

KESSINGLAND PARISH COUNCIL



Minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee Meeting on Wednesday 23rd August 2023 held in the Council Chamber, Marram Green

Members present: Councillors N. Glendinning, I. Graham, A. Green (Chair),
B. Saunders & L. Truman

Others present: None

Clerk to the Meeting: N. Coleby (Clerk) & D. Blowers (Admin/Committee Clerk)

34. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and explained the meeting protocol.

35. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Cllr McLean with acceptance proposed by Cllr Truman which was seconded by Cllr Saunders with all in favour.

36. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests from councillors on items on the Agenda and to note that there are no written requests for dispensations for Disclosable Pecuniary Interests nor dispensations granted.

37. Governance

37.1 The draft Defibrillator Policy will be deferred until the next meeting

37.2 It was noted that the next policy working group will be held at 10am, 5th September 2023.

38 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee meetings held on the 28th June and 2nd August 2023 had been circulated. It was noted that Cllr McLean had identified an error in the minutes of the 28th June at the previous meeting however that error had been with relation to seconding a proposal and had been deferred until this meeting to enable the original staff notes of the meeting to be checked. Fortunately staff notes of meetings are retained until the minutes have been approved so the correction was able to be made and those corrected minutes have been brought to committee for approval. Cllr Graham proposed approval of both sets of minutes and Cllr Saunders seconded with all in favour.

39 Banking

It was noted that due to the delays in completing the 2022-23 financial year, the new accounts system is just being set up and reports could not be run. The staff are currently undergoing training on the system and aim to have the system set up and all information input by the October meeting at the latest so that this information can be provided. This applies to items on the agenda, 39.1, 39.2, 39.4, 39.5, 39.6 and 39.7.

- 39.3 It was noted there were ongoing issues with one of the council's banks and was therefore considered writing to them advising that we are closing the account.
- 39.8 It was noted that because of the funds spent on parish improvements it has been decided that there is no need to open additional deposit accounts at this time.
- 39.9 It was noted that once Parish Council has considered the recommendation to add Cllr Glendinning to the signatories then this will be actioned.

40 Accounts and Budget

It was noted that the councils new finance system is currently being set up. Item number 40.3 will be dependent on completion of items 40.1 and 40.2.

41 Audit

- 41.1 It was noted that having resolved the issue with the shutdown of the 2022-23 accounts a further difficulty was discovered which caused a further delay to the start of the internal audit. Unfortunately it was discovered that every link to documents on the website prior to January of this year took the viewer to a holding page for the old website. On top of this some of the layout of the website turned out not be user friendly when following links. Indeed some uploaded information was not accessible by our internal auditor. However, with a lot of hours of work, the council section of the website is up to date with all areas accessible.
- 41.2 It was noted that the internal audit is currently underway and hoped that it should be able to be completed next week. The auditor is going through all the information uploaded to them as well as all the information on the website. It is anticipated that they will come back to ask for various information or documents to provide evidence and verification of the accounts etc. Once the internal audit report is received, an EGM of the council will be called if necessary to receive the report and then it can be sent to the external auditor. It is likely that the council will have to pay some additional costs due to the lateness of the accounts.
- 41.3 Councillors noted that this situation has arisen due to a set of circumstances which were unique and would have been hard to predict. The impact of the decision to change the council's website last year and the delegation of the set-up of the new site to a member of staff who subsequently left was not felt until audit preparations were in the final stages. The fact that the billing year for the council's accounts system did not match the financial year and the refusal to extend the contract to cover until the end of the financial year because the council decided to move to a new system, followed by the withdrawal of support for the end of year closedown left the council in an awkward position. On top of that, the fact that the council had to change Internal Auditors due to the retirement of the council's auditor added another layer of complexity. It should be noted that both SALC and Scribe the new auditors and accounts system have been supportive and helpful through this process. Whilst they noted that the amount of work that the office does is continuing to grow as the council increases its activities on behalf of the community. Councillors expressed

concern but understood how the regarding the current situation has come about however they felt that the Personnel Committee should consider whether additional hours or other options would help spread the workload. Cllr Saunders proposed that a Personnel Committee meeting to consider office support should be organised ASAP. This was seconded by Cllr Truman with all in favour. It was also noted that the following week the Clerk would be the only office staff member in and therefore Cllr Green proposed that the office should be shut for that week to enable to Clerk to concentrate on any matters relating to the audit and also the set up of the new financial system. This was seconded by Cllr Saunders with all in favour.

42 Payments

42.1 There was only one payment to consider and approve for authorisation as detailed with the RFO's monthly report.

43 Other financial matters

43.1 CIL

Nothing to note.

43.2 Expenditure

It was noted that a meeting was held with East Suffolk Services regarding the ground's maintenance, play equipment and waste contracts. The meeting went well and a quote is expected soon. As the grass cutting costs were in line with those of the council's previous provider, it was agreed that the contract would start in order that necessary works take place however if final quotes are received before this meeting, then they will be in place before the meeting for consideration and a recommendation to parish council. If they are not then they will go direct to parish council.

43.3 This matter was dealt with in the confidential session of item 47.1.

43.4 Financial accounts system

It was noted that the set-up of the new accounting system is underway and Scribe are providing support.

43.5 Office Mobile Phone

This matter was dealt with in the confidential session of item 47.2.

43.6 IT Security

This item was dealt with in the confidential session of item 47.3.

44 Compass Suite, Marram Green

An update on the status of the Compass Suite Trust's dissolution was received and two signatures are still needed for the transfer to complete.

45 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be the 10.00am on Wednesday 27th September 2023.

46 Items for the next agenda

It was noted that items for the next agenda need to be with the Clerk by 5pm on the 14th September 2023.

47 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Cllr Graham proposed that in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 (Sections 100 and 102), the public and press be excluded for the remaining items of business due to the confidential

nature of the business to be transacted including contractual and personnel related matters. This was seconded by Cllr Saunders with all in favour.

48 **Close of Meeting**

This meeting closed at 12.25pm.