



Notice of Finance Committee meeting

**A Meeting of Dodderhill Parish Council Finance Committee will be held on
Wednesday 17th April 2024 commencing at 18.00h**

Pools and Gardens Ltd shop, Walkmills Farm, A38 Wychbold, WR9 0DH.

Venue Directions: travelling towards Droitwich on A38, first access on the right after M5 j5 – follow the drive and the shop is the first long brick building on the left-hand side. There is plenty of parking anywhere in the yards, either directly outside the doors or opposite on the block paving. The area will be lit.

The meeting is open to members of the public who may ask questions during item 5 relating to matters on the agenda, however this is not an opportunity for open debate with the committee and will be managed by the committee Chair. If the meeting is required to discuss confidential matters relating to any of staff, legal matters or contractual commercial sensitivity, it will be closed to members of the public, as indicated at agenda item 14.

Summons

All members of the Finance Committee are summoned to attend this meeting to transact the business on the agenda set out below.

Gill Lungley

Gill Lungley FSLCC
Clerk / RFO

04/04/2024

AGENDA

- 1. Election of Chair and Chair's Welcome.**
- 2. To note any apologies for absence.**
- 3. To receive declarations of interest and decide upon any request for dispensation.**
- 4. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held 13/03/2024, pages 3 - 6.**
- 5. Public Participation – members of the public are invited to speak.**
- 6. To review the council's accounts at the end of the 2023/24 financial year, including a review of budget performance for the year; the final bank reconciliation, explanation of variances (if any) and preparations for the completion of the 2023/24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).**
- 7. To review the committee's Terms of Reference for approval at the Annual Parish Council Meeting in May 2024; suggested amendments circulated separately.**
- 8. To consider the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2023/24 accounts for ratification by the full council on 22/04/2024; four quotations have been received, page 7.**

9. To receive an update on the council's response to the External Auditor in relation to the 2022/23 accounts.
10. To receive an update on the council's budget for 2024/25.
11. To revise and agree the procedure for making payments.
12. To note the position relating to the council's Asset Register.
13. To note the Clerk / RFO's update on outstanding matters.
14. **TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (if deemed necessary)**
To resolve that by the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting on the grounds the business to be discussed involves the likely disclosure of confidential information as defined in the Act.
15. **Date, time and venue of next meeting – to be agreed.**

Finance Committee members:
Cllr N Edge, Cllr P Evans, Cllr N O'Leary
Cllr J Harrigan and Cllr S Howarth *ex officio*

FINAL DRAFT MINUTES

Minutes of Dodderhill Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting held at Pools and Gardens Limited, Wychbold 6pm on 13 March 2024

Committee Members present: Cllr Peter Evans (Chair) - PE
Cllr Norma Edge – NE, Cllr Jo Harrigan – JH, Cllr Nora O’Leary - NO
Cllr Sue Howarth (ex-officio - Chair of DPC) – SH

Apologies: Gill Lungley – Temporary Clerk/RFO (GL)

The meeting was quorate.

Minutes taken by Ann Davidson (on voluntary basis)

NOTE: For appropriate confidential and sensitive items the Public bodies ACT 1960 can be used for discussions in camera. The Act was not implemented during this meeting and therefore no separate confidential notes were recorded.

Agenda Items for Discussion

1. Chair’s Welcome

- PE thanked the Committee members for the considerable amount of detailed work being carried out.
- Nine months into the new Council, not all finance matters prior to the election are yet resolved.
- PE stated that although “Any Other Business” had been removed from the agenda, as Chair, he was happy for the Committee to discuss any minor updates and to make any minor decisions which enabled other matters to progress. Any lengthy item, if not urgent, would be carried forward to the next agenda.

2. Apologies for Absence

- As noted above.

3. Declarations of interest and to decide upon any request for dispensation

- None.

4. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 February 2024

- The minutes from 14 February 2024, first draft previously approved by email by the Committee, were formally ratified as an accurate record of the meeting. **Vote:** to ratify the minutes as a record of the meeting: For: 3, Abstentions: 2. PE formally signed off a copy of the minutes to confirm ratification.

5. Public Participation

- No members of the public were in attendance.

6. To review and approve bills now due for payment

- NO presented four payments to be approved:
 - Voucher 150 - Play equipment annual inspection £273.60
 - Voucher 151 - Play equipment check £76.80
 - “ “ - Lengthsman £102.30
 - Voucher 152 - Locum Clerk £181.73
- The above payments are those presented at the time of the meeting. Further payments are expected to come in shortly, which will require approval.

- **Vote:** to agree payment of the above bills – For: Unanimous.

7. General financial matters for current and future discussion

- A38 VAS – (Police and Crime Commissioner) – the grant has been approved subject to one more document being provided by another Councillor – which needs to be done by the end of March. Use of the grant will need to be considered at a full Council meeting together with consideration of placement, such as on opposite sides of the A38 on the approaches to the village, with approval from Worcestershire County Council Highways.
- Community Legacy Grant Open Spaces Project – an application has been submitted for £50,000 and has moved on to the next stage. DPC to make a funding contribution of £5,000 from earmarked reserves. **Action: SH** to liaise with the working party. **Action: PE** to contact the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to obtain further information to progress possible support.
- Village Hall – this is a separate matter being progressed.
- Biodiversity and implication – DPC has adopted a policy whereby any decisions made have to consider the environment and sustainability. It is hoped to develop this policy in the future by working with local groups.
- Access road to Village Hall and Playing Fields - pothole repairs will be carried out tomorrow. The gate will be closed until after the weekend to ensure the surface settles.

8. Bank Accounts with HSBC - update

- Work ongoing.

9. Bank Accounts with Unity Trust - update

- Both accounts have healthy balances.
- A form has been submitted for the Temporary Clerk to become the key contact to receive statements.

