

# BUCKHURST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & ESTABLISHMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT 8.00 pm ON THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2023 AT BUCKHURST HILL LIBRARY, 165 QUEENS ROAD

### **PRESENT**

Cllrs: Mr M Vance (Chair)  
Mr R Kaul  
Mr A Weinberg

In attendance: Mrs C Carroll (Locum RFO)  
Mrs E Petyt-Start (Clerk)

### **14/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Mr D Saunders (Vice-Chair), Mr R Church, Mr S Heap

### **15/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members in any item on the agenda.

### **16/23 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 22 June 23, circulated, were approved and the Chairman authorised to sign them.

### **17/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

### **18/23 CHAIRMAN'S AND CLERK'S COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no communications.

### **19/23 FINANCE**

- I. To receive and consider a report of the Council's financial position to date. Received, to note the following:-
  - RFO will look at the IT systems in place and the relevance of what services we pay for are adequate for the staff.
  - Cllr Vance asked members to look at their cost centres ahead of the budget planning meeting in November and ensure anything is brought to the attention of the F&E committee when planning the budget for 24/25.
  - Cllr Vance had previously asked for clarity on the gardening contract but can confirm members are satisfied with the contract arrangements and the charges.
  - The RFO advised the Council that the rent on the office premises has been increased and the budget will now be overspent in this area.
  - Cllr Vance would like to see the 24/25 budget broken down in certain areas to enable transparency on spend when presented to members.
- II. To note list of payments for 1 June 23 – 31 August 23. Noted, with no additional comments made.
- III. To note estimated income for the Halls for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, July – September 2023. Noted with no additional comments made.
- IV. To note the bank reconciliation reports for 1 May – 31 July 23. Noted with no additional comments made.

**20/23 TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Cllr Vance thanked the Clerk for producing the terms of reference and committee members for their review. The two points to note were item 5 under objectives needs to have "financial" inserted to be clear that the points referred to are covered for financial purpose and again under "means" the word financial to be added to item 5. Item 9 to be removed. The Terms of Reference will be adopted at the next full council meeting.

**21/23 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON THE RENTAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND TOOLEY FOSTER**

Cllr Vance thanked the Clerk for the contract circulated following a request at the previous F&E to establish the contract arrangements with Tooley Foster (the landlord for the office premises). The members were informed that the rent increase communicated in August will be 23% mainly due to a valuation on the building and a amendment to the current market value. It was agreed that given the 23% increase and the hall premises that the Council own the Council will now look at these premises to establish whether moving the Council offices to one of the halls would be suitable. Cllr Weinberg expressed concerns that the current council offices are not accessible to the public.

**22/23 TO AGREE A MONTHLY INCREASE TO £25-30 ON PREVIOUS AGREEMENT FOR THE PARISH OFFICE MOBILE**

It was agreed that the RFO would be authorised to find a phone contract within the agreed budget to allow the Council to operate good governance and ensure no personal mobiles are used for any Council business.

**23/23 TO NOTE COUNCIL EXTERNAL AUDIT IS NOW COMPLETE AND CERTIFICATE HAS BEEN DISPLAYED AS NECESSARY**

Noted

**24/23 TO DISCUSS AND AGREE A WAY FORWARD FOR THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM THE NATWEST RESERVE ACCOUNT**

Following a report from the RFO detailing the poor rate of interest on the NatWest reserve account and the options for transferring the NatWest reserves to either a new account or existing account with NatWest offering a higher rate of interest. It was agreed by members that the funds should be moved within NatWest to a 95 day account paying 4.25%. The funds for the new playground would be separate to this account and remain in our Unity Trust account for easy access when the new playground is approved and funds are then required. Cllr Kaul advised the RFO that the notice period would need to be carefully monitored.

**25/23 TO AGREE COSTS FOR VALUATION SURVEY ON THE RODING VALLEY AND THE WOOLLARD CENTRE**

Members were presented with a quote from a local reputable company by the Clerk which has now been revised. Having spoken to members Council would like to receive the alternative quotes in order to make a decision on moving forward. The Clerk is pursuing the alternative quotes and will provide ahead of the September full council meeting where a decision can hopefully be made on the best way forward.

**26/23 REVIEW OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR**

The RFO confirmed that following the Council's request to rotate the internal auditor we will have a new auditor appointed for the 23/24 financial year end from our current provider Auditing Solutions. The RFO will continue to look at alternative auditors to consider in the next financial year.

**FINANCE AND ESTABLISHMENT ITEMS OF CONCERN**

(a) Cllr Weinberg expressed some concern that the Council was not doing

enough to reach out to all members of the community. The Clerk and were asked to consider how we can ensure we outreach all in the community.

- (b) Items requested for inclusion in the next F&E agenda:  
None.

There being no further business the Chairman thanked Members for attending and closed the meeting at 9.45 pm

Date .....

Chairman .....