

FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

The Pump House, 5 Market Place, FARINGDON, Oxfordshire, SN7 7HL
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Clerk: Sally Thurston



Minutes of Finance and Audit Committee Meeting held on Monday 29th July 2024 at 7pm in the Jubilee Room, Pump House, Faringdon

Members Present: Cllrs: Leniec (Chair)
Castle
Farmer
Finn
Norris
Webb

In attendance: Sally Thurston, Town Clerk
Margaret Nairne, Town Clerk's Assistant

1/3/24 Apologies for Absence:

Cllr. Boulton; Cllr. Ford; Cllr. Wild

2/3/24 Election of Vice Chair

Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED that Cllr. Finn be elected Vice Chair. This was SECONDED by Cllr. Farmer and RESOLVED.

3/3/24 Minutes and notes of meetings

It was PROPOSED that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 29th April 2024 be signed as a correct record. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED.

4/3/24 Declarations of Interest & requests for dispensations

None

5/3/24 Public Speaking and Question Time

None

6/3/24 Grants Sub-Committee:

a) Members elected the following to the Grants Sub-Committee:
Cllrs. Boulton, Farmer, Finn, Leniec, Norris, Webb.

b) It was PROPOSED that Cllr. Finn be elected Chair of the Grants Sub Committee. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED.

7/3/24 Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED that standing orders be suspended so that the Grants Sub-Committee could be held. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED.
The Finance and Audit Committee Meeting was suspended at 7.15pm

Members PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Cllr Finn should chair this section of the meeting.

I. *Apologies for absence*

None

II. *Minutes*

It was PROPOSED that the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 29th April 2024 be signed as a correct record. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED.

III. *Declarations of Interest*

None

IV. *Public Speaking and Question Time*

None

V. *Items for Information: members NOTED the following*

- a) Action List
- b) Citizens Advice letter

VI. *Finance*

Members NOTED the financial reports.

VII. *General grant applications*

Members considered applications for financial assistance from the general grant budget including:

- a) Bass Therapy J-Fest applied for £2,200 to cover cost of medics attending the festival. Cllr. Farmer PROPOSED, Cllr. Castle SECONDED and it was RESOLVED (with one abstention and one against) to grant £750 and to ask for more detailed information on attendance figures, specifically from Faringdon, and ask them to attend and give a presentation at the next Finance and Audit Committee meeting.
- b) Faringdon Art Society applied for a room subsidy in hiring the Corn Exchange. Cllr. Castle PROPOSED, Cllr. Norris SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to grant this.
- c) The Pump House Project applied for a grant towards coaches for Youth Boxing of £2,730. Cllr. Farmer PROPOSED, Cllr. Finn SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to grant the full amount and to ask the Pump House Project to give a more detailed breakdown of attendees.
- d) Enrych applied for £1,000 but withdrew their application and will re-submit next year.

VIII. *Painting and Planting Grant Applications to include:*

- a) Wheatsheaf - £250 + £80: granted
- b) Great British Revivals Ltd - £250 + £80: not granted as deemed outside the central area of Faringdon Market Place
- c) The Crown - £250 + £80: granted
- d) 4a Market Place - £250 + £80: granted conditional on giving details of use of grant as were granted painting grant last year
- e) 4b Market Place - £250 + £80: granted conditional on giving details of use of grant as were granted painting grant last year
- f) Sadlers for planting (For information: granted under delegated authority) - £50

It was PROPOSED to grant the amounts as detailed above. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED. Cllr. Finn PROPOSED for the next agenda looking at the Terms and Conditions of the painting and planting grants with specific reference to the area within which businesses and residential properties may apply and frequency of applications. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED.

IX. *Agenda Items*

To consider items for a future agenda

Terms and Conditions of painting and planting grants.

Members PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED that Cllr Leniec should come back into the chair for the remainder of the meeting and the Finance and Audit Committee Meeting was re-convened at 7.45 p.m.

8/3/24 Members received Items for Information Only

Members NOTED the following:

- a. Investment and Interest updates. Members agreed that interest on investments should be earmarked for grants at the end of the year
- b. Action list
- c. VAT compliance check

9/3/24 Information Centre:

Members received and NOTED a report from the Information Centre, congratulating the Manager on a successful quarter.

10/3/24 Financial Reports

- a) Members received and NOTED the following reports:
 - i. Office and Establishment
 - ii. Direct Council Expenditure
 - iii. Faringdon Information centre

- b) Members received and NOTED summaries for the following committees:
 - i) Facilities
 - ii) Communities and Partnerships

- c) Members received and NOTED a full summary including notification of balances.

- d) Members NOTED the CIL payment notification and report.

