
Administration		12,511		9,335		12,864		352
Maintenance, repairs and upkeep		32,210		29,392		42,965		10,755
Projects		7,950		1,349		4,449		-3,501
Sundry		5,257		15,083		15,112		9,855
Total Expenses		112,742		88,322		134,236		21,494
Closing Balance		60,719		90,998		45,870		-14,850



Nature Area Expenditure to 07 November 2023

Opening Balance - Barclays Savings Account	£ 84,129.42				
Opening Balance - Metro Account	£ 54,903.06				
Total	£ 139,032.48				
Expenditure - YTD	Date	Reference	Supplier	Description	Amount
All paid from Metro Account	2023-05-17	800030	JCM Services	Nature Area - Grounds Maintenance 1/4	£ 420.00
	2023-07-05	800031	JCM Services		£ 756.00
	2023-07-26	800032	JCM Services	Nature Area - Watering nature area 19/07/23 , supplied 200l per visit	£ 126.00
	2023-09-06	800033	JCM Services		£ 546.00
	2023-09-30	800034	JCM Services		£ 672.00
					£ 2,520.00
Closing Balance - Barclays Savings Account	£ 84,129.00				
Closing Balance - Metro Account	£ 52,383.06				
Total	£ 136,512.06				
S106 Funds Received	02/10/2018				
S106 Funds Expire - 20y time period	02/10/2038				
Years Remaining	14.9				
Available Expenditure p.a.	£ 9,171.16				

