

- whether, to increase financial awareness, all Committee Chairs should be Members of this Committee (agenda item 13)
- to have more of a joined-up Council plan rather than four Committee plans

120/22 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 14 March 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair

121/22 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

Proposed by **The Town Mayor** and seconded by **Councillor Fogg** and

RESOLVED: that **Councillor Richard Allen** is elected Vice Chair of the Finance & Policy Committee for 2022/23

122/22 ACTION LOG

Members noted the updated action log and reviewed progress of two incomplete actions:

#19: Branding and Corporate Image – the Town Clerk had obtained two samples (a badge and a brochure were passed around for Members to view).

RESOLVED: to purchase silver-coloured badges for all Councillors to display the Town Crest and Councillor's names in full at a cost of £270

#25: ducting in High Street – discussion points included:

- careful consideration would be required about what voltage to install (e.g., agree the purpose: voltage for EV chargers would likely be different to voltage required for market traders or to power a large Mop Fair ride)
- ownership – whether the charger points would belong to Marlborough/Wiltshire Council, or the company installing them
- that the Town Clerk had met with one contractor already; they had declined to quote for EV charger points at the Recreation Ground car park because the site would not be financially viable
- that the contracting company would pay for the installation and pay rent to the EV charger point location landowner
- that Wiltshire Council had an EV Charger Point plan for the whole county
- traffic – it would be difficult for cars to queue for EV charger points on the High Street
- if a project went forward, whether it would be the responsibility of this Committee
- that budget would need to be identified before a formal project could be created
- whether it would be possible to incorporate the requirements for the Showmen's Guild when scoping a project (there would be environmental benefits from reducing the need for diesel generators at the Mop Fairs)
- whether to discuss with Full Council to agree a way forward
- whether to invite tenders as a Town Council project, or wait for the Wiltshire Council scheme if satisfactory

- whether, if the Town Council takes the project forward, to insist that the Salisbury Road site be included alongside the High Street

Councillor Sheppard advised that it would be best to discuss this with Wiltshire Council first to clarify possibilities and to find out what was being planned by them for Marlborough. He was happy to approach Wiltshire Council to open discussions but would need a clear steer – for example whether separate meters would be required for different voltages/uses.

123/22

FINANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 1

Members noted and considered the finance report for Quarter 1 2022/23. Discussion points included:

- Whether to build the report up to provide more insight
- Whether the report should state the period covered
- Whether the report should highlight issues, e.g., gas expenditure at 52% of budget at Q1
- Whether the PPE figure was correct
- In the past, as Chair **Councillor Ross** had taken the approach to explain to Members the % spend they should expect at the reporting period, and to highlight and explain any anomalies
- Whether to include a closing-down report of the previous year's accounts for the next meeting, and routinely include it in the reports at the first meeting of F&P each year
- That most councils received Omega reports without any supporting analysis from the Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer
- Whether there had been a handover between former and current Chairs
- That the auditor's report and AGAR showed no issues with the previous year's accounts
- Whether F&P Members should review the end of year report before circulating to Full Council
- There were differences of opinion about accounting methods for funding projects from Ear Marked Reserves, in particular the Jubilee High Street Party (whether the charges should go against the Events revenue budget or Ear Marked Reserve for Jubilee events) – there was no question of improper spend and no apparent risk; more, a debate about which method was preferred
- The **Chair** and **Town Clerk** would discuss the approach taken to clarify the guidance received from the Town Council's finance system support team (RBS) and report back to Members
- Whether a simple guide about accounting practices could be produced for Councillors
- Members agreed the **Town Clerk's** overview report was helpful
- Whether the report could differentiate between fixed costs vs discretionary vs projects, highlight risks and flag upcoming contract renewals and supplier performance etc (agenda item 8 would cover this)

RESOLVED: to produce a final annual accounts report to circulate to all Councillors, and to include it in the first F&P meeting of the year going forward

ACTION POINT: include an agenda item at the next meeting to answer any queries arising from the end of year accounts

ACTION POINT: Chair/Town Clerk to clarify RBS guidance on accounting practices

124/22 REVIEW OF FINANCE REPORT

Members considered a draft financial reporting template and provided feedback:

- All agreed the fixed/flex/risk flags were helpful
- Whether to produce a colour coded overview report to highlight risk
- That the report would be helpful for all committees
- To consider the time it would take for the Town Clerk and/or officers to prepare additional reports for committees

RESOLVED: to review an updated template at the next meeting, incorporating the feedback received

125/22 EAR MARKED RESERVES

Members noted the Ear Marked Reserves for 2022/23.

