

# **CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL**

## **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting held at Pinetrees Community Centre, The Circle, Pinehurst, SN2 1QR  
on Tuesday 1 June at 7.00pm.

**Present** Cllr Kevin Small (Chair)  
Cllr Mick Lucas  
Cllr John Ballman  
Cllr Ray Ballman  
Cllr Paul Exell  
Cllr Steph Exell  
Cllr Javes Rodrigues  
Cllr James Yeowell

**Officers** Andrew Briggs (Estates Manager, Via Zoom)  
Andy Reeves (Parish Clerk)  
Jodie Smart (Head of Finance & Governance)

**Public** None

The Chair asked if all those present were content with the meeting being recorded for the purpose of sharing on the Parish Council social media and website. The majority of Members affirmed that they were content, so the meeting was recorded.

**FGP001** **Apologies**  
Apologies were received from Cllr D Patey (Vice Chair).

**FGP002** **Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensation**  
Cllr J Ballman declared an interest as Member of HBUF and the RSPB.

**FGP003** **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**  
The minutes of the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee meeting held on Tuesday 6 April 2021 were reviewed and approved as a correct record of the meeting with the amendment that Cllr P Exell be added to the Members present list.

**FGP004** **Transaction Logs**  
Members noted that the Government Procurement Card (GPC) transaction logs for April 2021 had been checked by Cllr S Exell and that there were no anomalies to be raised.  
It was agreed that Cllr P Exell would perform the monthly checks on the GPC transaction logs for the remainder of the municipal year.

**FGP005** **Budget Report - March 2021**  
Members noted the summary income and expenditure against budgets report to March 2021, a copy of which appears as Appendix A in the Minute Book.  
Cllr M Lucas stated that he was concerned about the shortfall in allotment income for the Churchward Avenue site. The Head of Finance & Governance explained that an amount of income had been moved to cover potential bad debt and invoicing errors and that any income yet received would increase the allotment income total.

Cllr J Rodrigues enquired about the increase in staffing costs and how that was recorded in the report. The Head of Finance & Governance explained that it formed part of the expenditure under the different cost centres.

Action: Head of Finance & Governance to circulate a detailed income and expenditure breakdown of staff costs to the committee on 2 June 2021.

**FGP006**      **Payments Lists**

Members noted the payment lists from March and April 2021, a copy of which appears as Appendix B in the Minute Book.

Cllr M Lucas asked for confirmation that the two payments to the Olive Tree were not duplicates. The Head of Finance & Governance confirmed that she had checked and that they related to two separate invoices.

**RESOLVED** to approve the payment lists from March and April 2021 totalling £203,047.30.

**FGP007**      **Ward Allowances**

Members noted the balances of Ward Allowances at 1 June 2021, a copy of which appears as Appendix C in the Minute Book.

There was some discussion around the urgency to use the Ward Allowances at the end of the financial year and that the funds would be subsumed into general reserves and used for the benefit of the parish in any case. Members also pointed out the benefits of having a set budget to use within a Ward for which the Member had been elected which could benefit those Parishioners directly.

**FGP008**      **Year-End Balance Write Offs**

Members noted the report of the Head of Finance & Governance regarding year-end balance write offs, a copy of which appears as Appendix D in the Minute Book.

**RESOLVED** to approve the year-end balance write offs as detailed in Appendix D.

*Cllr J Yeowell exited the meeting at 7.18pm*

**FGP009**      **Members Allowances**

Members noted the report of the Clerk regarding Members allowances, a copy of which appears as Appendix E in the Minute Book.

The Chair gave a brief explanation around the link between the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) recommendations and the fact that at budget setting, the Full Council had agreed to increase the budget in line with this recommendation.

*Cllr J Yeowell entered the meeting at 7.20pm*

There was some discussion around the magnitude of the proposed increase and that some Members felt that this would not be an appropriate decision after recently being elected. The majority of Members present agreed that they would not be happy with such a substantial increase.

There was also some discussion around what had prompted this report. The Chair confirmed that the IRP recommendation along with the Full Council decision to increase the budget for Member's allowances had prompted the report.

**RESOLVED** to make the following recommendation to Full Council on 16 June 2021:  
In line with Officers not having a pay rise in 2021/22, Council does not increase the Members Allowance in 2021/22.

**FGP010**      **20/21 Year-End Accounts**

Members noted the 20/21 year-end accounts prepared by the Head of Finance & Governance, a copy of which appears as Appendix F in the Minute Book.

There was some discussion around the value of assets held and whether the Parish Council were making best use of the assets. It was noted that during the Covid-19 pandemic many assets such as the newly refurbished kitchen at Pinetrees Community Centre had not been used to their full potential. However, it was hoped that they soon would be.

There was also some discussion around the decision making process of acquiring large value assets. The Chair confirmed that the capital programme had been approximately 90% Councillor led and 10% budget led. If Officers felt the need to acquire certain items they were well within their rights to make a recommendation, however the decision is that of the Council .

**RESOLVED** to recommend that the 20/21 year-end accounts as per Appendix F be approved at the Full Council meeting on 16 June 2021.

**FGP011**      **Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)**

Members noted section two of the AGAR as prepared by the Head of Finance & Governance, a copy of which appears as Appendix G in the Minute Book.

**RESOLVED** to recommend that section two of the AGAR, as per Appendix G be approved at the Full Council meeting on 16 June 2021.

**FGP012**      **Exclusion of Press and Public**

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with the provision of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations, the public and press be excluded during consideration of the following items on the basis of **Commercially Sensitive Matters**.

*The recording was switched off at 7.55pm*

**FGP013**      **Community Centre Debtors**

Members noted the report of the Head of Finance & Governance regarding Community Centre Debtors, a copy of which appears as Appendix H in the Minute Book.

The Clerk explained the process of rental charges for the Community Centres and that from time to time hirers fall into arrears and fail to pay their bills. There is a process in place, which is a pre collection protocol. In the past there have been only had two occasions where Council have had to go to this extreme and both were won without going to Court. At the start of lockdown it was agreed that Council would not have any collection processes during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. However, at the start of the easing of lockdown restrictions the Clerk asked the Head of Finance & Governance to start the debtor review and debt collection process.

The Clerk went on to discuss a particular regular hirer that had fallen into arrears of £6,031.56, some of which date back to 2018. This is the largest outstanding debt owed to the Council by a Community Centre hirer. Members discussed options of how to recover this debt. The Clerk confirmed that he had offered to accept £5,000.00, then allowing the regular hirer to use the facilities and pay the remaining £1,031.56 under a payment plan. However, the hirer had not responded to the latest communication.

**RESOLVED** that Members approve the elevation of credit control to Small Claims Court for outstanding debts of £1,500.00 or more, when all other efforts to recover monies have been exhausted.

**RESOLVED** that a maximum amount of credit should be agreed at £500.00 or three months use for regular bookers, whichever is highest.

**RESOLVED** that the debtor with £6,031.56 outstanding, be given until 13 June 2021 to pay £5,000.00 and then the matter should be progressed through the pre collection protocol to Small Claims Court if necessary. An update will be brought to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting and a decision on whether the booking slots should be cancelled will be made.

The meeting closed at 8.18pm

Signed.....

Date.....  
Chair of the Council