

FELSTED PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting

held on 3rd February 2025 at 3.00 pm in the Committee Room at the URC Hall.

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

F25/01 **Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

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

F25/02 **Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2024**

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

F25/03 **Matters arising from the previous Minutes (not covered elsewhere on this Agenda)**

There were no matters arising from the previous Minutes.

F25/04 **Bank Reconciliation and PAYE Records**

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

F25/05 **Review of grass cutting tenders and recommendation to Full Council**

Councillor Graham Harvey outlined the tender process whereby 21 contractors had been invited to quote on the tender and to see the scope of works in person. Following this initial process there had been 5 tenders returned.

Members studied the tender review document that had been produced by Councillors Graham Harvey and Clive Perrins as part of the tender process and noted

- The range of tender quotes received was wide but most of the quotes were in the £12-15k (ex. VAT) range with 1 outlying quote for £42k.
- The tender review also provided details about the contractors:
 - Qualifications for safe use of pesticides
 - Health and Safety qualifications and procedures
 - Level of public liability insurance cover
 - Staff training processes
 - Machinery available to complete the works

Councillor Richard Silcock noted that the tender had not specified that there were 2 “areas for nature” which would need to be cut differently and queried whether this would be an issue. Councillor Graham Harvey replied that he didn’t see any issue with contractors adjusting their cutting in these areas for this and that this would be specified on the next tender.

Councillor John Moore queried whether the £42k tender was quoting for the same works or if they had quoted a price for the full 3 years. Councillor Graham Harvey replied that he had confirmed that it was a p.a. quote and that the price was likely so high because the machinery that the contractor had available wasn’t large enough, they would require a lot of time on the cutting.

Councillor John Moore also queried whether the churchyard grass cutting was included in the tender and Councillor Graham Harvey responded that it was included.

Having reviewed the tender overview, the members unanimously agreed to recommend a 3-year contract with the current contractor (JCM Services) who were approx. £200 p.a. more expensive than the cheapest contractor but whose level of machinery was far more appropriate and whose Health and Safety and Staff training procedures and processes were felt to be of a higher level. It was also noted that JCM had specified they would perform 15 cuts p.a. rather than the 13 requested in the tender as they felt this would be the required amount.

Members noted their thanks to Councillors Graham Harvey and Clive Perrins for the hard work and effort that had gone into the tender process.

F25/06 **Allocation of Metro Bank Compensation to Christmas Tree event costs**
Councillor Graham Harvey explained that because of the failure of Metro Bank to cash the previous 2 cheques for the funds transfer to Barclays he had raised a complaint. The complaint process had resulted in compensation of £200 for his time and travel expenses which he proposed should go towards the costs of the Christmas Tree event. Members agreed unanimously to this proposal.

F25/07 **Consider appointment of Internal Auditor and recommendation to Full Council**
The RFO noted that as reported to Full Council (minute ref 25/09.7) the current Internal Auditor was retiring and would not be undertaking the Internal Audit for 2024-25. The RFO had contacted 3 local Internal Auditors who were listed on the Internal Audit Forum directory which had been recommended by the current Internal Auditor. The estimated cost ranged from £320 to £525. As the RFO and members had no knowledge of any of the Auditors approached it was unanimously agreed by the Members to recommend the cheapest quote to the Full Council for the 2024-25 Internal Audit.

F25/08 **Review of Conduct of future Finance Committee Meetings**
It was agreed to change the time of the 26th February 2025 Finance Committee Meeting to 3pm in the Committee Room of the URC Hall (subject to availability) and that future meeting should be scheduled for 3pm rather than 4pm.

F25/09 **Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items**
None.

F25/10 **Next meeting**
The meeting closed at 3.45pm.
The next meeting will be held on 26th February 2025 at 3.00pm in the Committee Room at the URC Hall, Stebbing Road, CM6 3JD.

..... Chairman Dated