

Minutes of a meeting of the **FINANCE and GENERAL PURPOSES** Committee held in the Council Offices, Pine Grove, Crowborough on Tuesday 18th June 2024 at 7.30pm

Present	Councillors	Peter Bucklitsch Suzanne Dixon* Martyn Everitt Martyn Garrett David Hedges Kay Moss Matthew Street Neil Waller Natalie Whittle	Vice-Chairman Chairman
Also present		Melanie Street Karen Whiley	Deputy Town Clerk Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

No members of the public present

*Denotes non attendance

APOLOGIES

Cllr Suzanne Dixon

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

MINUTES

Minutes of the meetings held on 30th April and 14th May 2024

- 10577 RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings held on 30th April and 14th May 2024 as confirmed be ratified by the Chairperson.

FINANCE

To note the Finance Report and supporting appendices and agree any action

To note F&GP's current income and expenditure against budget and Earmarked Reserves

The Income and Expenditure was noted.

The Earmarked Reserves were noted, and it was agreed all were still required.

To review the Internal Auditors report

The Internal Auditors report was noted. Members discussed the auditors observation regarding the General Reserves and whether to recommend the transfer of £150,000 to the Pine Grove Earmarked Reserve (EMR). The internal auditor had made this suggestion to the RFO as the Pine Grove building receives profit share from its tenant and has incurred significant unplanned expenditure in recent years, but currently only has a small fund available for works.

It was agreed that officers would provide the committee with an outline of any potential future works for Pine Grove with some estimated costs for its next meeting so that it could better consider whether more funds are required in the Pine Grove EMR.

A member enquired whether the Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) funds from 2019/20 noted in the auditor's report were still available as CiL funds have to be spent with 5 years of receipt. The RFO confirmed these were spent by council earlier in the year and that the funds noted were dated at the end of the previous financial year. The RFO confirmed that CiL spending is published on the council's website as part of the Transparency page.

A member enquired about the insurance value listed for Pine Grove. The RFO explained that the figure is provided by the insurance company and is different to the asset value. Building assets are revalued every five years and the council is currently halfway through this period. The member asked if it was possible to get the site revalued and the Chair explained there would be a cost involved in a revaluation. It was agreed that the RFO contact the insurance company to ask how it calculates the insurance value of the building.

A member enquired about the auditors recommendation to contact East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) with regard to the Wolfe Recreation Ground Pavilion.

Cllr Kay Moss declared a personal interest as a director of ESALC.

The RFO explained that the council has already sought VAT advice, and this is a complex area. It was noted that the external audit will be completed next month, and this should bring some clarity to the situation. The RFO will report back to the next meeting.

Members noted that the Internal Auditors report was complimentary to the council and its practices.

10578 RESOLVED to note the committee was very pleased with the content of the report and issued its thanks to the RFO and all officers involved.

To approve the recommendation of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2023/24 to Full Council

The committee had previously approved Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement and recommended it to Full Council (Resolution 10495, 30.04.2024).

The committee noted that the figures reported in Section 2 included all transactions involving the Trusts as recommended by the Internal Auditor. The figure in Box 9 for year ended 31st March 2023 had been restated since the draft version presented on 30th April 2024 to reflect the identified additions and disposals.

- 10579 RESOLVED** to approve Section 2 and recommend the Annual Governance and Accountability Return to Full Council with the noted amendment.

To note the latest information on Insurance Claims

The information was noted.

POLICIES

To review the following policies and agree any action

Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme

The policy was reviewed. It was agreed to correct the spelling error in item 1 to state, 'Data Protection Act' and amend item 4.1 to state, 'Deputy Town Clerk'.

- 10580 RESOLVED** to accept the Freedom of Information Policy with the noted amendments.

The Publication Scheme was reviewed. Members considered the costs involved in photocopying requested documents. A member asked officers to check that any byelaws are available on the website as this was not stated on the scheme.

- 10581 RESOLVED** to accept the Publication Scheme as presented.

Recording of Public Meetings

The committee reviewed the policy and agreed to remove item 2.3 as it was in opposition to the Openness Regulations. For the sake of clarity, items 2.6 and 2.7 will be moved directly after item 2.2.

- 10582 RESOLVED** to accept the Recording of Public Meetings Policy with the noted amendments.

CiL Spending Policy

In response to a member enquiry, the RFO confirmed that CiL funds are now presented by year on the Earmarked Reserves spreadsheet, so it is possible to see what is being spent from each year's funds.

- 10583 RESOLVED** to accept the CiL Spending Policy as presented.

Fixed Asset Policy

A member stated that the policy implies the Asset Register is published on the website. The RFO confirmed that it was published on the website with the agenda documents of 30th April 2024. It was agreed that the document would be placed on the website as an individual document as this would be easier for members of the public to locate.

10584 RESOLVED to accept the Fixed Asset Policy as presented.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

A member expressed concern about the energy bills for Goldsmiths Recreation Ground. The RFO informed the committee that a new smart meter is being installed in the next few weeks. The Chair suggested this is monitored to see what it shows.

A member asked if it is possible for the card readers to be available for use at CrowFest. The RFO explained that officers had experienced difficulties in the registration of the system as it had required personal information which would affect their personal credit rating. The RFO agreed to investigate this further.

EXEMPT BUSINESS

To note the confidential Aged Debt report

10585 RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reasons of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

The Aged Debt Report was noted. It was agreed that the RFO send the most significant, longstanding debtor a letter stating the council will now be taking legal action to recover the debt.

The meeting closed at 8.22pm.