

FOUR MARKS PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee
Held on Wednesday 31st January 2024 commencing at 12.00pm
This meeting was held at The Scout Hut, Four Marks**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllr Briggs (Chairperson), Cllrs McAllister and Pullen (R)
IN ATTENDANCE: Jo Tsigarides – Clerk
APOLOGIES: Cllrs Gebbet and Smith.
Louise Steele, Locum RFO.

24.01 FGP APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Cllr Gebbet (health issues) and Cllr Smith (work commitments) were given and duly accepted by the Committee. Louise Steele, Locum RFO, was also unable to attend and sent apologies.

24.02 FGP OPEN SESSION/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In terms of reporting, Cllr Pullen inquired about the best time to allocate any unspent funds from the general reserves and the Locum RFO would be consulted on this. The timing of the next Committee meeting would be dictated by this.

The open session ended at 12.05pm.

24.03 FGP DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24.04 FGP MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr McAllister, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was **RESOLVED to approve the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday 13th December 2023 as a true reflection of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.**

24.05 FGP FOR CONSIDERATION

24.05.1 To consider creating a separate budget line for Councillor services

Following a recent Councillor request, the Committee discussed creating a separate budget line for the approximate cost of Councillor services. The reasoning for this was that if at any point, Councillors were unable to undertake the voluntary tasks that they often do, they would have to be outsourced at a cost.

Following a discussion about the administration involved, how Councillors might feel undue pressure to assist with tasks and how it might be presented, it was felt that this was not something that should be proceeded with.

24.05.2 To review fees for sports and social clubs

A detailed review of the fees and charges specifically in relation to the Benians Committee and the Bowls Club took place considering recent energy price increases. It was decided that a discussion should take place between the clubs and Councillor representatives before a recommendation could be made. The Clerk would arrange these.

24.05.3 To allocate areas for asset register review

Cllr Pullen volunteered to complete the review of the asset register and will ask for assistance where necessary. It was suggested that 'What three words' could be used for the exact locations of the items, but the Committee did not wish to proceed with this.

24.06 PROCEDURE AND POLICY REVIEW

24.06.1 Review of effectiveness of internal control

The report provided by the Locum RFO was reviewed along with the accompanying action plan.

On the proposal of Cllr Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr McAllister, and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to recommend the review and action plan to the Full Council.

24.06.2 Review of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations

The Committee reviewed the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for recommendation to the Full Council. It was decided that Financial Regulation 4.5 should be amended to allow the Clerk delegated authority in an emergency of up to £5000 which will be authorised by the Chairperson/Vice Chair and one other Councillor. This figure reflects the delegated authority level of the standing Committees and seemed appropriate given the nature of works that are likely to be considered emergency works.

On the proposal of Cllr R Pullen, which was seconded by Cllr McAllister and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to recommend the circulated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations for adoption by the Full Council with an amendment to Financial regulation 4.5.

24.06.3 To review members code of conduct.

The members' Code of Conduct was reviewed, and no changes were suggested. This policy will be recommended for adoption by the Full Council.

24.06.4 To review volunteer policy for recommendation to Full Council

The Clerk discussed the need for a volunteer policy which would cover Councillors, general volunteers and those volunteering at the tennis courts and the drafted policy was reviewed. Cllr R Pullen had some suggestions, and it was agreed that he would 'track changes' and that this would become a working document.

24.07 FOR APPROVAL

24.07.1 Purchase of Office 365 business software

The Committee discussed upgrading the office software from the personal to business version which would give access to SharePoint and Teams amongst other benefits. The Clerk advised that the cost was £10.95 per month and it was suggested that a better price may be given for an annual subscription.

On the proposal of Cllr McAllister, which was seconded by Cllr R Pullen and with all Councillors in agreement, it was:

RESOLVED to subscribe to Office 365 Business through the most cost-effective plan.

24.08 Next meeting TBC.

24.09 Meeting closed at 1.10pm.