11/3/24 Internal Controls

- a) Members received and NOTED the internal audit report 2024. Members congratulated the Clerk on a clean audit and another successful year.
- b) Members APPROVED a list of direct debits
- c) Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Castle SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to appoint Cllrs. Boulton, Castle, Leniec and Wise as the four bank signatories for all council accounts plus the Town Clerk (the incoming Clerk, Katherine Doughty) and Facilities Officer, Sarah Johnson. Sally Thurston's (the outgoing Clerk) name should be removed by 31st August 2024.
- d) Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Castle SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to appoint Cllr. Farmer as a non-signatory councillor to review invoices monthly.
- e) Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Castle SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to appoint Cllr. Finn as a non-signatory councillor to review bank reconciliations and payments quarterly.
- f) Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Farmer SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to re-appoint Auditing Solutions on the same terms as internal auditor for the 2024.25 financial year.

12/3/24 Facilities Committee

a. 11/2/24 Town Park

Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Finn SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to accept a quote for £1130 for an initial design for the Town Park refurbishment from DMW Landscapes and fund from reserves.

b. 12/2/24 Telephone Box on Canada Lane

Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Norris SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to accept a quote, to be ratified at Full Council, for the refurbishment of the phone box in Canada Lane from Faringdon Electrical Services and installation of a defibrillator from Community Heartbeat, for a total of £5,141 to be funded from Community Infrastructure Levy.

c. 13/2/24 Oakwood Park

Cllr. Norris PROPOSED, Cllr. Finn SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to accept a quote from Playdale Playgrounds of £6572.42, to be ratified at Full Council, for new equipment and updating, to be funded from Community Infrastructure Levy.

d. Lift repairs

Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Finn SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to accept a quote for £4753 for necessary lift repairs from current contractor, to be funded from the asset repairs and maintenance budget.

13/3/24 Community Space and Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)

Members discussed an early-stage proposal for a community sports hall and multi-use games area (MUGA) to be created at the Folly Sports Park. Following a positive response to a pre-planning application, with full advice and suggestions pending, and given that this is a large-scale project that will need significant research and development to get the plans and proposals to a point where planning and funding could be applied for, members discussed the following recommendation:

To allocate £30,000 from CIL funding towards

1. Planning consultant
2. Surveys etc
3. Architect
4. Funding search

Cllr Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Finn SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to allocate research and development funds of up to £30,000 following the advice received at the pre-planning meeting to consider possible community space and MUGA at Folly Park.

It should be noted Fernham Field MUGA funds have a date to be spent by February 2025 – Members agreed that the Clerk should write to developer to ask for timescale to be extended.

14/3/24 Financial Regulations

Members reviewed updated financial regulations and agreed to defer recommendation to Full Council until the new Clerk is in place and any amendments have been processed.

15/3/24 Staffing Policy

Members received and approved the following:

- a. Staff handbook – new section to cover working from home - on the basis of additional clauses covering desks and chairs and compliance with GDPR.

16/3/24 Staff Matters: Due to the nature of this item Members, Cllr Leniec PROPOSED these items be discussed in confidential session. This was SECONDED and RESOLVED.

- a) Cllr. Norris PROPOSED, Cllr. Castle SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to agree a permanent change to the Facilities Officer's job description to add an additional day for working on climate change policies and actions. This can be budgeted for next year.

- b) Cllr. Leniec PROPOSED, Cllr. Castle SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to amend the sickness terms and conditions to green book recommendations for a long-serving member of staff on this specific occasion to payment of 6 months full pay and then 6 months half pay. It was recommended that talking therapy be included in help offered to staff.
- c) Cllr. Farmer PROPOSED, Cllr. Finn SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to use agency staff to cover for the above.
- d) Cllr. Farmer PROPOSED, Cllr. Norris SECONDED and it was RESOLVED to award the town clerk the minimum offer of 2.5% (as per the basic Local Government Pay claim) now to ensure all pension, back pay and paperwork can be resolved before she leaves at the end of August.

17/3/24 The Place

Members received and NOTED an update on the management of the project from October 2024.

Investigations to find an alternative to Spurgeons have been unfruitful and The Place Charity Steering Board have resolved to undertake the management in-house if Faringdon Town Council support. There would be no risk to Council who will become grant-giving and landlord only (Faringdon Town Council are currently contract holders with Spurgeons). The tenancy agreement currently runs to Jan 2026.

The Town Council to have one Trustee and one Board Member. Sally Thurston has become a Trustee to assist with transition and will remain Treasurer. The New Clerk will continue to administer The Place meetings if Faringdon Town Council agree.

Members PROPOSED, SECONDED and RESOLVED to recommend to Full Council that Faringdon Town Council support all the endeavours of The Place to manage and budget for the project in-house.

Members re-iterated their thanks to the outgoing Clerk, Sally Thurston, for her 10 years in the post, and wished to recognise all her hard work over that time and state their appreciation of everything that she has achieved for this committee, for the council and for Faringdon during her time.

18/3/24 Agenda items for the next meeting to be held on 21st October 2024.

- Consider zero-based budgetting

Meeting closed at: 8.48 pm