



Arborfield & Newland Parish Council

The Parish Office
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Parish Clerk: Hilary Carless

**Minutes of a Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on
Tuesday 16 April 2024 at Arborfield Pavilion at 6:00pm**

Present: Cllrs Murphy (Chair), Clint, Bailey and Stevens

In Attendance: Mrs Carless, Parish Clerk, and Mr Watts, Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

1. To receive and accept any apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Strong and accepted by the Council.

2. To receive any declarations of interest on items on the agenda.

None noted.

3. To review 2023-24 Income and Expenditure – Actual v Budget

- Cllr Murphy thanked the RFO for his consistently diligent work in preparing the budget and accounts for the Parish Council
- It was noted that the Council accounts showed a saving of £13K against budget in the financial year
- Of this, as is usual practice, £7K will be accrued to the 2024/25 Parks Committee budget to fund improvements to equipment at the Park
- The remaining £6K will be added to General Reserves for future use.

4. To review the draft 2023/24 Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR)

- The RFO reminded the Committee that the AGAR was due to undergo an internal audit, followed by an external audit prior to submission of the final figures by 20 June 2024
- The annual precept (council tax) figure, received from WBC, was lower in 2023/24 than in the prior year. This was queried with WBC who informed us that the Parish had less Band D houses in 2023/24 than in 2022/23
- Reserves have been spent as planned in 2023/24, falling in the year from £493K to £192K as a result of two significant projects:
 - The purchase of part of The Coombes Woodland with Barkham Parish Council which utilised all the Council's CIL £132K
 - The renovation and extension of The Pavilion at Arborfield Park which utilised £184K of the Council's Special Projects Fund which has been accrued over many years
- A transfer from the general reserve to the earmarked Special Projects Fund of £29K is needed to cover final bills in relation to the Pavilion work. This transfer was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed by the Committee
- The Committee decided that it would be good practice to review the reserves on a quarterly basis

- 5. To approve the opening of a bank account with CCLA and the closure of the HSBC bank account**
- The Council currently uses Unity Trust Bank for day-to-day banking and HSBC to hold surplus funds
 - The RFO has identified that CCLA offer better short-term interest rates than HSBC (based on historical data) and more on-line accessibility. The Council requested that the RFO research additional information on the CCLA account to see if it would be prudent and safe to transfer our funds to a new account.
- 6. To review and agree any changes to Arborfield News advertising and Football Pitch rates**
- It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that advertising rates be increased by 5% to cover Arborfield News printing costs
 - It was proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that the rate for hiring the football pitch will be increased by 5%, with the first year remaining at the same rate and the increase taking effect the following year
- 7. Any items for consideration to include items for the next meeting agenda.** For information only.
- To consider results of a resident survey question relating to projects to consider for future spend
 - To consider the renewal of bus shelters and any opportunities to generate funds through bus shelter advertising
- 8. Date of next meeting** - The next Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting will be as and when required.

The meeting ended at 7:20pm.