

FELSTED PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 24th November 2021 at 5.00 pm by Zoom video conference.

- Present** Councillors Roy Ramm (Chair), Frances Marshall, John Moore and Graham Harvey.
- F21/61 **Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**
There were no Apologies or Declarations of Interest.
- F21/62 **Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2021**
The Minutes of the meeting were approved. They will be signed by the Chairman when the committee next meets in person.
- F21/63 **Matters arising from the previous Minutes (not covered elsewhere on this Agenda)**
Councillor John Moore queried if anything further had been received from the external auditors or if any action was required. The RFO confirmed that nothing had been received to date and that at present the Council had to wait for the External Auditors final report. Councillor John Moore also noted that the Finance Committee had agreed that any non-essential spending should be deferred and expenditure closely monitored. Councillor Roy Ramm noted that the Finance Committee was unanimous in agreement and prudence was required to allow re-accumulation of reserves.
- F21/64 **Bank Reconciliation and PAYE Records**
The bank reconciliations will be reviewed and signed by the Chair and Cllr Frances Marshall at their next meeting with the RFO.
- F21/65 **Review of Accounts for current Year to Date**
Members studied the budget comparison prepared by the RFO (appended on page 4) and noted the following items:

Income:

- Magazine advertising and donations were estimated to come in around £7,160 lower than budgeted due to the move from monthly to quarterly publication.

Expenditure:

- Salary and Expenses costs were estimated to come in around £2,400 over budget. The RFO noted that some of this excess was offset by reductions in other line items as the Clerk and Assistant Clerk had paid for inks / stationery and had paid for a number of items (eg. Christmas Tree lights) directly and been reimbursed.
- Administration costs were forecast to come in £7,327 lower than budget, primarily due to the move to quarterly publication of the Felsted Focus.
- Maintenance, Repairs and Upkeep were estimated to come in around £13,750 higher than budgeted, primarily as a result of the rollover of the works to remove the Copper Beach tree in the church yard being expected to be completed in the previous budget year and thus not included in the current budget, the pay increase for the village attendant and pavilion repairs as authorised F21/51.
- Projects are estimated to come in around £23,505 higher, again due to the rollover of final works on the Crix Green Mission Hall project which has now been completed and the creation of a passing place in Jolly Boys Lane North which was unbudgeted.

Councillors discussed the rate of pay for the village attendant following on from a review by the HR Committee. It was agreed that even with the pay increase previously awarded that the rate of pay was low. It was noted that regular gardeners were charging around £22 per hour (and upto £25 if using their own tools). It was also noted by Councillor Richard Silcock that the village attendant is essentially available at all hours. The members of the committee agreed that in the event the village attendant was to resign replacement services would be considerably more expensive. It was proposed and unanimously agreed to accept a further increase in pay to £20 per hour effective from 1st December.

The committee agreed that given existing and potential budgetary pressures, unless spending was essential it should be deferred and that expenditure vs budget should be closely monitored during the year.

F21/66

Final Consideration of 2022-23 Budget and Precept for proposal to Full Council

The RFO noted that due to the potential increase of the Clerk and Assistant Clerk's hours it would be better to finalise the budget and Precept recommendation after the 1st December Full Council meeting when this had been decided.

It was agreed to review and agree all budget items excluding the Clerk and Assistant Clerks pay (including PAYE/NI and pension contributions which would also change as a result of a change in their hours).

The RFO would also present the draft budget with the Clerk and Assistant Clerks hours unchanged to Full Council at the 1st December meeting and also prepare an assessment of the impact of a change of hours on the budget.

The draft budget for 2022-23 (appended on page 4) with no change to hours was considered by members. It was noted that the budget contains specific one off expenses, specifically:

- £6,000 budgeted for internal repairs to the Pavilion.
- £2,000 budgeted for estimated costs of consultants to advise on the doctors surgery.

While the budget as drafted shows a deficit of approximately £5,400 members agreed that without the one off expenses noted above there would be a surplus on the budget of £2,600. The suggestion for the Precept value was an increase of 4.2% rather than a larger increase to cover the cost of one off major works. With no major works anticipated in coming years the future budget surpluses would allow the rebuilding of the councils reserve position.

It was noted that any increase in hours for the Clerk and Assistant Clerk would be an additional cost to the budget and that the precept would need to be increased by an equal amount to offset this and leave the running surplus unchanged. This would result in a large one off increase in the precept followed by expected inflation linked increases in future years. Councillor Frances Marshall noted that the increase in hours was to correct an historic issue where the previous clerk was working more hours than she was being paid for and this had combined with an increased workload on the Clerk and Assistant Clerk due to an increase in the regulatory burdens and the size of the Parish. It was noted that neither the Clerk nor Assistant Clerk had asked for an increase in hours but had flagged at their annual appraisals that their workload was exceeding their contracted hours.

The budget would be finalised and the Precept recommendation set at the Finance Committee meeting on 12th January 2022 in order to recommend the budget and Precept level for Full Council consideration and approval at the 12th January 2022 Full Council meeting.