10. FSCS – update

- **Action: PE** will issue an information paper to the Committee to set out the options available in order to spread balances and maximise return (DPC should have no more than £85,000 in any one organisation).
- Discussion followed regarding different options available, such as a 3-Month Bond at 4.9% (renewable every 3 months), a 40-day notice account at 3.75% (does not need renewing) and a long term Bond.
- **Vote:** to agree for PE to open a United Trust Bank 40-day notice account as soon as possible and look at opening a 3-Month Bond at a later date. For: 4, Abstention: 1 (PE). Vote carried, with PE to confirm the proposal by email.
- Having sought advice from various sources, PE advised that there is some confusion regarding determining DPC's legal status regarding deposits – limited company, trust, charity, authority?

11. HMRC – update

- No further progress. GL is investigating.

12. To confirm the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2023/24 accounts

- GL has contacted GAPTC and is awaiting a response.

13. Public Inspection 2023 – update

- This matter is ongoing.

14. Budget 2023/24 – review performance

- Overall the budget, at present, is in a favourable situation with regard to this year's budget.
- PE thanked NE for all the work she has done to provide budget information for the Finance Committee.

15. Budget 2024/25 and Precept – update re submission/monthly summary sheet

- A monthly financial summary document will be provided to the full Council at the start of the next financial year.

16. Consideration of communication to the residents of the precept and other matters

- An item will be included on the agenda for the next full Council meeting to communicate the rationale for the 2024/25 budget.
- This communication should also include an update on areas which are being addressed by the Council including access road to the village hall, grant/s, speeding signs - VAS sign and stickers, orchard.
- **Action: SH** to investigate who is responsible for issuing a communication.

17. Internal Audit - update

- Action points from the internal audit in April 2023 are being progressed.

18. External Audit – update

- AGAR challenge - this item will be included on the agenda for next week's full Council meeting.
- This item is time limited and will need to be approved at the meeting.

19. Bank Accounts Reconciliation - update

- To be completed on Scribe as part of the year end process.

20. Asset Register – review

- DPC has still not been allowed access to the Village Hall to complete the exercise.
- The matter is not yet resolved.

21. Terms of Reference of Finance Committee

- This is a standing item - no changes at present.

22. Finance Administration Process – commence review

- To be progressed following the appointment of a new Clerk.

23. TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (if deemed necessary)

- No members of the press and public attended the meeting.

24. Any Other Business

- Residents Association – would like to apply for a grant for the Summer Fete. **Vote for process:** Once an application has been received this should be discussed at a full Council meeting to approve or otherwise and, if approved, to agree a maximum grant and then delegate to the Finance Committee. For: Unanimous.

25. Date of Next Meeting - confirmation

- 6.00pm on Wednesday, 10 April, 2024 at Pools and Gardens Ltd, Wychbold.

26. Closure of Meeting by 2000hrs

- There being no further items to discuss, the meeting closed at 1915hrs.

PE thanked Pools and Gardens Ltd for their kind support to the community in allowing the meeting to take place on their premises free of charge.

Appointment of Internal Auditor for 2023/24 accounts.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, state at section 5:

“Internal audit 5.—

(1) A relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.”

It is accepted practice for the Internal Auditor to be both competent and independent of the council.

Since 2022 the Internal Audit Forum (IAF) www.internalauditforum.org.uk has provided a list of internal auditors, three of which were contacted. The parish council’s previous Internal Auditor was also invited to quote for the 2023/24 internal audit.

DPC’s receipts and payments totals for the year do not exceed £100,000.

The quotes received are from, in alphabetical order, DKE Audit, Helen Dubois, GAPTC (previous year’s internal auditor) and PATAS via Microshade vsm. Identified below in no particular order only as A, B, C and D.

	Summary of work.
A	<p>Cannot start until May. Works remotely.</p> <p>MO: provides an engagement letter confirming the details of the service to be provided and the agreed deadlines, to be signed by the council’s Chair and returned. Will then send a checklist to complete and return, along with any requested documentation. At the end of the audit, the Council is provided with the signed Internal Audit Annual Report from the AGAR and a report of IA’s findings/recommendations.</p>
	Cost: for budget up to £100,000: £390.00
B	<p>Time wise, main time slot availability is weeks 6th and 13th May.</p> <p>MO: To focus on 2023-24 looking back only to aid this year’s work following the AGAR - AIAR requirements, comment wider where appropriate.</p>
	Cost: £25 per hour up to 25 hours (plus mileage).
C	<p>MO: Will consider the following matters and report any areas which do not meet the required standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish whether proper accounting records have been kept by the Council; • Establish whether the Council’s Receipts and Payments Accounts and supporting statements agree with the accounting records and returns; • Establish whether all the information and explanations have been obtained which are thought necessary for the purpose of the audit. <p>Going forward for 2024/25 financial year, due to Council size recommends at least two internal audits are undertaken per annum going forward. If agreed the charge would reduce be £295 per visit with £25 mileage charge per visit. The total cost for two visits in 2024/25 would be £640 inclusive of mileage.</p>
	Cost: Initial fee would be £325 to include a site visit to bring up to speed and undertake the end of year annual internal audit for the Council with an additional mileage charge of £25
D	<p>MO: On receiving the appointment, will endeavour to assign an Independent Auditor in close proximity to the council. Contact will be made to arrange a visit / receipt of specified documents, ASAP. The Auditor will conduct a thorough review.</p> <p>Following this, the report is sent to both Clerk and Chairman with the invoice. Should further interim reviews be required, arrangements and fees will need to be discussed. The Internal Auditor will arrange the necessary completion of Section 4 of the Annual Return for Local Councils with the RFO.</p>
	Cost: For budget less than £200,000: £245.00 to £275.