

## COOKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of an Inquorate Meeting of the FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Held in the Community Room on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022, commencing at 7.30pm**

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**PRESENT:** Cllr P. Roe (Chairman)  
Cllrs L. Austin, C. Doyle and M. Howard.

No members of the press or public were present.

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**Prior to the start of the meeting the Clerk made the attendees aware that this meeting of the Finance Committee was not quorate, 5 Committee members are required. The meeting continued with discussions, but no decisions could be made.**

**1. APOLOGIES:**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M. Brar, B. Perry and J Perry.  
Cllr I. Herd was not present.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Cllrs have signed a Grant of Dispensation regarding matters related to the setting of the Precept.

**3. TO CONSIDER AND APPROVE A DRAFT BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23 FOR RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL:**

Cllr Roe and the Clerk reviewed the draft budget in line with comments from the October Finance Committee meeting and committee requests. Under these proposals, total expenditure for the Council for 2023/24 would provisionally increase from £176k to £212k, which is a significant increase. A potential increase of 10% in the precept has been assumed in line with initial discussions at the October Finance Committee meeting giving a predicted end result of a deficit in 2023/24 of £16k.

The report was reviewed and Cllrs felt the draft budget, as presented, was acceptable for approval by Full Council, subject to a reduction of the cemetery lodge renovation works from £10,000 to £5,000, and a reduction in the precept increase to 5% in order to keep the council tax increase to residents low and proactively use surpluses in the general fund.

Strategic reserves will be reviewed in more detail at the March Finance cmte meeting. By which time more might be known about the Cemetery lodge project.

**4. TO PROPOSE THE PRECEPT REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23 FOR RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL:**

After a discussion about the budget and ongoing level of the general fund, Cllrs felt that a precept increase of 5% would be sufficient. There was an intension to utilise some of the funds in the general fund to help to reduce this to a figure more in line with best practice. This gives a provisional figure of £140,781 (Precept fin year 22/23 - £134,077 plus 5%). This will be recommended for approval at Full Council.

**5. CEMETERY LODGE: TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE RENEWAL OF THE LEASE AND THE SERVICE PROVISION FROM PROSPECT LETTING AGENTS:**

The communication with Prospect Letting Agents, formerly Wilkinson Estates, has been a bit patchy over the last 12 months. Cllr Howard has raised this matter with the Prospect Letting Team Manager and is waiting for an update which is due in the near future.

The matter of the renewal of the lease is awaiting input from Prospect. As discussed at the October finance Committee meeting, a representative of the Tenant had suggested that they would be prepared to work with CPC on redecorating costs. The Parish Council has requested a meeting with the Tenant to confirm the parameters of any offer, but the meeting had not been forthcoming. Cllr Howard to speak to Prospect Letting Agency. If there is no response about the redecoration plans, then Cllrs would like to raise the monthly rental amount to £1,600.

**6. CEMETERY LODGE: TO DISCUSS A PROJECT TO UPGRADE THE ENERGY PERFORMANCE OF CEMETERY LODGE DUE TO RENTAL REGULATION CHANGES REGARDING MINIMUM ENERGY EFFICIENCY STANDARDS DUE TO TAKE EFFECT BY 2028:**

Cllrs were in agreement to start information gathering on possible options, costs and consider a budget for the works to bring the energy performance rating for Cemetery Lodge to level C, which is anticipated to become the minimum level for a rental property. The matter will be discussed further at the next Finance Committee meeting in March.

As the old energy performance certificate ends in 2023, the Clerk will speak to Prospect Letting Agents to get a new one prepared.

**7. TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE RENEWAL OF THE LEASE FOR COOKHAM RISE PRIMARY SCHOOL, AND REGISTRATION WITH LAND REGISTRY:**

Cllr Howard has restarted talks with the school regarding the lease for a portion of the Alfred Major recreation ground that they use for the schools playing fields. Once the negotiations are complete the lease will be logged with Land Registry.

**8. TO REVIEW AND COMMENT ON THE ASSETS REGISTER:**

The asset's register needs to be updated following the changes in the equipment on the Alfred Major recreation ground following the play area installation project. The Clerk to update this.

**9. TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE OUTCOME OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY CLAIM 2022/23, WHICH IS TO BE BACKDATED TO 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2022, WITH A CHANGE TO HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT FROM 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2023:**

The outcome of the 2022/23 pay claim and increase in holiday entitlement was acknowledged. The salary increase, (£1,925 on all NJC pay point) will be backdated to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022, and the agreed increase in holiday entitlement by 1 day for all employees, will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

The Clerk ask how the re-evaluation of the Clerks role was progressing. Cllr Howard said he had been in correspondence with the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), Local Council Consultancy (LCC) team regarding this matter. The Clerk asked for copies of the communication on this topic and to be included on future emails.

**The meeting closed at 8.40pm.**