F21/67

Pavilion Repair Update

The RFO informed members that the repairs to the pavilion roof had been completed and the invoice paid as approved by the Finance Committee at the previous meeting (F21/51).

F21/68

Review of conduct of future finance committee meetings

It was agreed by majority of the committee that the coming Finance Committee meeting due on 12th January 2022 would be held by Zoom. This would be reviewed at each Finance Committee meeting going forward. It was also proposed that a face to face meeting be arranged for Spring 2022.

F21/69

Any urgent matters and proposals for future agenda items

21/69.1 Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Councillor Richard Silcock informed the Finance Committee that the Felsted Events Committee had agreed to make a donation to cover the cost of all the events to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee which would be organised by the Council. The initial invoices for the hire of marquees would be sent on for approval for payment at the coming Full Council meeting and the RFO would note that these were specifically to be reimbursed by the Felsted Events Committee as would future invoices related to the Platinum Jubilee.

21/69.2 Electric Car Charging Points

Councillor Richard Silcock shared the findings of his research into the possibility of the installation of electric charging points in the village. Costs would range from £6k to £8k with limited grants available. Given the long payback time and the deferral of non-essential spending it was agreed to review this potential project at a later date. Councillor Roy Ramm noted that electric charging points would be installed for the new houses and the Doctors surgery on the Bury Farm site when this was completed.

F21/70

Next meeting

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.

The next meeting will be held on 12th January 2022 at 6pm by Zoom.

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Chairman

Dated

F21/65 - Review of Accounts for current Year to Date

FPC - Budget Comparison to 29 October 2021

	Budget 2021-22		Actual 2021-22		Year End Estimate		YE Estimate - Budget		Notes
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Opening Balance	99,183.00		99,183.00		99,183.00				
RECEIPTS									
Precept	85,000.00		85,000.00		85,000.00		0.00		
Allotments Rents	1,534.89		1,696.00		1,700.00		165.11		
Playing field rent	250.00		0.00		250.00		0.00		
Grants	0.00		0.00		0.00		0.00		
Sundry other receipts	1,214.98		0.00		1,214.98		0.00		
Magazine advertising & donations	10,128.00		1,623.30		2,800.38		-7,327.62		Lower income due to move to qtrly publication of Felsted Focus
Total Receipts	98,127.87		88,319.30		90,965.36		-7,162.50		
PAYMENTS									
Salary and Expenses	31,058.26		17,608.14		33,489.82		2,431.56		Expenses - partially offset by lower Stationery costs in Administration line
Street Lighting	4,838.48		3,440.96		4,794.70		-43.78		
Administration	18,251.68		5,605.01		10,924.30		-7,327.38		Lower expenditure due to move to qtrly publication of Felsted Focus
Maintenance, repairs and upkeep	27,892.58		23,772.08		41,649.00		13,756.41		Cost for Copper Beech removal rolled over from 2020-21, pay increase for village attendant after 5+ years plus repairs to Pavilion
	0	0	200	0	500	0	500	0	Estimate
Projects	9,354.31		26,013.61		32,858.64		23,504.33		Final Crix Green works rolled over from 2020-21, passing place on Jolly Boys Lane North
Sundry	3,817.45		3,972.67		3,972.67		155.22		
Total Payments	95,212.77		80,412.47		127,689.13		32,476.37		
Closing Balance - Income and Expense	102,098.10		107,089.83		62,459.23		-39,638.87		

F21/66 - Consideration of 2022-23 Budget – no change to Hours

FPC - Budget 2022-2023- DRAFT

	Actual 2020-21		Estimated 2021-22 Year End		Proposed Budget 2022-23	
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Opening Balance	132,358		99,183		62,459	
RECEIPTS						
Precept	77,000		85,000		88,500	
Allotments Rents	1,588		1,700		1,700	
Playing field rent	-105		250		500	
Grants	8,178		0		0	
Sundry other receipts	915		1,215		0	
Magazine advertising & donations	5,680		2,800		4,516	
Total Receipts	93,256		90,965		95,216	
PAYMENTS						
Salary and Expenses		31,236		33,490		33,082
Street Lighting		4,689		4,795		5,453
Administration		14,355		10,924		11,523
Maintenance, repairs and upkeep		40,473		41,649		40,807
Projects		30,518		32,859		4,958
Sundry		5,160		3,973		4,762
Total Payments	126,431		127,689		100,585	
Closing Balance - Accrual Basis	99,183		62,459		57,090	

Notes:

Draft Precept increase of 4.1% on 2021-22 Budget

Deficit includes £6,000 for Pavilion internal repairs and £2,000 for doctors surgery consultant works which will not be repeated.

Budget would show a surplus of approx £2,600 excluding the above one off items.

Further changes to budget may be needed following decision on Clerk and Assistant Clerks hours at 1st December 2021 Full Council Meeting.

Budget will be finalised and Precept recommendation made by Finance Committee before 12th January 2022 Full Council meeting in order to submit Precept to Uttlesford by 21st January 2022.