

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee
held in the Town Hall on Wednesday 28 February 2024**

Present Councillor R Hopkinson (Chair)
Councillors S Abbott, H Belcher OBE, T Ellis, A Jones and G Ward

In Attendance Councillor A Brown
Mrs M Jones (Head of Finance and Administration)
D Martin (Chief Executive)

F&A 34/23 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors J Brook and R Williams.

F&A 35/23 Public Question Time and Petitions

A representative of Fairtrade Corsham attended the meeting in person and asked the Committee to support their grant application.

F&A 36/23 Declarations of Interest

To receive any Declaration(s) of Interest under Corsham Town Council's Code of Conduct issued in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Councillor S Abbott declared a non-pecuniary interest in Fairtrade Corsham as an active member of Fairtrade Corsham and T Ellis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Fairtrade Corsham as Corsham Town Council's (reserve) representative of Fairtrade Corsham (*Agenda Item 5 Grant Applications*). They remained in the room during the discussion and decision on the item.

F&A 37/23 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Finance and Administration Committee meeting held on 13 December 2023

There were no matters arising.

F&A 38/23 Grant Applications (Sixth Round)

One grant application was considered.

Resolved

That Fairtrade Corsham be awarded £750 towards activities to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Fairtrade in the UK, including part of the cost of hosting a visit by a Fairtrade Tea Farmer in Kenya. £245.67 of the funds would be from the grants earmarked reserve (EMR 370) and £504.33 from the 2024/25 grants budget.

F&A 39/23 Detailed Income and Expenditure Accounts (including the Town Hall)

The Committee reviewed and noted the Income and Expenditure Accounts, Financial Report and the breakdown of Earmarked Reserves. The Chief Executive reported that urgent stone wall repairs at Middlewick Allotments had been commissioned due to safety concerns. The cost of just over £10,000+VAT would mainly be met from earmarked reserves.

F&A 40/23 Internal Audit Report 2023/24 (Interim Update)

A copy of the report from the interim visit was considered. There were two recommendations arising from the interim update report, which related to hanging basket income and the burial register:

‘R2 - ...an effective cross-referencing of the receipt of hanging basket fees due should be implemented by inclusion of the invoice numbers in both the control spreadsheet and Omega nominal income code.’

‘R3 - To reduce the risk of any recording oversight in the official Burial Register, interment details should be recorded on or as soon as possible thereafter the date the interment occurs, rather than await receipt of the fees due to the Council.’

The Chief Executive and Head of Finance and Administration had prepared the following draft responses:

R2 – *‘From April 2024, the invoice numbers will be entered against the payments on the Omega accounting system.’*

R3 – *‘This procedure had now been implemented.’*

Resolved

That the draft responses to the Internal Audit Report 2023/34 (Interim Update) be endorsed.

F&A 41/23 Annual Review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Terms of Reference

The annual review had been completed. Changes incorporated since the previous review were:

- i) Changing Chairman to Chair throughout the documentation
- ii) SO 5.3 – Change of meeting time from 7.30pm to 7.00pm
- iii) SO 18.6.1 and 18.6.2 – Thresholds updated to reflect SI 2023 No. 1117

Resolved

That the Full Council be recommended to note the recent changes to the Town Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

F&A 42/23 Mileage Allowance for Using a Bicycle for Business Journeys

As part of the Town Council’s commitment to reducing carbon emissions, it had been suggested that a rate of 20p per mile be introduced for using a personal bicycle instead of a car for work purposes. The rate is in line with HMRC’s guidance on expenses and benefits. Any higher rate would be taxable.

Resolved

That the mileage allowance for using a bicycle for business journeys be approved.

F&A 43/23 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved

That the press and public (including anyone attending online) be excluded from the meeting for the next item of business in order to consider confidential personal information covered by the Data Protection Act 2018.

F&A 44/23 Staffing Update

The Chief Executive provided details of a confidential staffing issue for the Committee to consider. The Town Council’s HR advisors had been assisting in the matter.

Resolved

That, in consultation with the Town Council’s HR advisors, Chair of Council, Committee Chair and Vic-Chair, the Chief Executive be authorised to deal with the staffing matter through to resolution.

The meeting commenced at 7pm and closed at 7.50pm. There was one member of the public present at the start of the meeting and none at the end.

CHAIR

DATE