

**PONTESBURY PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Finance & General Purposes Committee**  
**Held at The Pavilion**  
**At 6:30pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024**

**PRESENT**

Cllr D Fletcher, Cllr A Hodges, Cllr M Trow, Cllr N Hignett, Cllr A Windows

**CLERK:** RFO, C Higgins

**No members of the public were present.**

**FGP 20.24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** - Cllr N Manning, Cllr S Davies, Cllr N Lewis and Cllr J Pritchard

**FGP 21.24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS** - None

**FGP 22.24 MINUTES OF COUNCIL** -The minutes having been circulated with the agenda were taken as read. It was noted that Cllr Heywood had been incorrectly listed as present, whilst the apologies of Cllr N Manning were omitted. It was proposed by Cllr Trow and seconded by Cllr Hodges, that the attendance list be corrected and that the amended minutes be approved. All were in favour, and it was **RESOLVED that the amended minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

**FGP 22.24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS** – No members of the public were present.

**FGP 23.24 COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY REVIEW** – The policy adopted 11 October 2021 was reviewed. It was noted that the policy was working well with community groups making regular applications for grants. **It was RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the policy be readopted, without change by full council.**

**FGP 24.24 REVIEW OF ELECTRONIC BANKING POLICY** – It was noted that the policy adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 was working well, with sufficient approved signatories to cover payment approvals. The RFO thanked those Council members who responded promptly to authorisation requests. **It was proposed by Cllr M Trow, seconded by Cllr A Hodges and RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY to RECOMMEND the policy be readopted without change by full council.**

**FGP 25.24 PENSIONS DISCRETIONS POLICY** – The policy adopted in 2019 was reviewed. The RFO reported that there had been no changes in legislation requiring any change to the pensions discretions policy and that the template provided by Shropshire County Pension Fund had not changed since it was used to adopt the current policy. The policy should be kept under regular review but presently meets the needs of the council without fettering any future decisions. **It was proposed by Cllr A Hodges, seconded by Cllr A Windows and unanimously RESOLVED to RECOMMEND that the policy be readopted, without change by full council.**

**FGP 26.24 GIFTS AND PRIZES POLICY** – A draft policy was reviewed by the Committee. The acceptable value of prizes and occasional gifts of appreciation was set at £10 with the policy applying to both staff and members of the Council. **It was proposed by Cllr N Hignett, seconded by Cllr A Hodges and all in favour to RECOMMEND that the policy be adopted by full council and added to the staff employment handbook.**

## FGP 27.24 RESERVES

**27.1 Earmarked Reserves** – A statement of the updated earmarked reserves values and descriptions dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 was noted and approved as being in accordance with the agreed allocations. The total of Earmarked Reserves was noted as £239,623.24.

**27.2 Reserve's Policy** – The General Reserves Policy adopted on 23 December 2023 was reviewed and it was proposed by Cllr A Hodges, seconded by Cllr M Trow, all in favour and **RESOLVED to RECOMMEND the policy be readopted by the full council.**

**FGP 28.24 PAYROLL SERVICE** – The value of an external payroll service was acknowledged as it protects staff from any suspicion of dishonesty in respect to salary payments. It was noted that the annual fee of £230 & VAT for 2025/26 was unchanged from 2024/25 and represented excellent value for money. **It was proposed by Cllr N Hignett, seconded by Cllr M Trow, all in favour and RESOLVED, to renew the payroll service provided by D M Payroll Services for 2025/26.**

## FGP 29.24 STATUTORY FINANCE

**29.1 Review of Bank Account Structure** – The benefits of retaining existing bank accounts was recognised due to the difficulties and timescales associated with opening new accounts when required.

**29.1.1 Lloyds Account** – It was noted that there was no longer a need to maintain a separate account for all Pavilion transactions as it was no longer intended to transfer the building to a different organisation. It was recognised that the Council's cash book kept a clear record of the financial costs of the building but transferring large sums across accounts created an unnecessary administrative burden. **It was proposed by Cllr M Trow, seconded by Cllr Hodges and RESOLVED to retain the account for the Pavilion Reserves only, as detailed below, (as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024) and to transfer day to day transactions to the Unity Trust Bank Current Account:**

Pavilion Funds (unallocated)	- £4,677.00
Pavilion Website	- £800.00
Pavilion Air source heat pump	- £6,000.00
Pavilion Solar Panels	- <u>£6,000.00</u>
Total Reserve	£17,477.00

**29.1.2 Nationwide Account** – It was noted that this account is attracting no interest as it holds less than £5,000 at present. **It was proposed by Cllr Fletcher, seconded by Cllr M Trow and unanimously RESOLVED to retain the account but to reduce the balance to £100.** The account levels to be reviewed should banking conditions change or the account is required to hold an allocated fund in the future.

**29.2 Interest Rates** – The reduction in interest rates for the Unity Trust Savings Account was **noted** but it was agreed to take no action as the account holds only £394.00 at present with most reserves being invested in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund.

**29.3 Debit Card Expenditure** – It was noted that only one significant transaction had been made using the debit card, which was for the annual zoom license for £155.88. It had proven uneconomic to set up HP Instant Ink accounts when compared to purchasing recycled ink cartridges.

**FGP 30.24 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN** – The Committee reviewed the contents and accuracy of the updated Strategic Plan with a view to identifying achievable timelines and budgets for projects listed and any further updates required.

**30.1 Leisure and Community Services –**

**30.1.1 Caretaker Recruitment** - Budget required

**30.1.2 Library Services Income** - License renewal required with Shropshire Council Estates (expires 4 May 2025).

**30.1.3 Trading Post** - Development of community parking and EV charging facilities proposed.

**30.2 Parish Appearance, Environment, Planning, Public Services** – Of the projects currently identified it was noted that the most achievable and urgent was the upgrade to the public toilets which were recently inspected by the Facilities Working Group. It was reported that Shropshire Council’s Place Plan Officer had been asked to confirm whether the project might qualify for CIL Local funding as the facilities serve the whole Place Plan area. **It was recommended that subject to funding, the Council should seek to develop a specification and competitive tenders for the project during the current financial year with implementation during 2025/26. It was further recommended that the project budget includes for provision of security measures and project management costs.**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 6pm. It was noted that this will focus on the draft budget and all members of the Council are invited and encouraged to attend.

*The Chairman closed the meeting at 7:50pm having thanked the RFO and Committee for their input.*

**Signed .....**  
**Chairman**

**Date .....**