Councillor Ross queried whether the figures were correct or complete; he didn't believe all Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments received were shown. He had made some alternative calculations and passed a document to the Town Clerk. The **Town Clerk** confirmed the report had been produced from the Town Council's accounting system and that the differences were likely a question of timing when reports were produced (i.e. when CIL payments had been received): for clarification, he asked Councillor Ross whether he was suggesting that the accounting system was wrong. All agreed it would not be possible to resolve Councillor Ross's concern at the meeting.

ACTION POINT: Councillor Ross to write to the Town Clerk, copying all Members, to set out his queries in detail

126/22 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Members noted the 2021/22 Internal Audit Report.

Comments included:

- Members believed the risk of its bank failing was small, but noted the advice about diversifying the placement of funds
- Whether to phase out the use of petty cash and replace it with debit cards
- Whether to consult with staff about phasing out the use of petty cash
- The Town Clerk agreed to provide a Petty Cash report for the next meeting
- Budgetary Control and Reserves – in the past the Town Council had worked to ensure it held general reserves of between 3-6 months of gross expenditure, assuming 6 months to be the maximum required. Point 3 in the audit report

mentioned 3-8 months being normal for a town council. Was this a typo, or had the recommendation changed?

RESOLVED: to consult with staff about phasing out petty cash within a year

127/22 PRECEPT SETTING TIMETABLE AND PROCESS

Members noted the timetable for precept setting for 2023/24.

All agreed that it would be helpful to offer an informal meeting to all Councillors in September ahead of the Precept setting process.

RESOLVED: to aid the preparation of the Precept for 2024/25, to schedule a 4-week gap between Finance & Policy Committee and Full Town Council Meetings in the autumn of 2023

128/22 SMALL GRANT SCHEME

Members considered three grant applications.

Members recognised that The Merchant's House was a significant asset to the town, and also that the cost of supporting it was significant. Recognising that there had been recent applications for different projects from The Merchant's House Trust, all agreed that, to preserve the availability of small grant funds for other organisations in the town, any allocation agreed to The Trust should not be funded from the Small Grant Scheme but could be funded from the Town Council's Heritage budget, as its aims and objectives were closely aligned with The Merchant's House (e.g. to provide a museum).

RESOLVED: (i) to award £2,000 to Marlborough Bowls Club to contribute towards the cost of laying a new floor

RESOLVED: (ii) to award £1,000 to the Merchant's House Trust to fund an upgraded hard-drive in support of the MODES archiving package; and that this be funded from the Heritage budget

RESOLVED: (iii) to award £1,000 to Sustainable Marlborough towards 'Marlborough's Great Big Green Week'

ACTION POINT: to keep the Heritage budget under review

129/22 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Members considered whether four places at the Finance and Policy Committee should be reserved for Committee Chairs in 2023/24.

Discussion points included:

- Whether this would limit Members' ability to join other Committees
- Whether this would prevent other Councillors from joining the F&P Committee
- Whether the place should be reserved for Committee representatives rather than specifically the Chair

- Whether to extend the Membership to 10 plus the Town Mayor
- Whether this would create conflict with the responsibilities of the Full Council that Standing Orders would need to be amended
- Whether to add a condition for all Chairs that they be obliged to attend F&P meetings as guests, rather being elected members
- Whether an alternative would be to hold separate meetings for Committee Chairs

RESOLVED: to recommend to Full Town Council that, starting 2023/24, all Committee Chairs would be asked to attend F&P meetings

130/22 RISK MANAGEMENT SCHEME

RESOLVED: to form a working party comprising **Councillors Thomas, Allen, Sheppard** and the **Town Clerk** to review the Risk Management Scheme

131/22 CIVIC EVENT PRACTICE REVIEW

Councillor Ross gave a verbal report expressing concerns about the organisation of, and behaviour of attendees at, civic events and his belief that, as the budget holder for Civic Events, the F&P Committee should also have the responsibility for planning them. Discussion points included:

- Whether to form a civic working party to plan civic events, where membership would not be limited to Councillors and officers but could include 4MI, clergy etc
- Whether the working party should be chaired by the Chair of F&P and membership be drawn from F&P members
- That there was nothing in the Scheme of Delegation stating the responsibility for this was devolved to the F&P Committee, and whether this was more a matter for Full Council?
- Scope: would one working party plan all events, or several working parties lead on different types of event?

RESOLVED: to recommend that Full Council consider whether to form a civic working group

132/22 WALL AT FIGGINS LANE

Members considered a request from the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee for funds up to £20K for remedial work to the boundary wall between Priory Gardens and Figgins Lane.

RESOLVED: that the A&OS Projects budget be allowed to overspend up to £20,000 to fund remedial works to the wall at Figgins Lane

The meeting closed at 9.29 pm

Signed: Date:

Chair