# Minutes of the Saddleworth Parish Council Joint Assets Management Committee & Finance Committee held on Thursday 18 September at 7pm at the Civic Hall, Uppermill.

**Present**: Cllr S Al-Hamdani (Chairman)

Cllr H Bishop, Cllr R Blackmore, Cllr K Phillips, Cllr L Thompson. Cllr P Walsh,

Cllr A Wrigley.

RFO: Mr J Price, Clerk: Mrs K Allott, Site Manager Mr C Lees.

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Cllr K Barton, Cllr B Beeley, Cllr L Dawson, Cllr P Gaul,

Cllr G Sheldon

1. **Absent:** Cllr D Wall
2. **Declarations of Interest** None were declared.
3. **Minutes of the Assets Management meeting held Monday 14th July 2025**

These were accepted as a true record and will be signed at the next meeting of the Assets Committee when the Chair is in attendance. Proposed Cllr Philips, seconded Cllr Thompson.

1. **Minutes of the Finance meeting held Thursday 25th July 2025**

A slight amendment to point 726 was requested by Cllr Bishop and agreed and the minutes were then accepted as a true record and signed at the meeting by the Chair. Proposed Cllr Al-Hamdani, seconded Cllr Bishop.

1. **Matters Arising**

Assets:

The Clerk advised all the drain work and re tarmacking had been completed.

The Clerk confirmed the 7 ash trees with late- stage ash dieback had now been felled. She confirmed Ben Caine, OMBC had visited and recommended a full survey next year which will identify all trees in different states of decline. A decision can then be made on whether cutting them all back, economy of scale, would be the best option. The Clerk confirmed we are aiming to replace as many felled trees as possible. She was asked for Mr Caine’s advice on the best replacements.

The Clerk advised that we finally had the go ahead from Highways to rebuild the bus shelter. A section 50 had been applied for by the contractor but due to time pressures and workload, unfortunately the rebuild wasn’t taking a priority.

The Clerk confirmed the red phone boxes at Heights Lane & Uppermill Museum had now been signed over to Defibrillator Saves Lives and they are working at restoring them before they fit the defibrillators.

1. **Budget**

* **Budget 2025-26 5 months to 31st August, spread and variances**

The figures had been shared prior to the meeting and were discussed.

* The spend on the cemetery is higher, but so is the income +(+269% on 5 month estimate, +112% on full year budget).
* All Assets repairs invoices have now been recoded. Total repairs spend is £4.5k and favourable. Code 307 includes some annual SLAs already paid out. Nothing spent in 311 budget yet, needs reducing from £15k to £8k to reflect the Assets’ decisions.
* Civic Hall Income is lower than projected, quiet over summer, but as from mid- September onwards we have events planned almost every weekend so we’re expecting to reduce the deficit.
* Salary code 301 is overspent due to long term sickness and cover required
* Salary code 103 is in line with additional RFO hours now included.

Under the budget item of the agenda, the Clerk requested the Asset Committee’s agreement on the charge to be levied on Charity fund raising events at the Civic Hall. She advised that the Parish Council only broke even on one event, and on one occasion, had actually lost money on an event agreed at the £420 rate. This is because of additional site staff required at the enhanced salary rate, and the big clean up required afterwards. These are big events with entertainment, with high ticket prices. After discussion it was agreed we would charge the £995 commercial rate with a 10% discount for charitable status. Proposed Cllr Philips, seconded Cllr Wrigley, carried.

There would be further discussion regarding Civic Hall room hire charges at the next Assets meeting when discussing budget 2026-7.

Further Assets spend in the current financial year to be covered later in the meeting.

* **Budget Setting 2026-2027 – initial discussion**

The timescale for a finalised budget was discussed.

An Assets building condition survey prepared by the Site Manager had been previously shared and it was discussed. Each item had been coded as Priority high, medium or low. The Clerk explained this would now be a working document and as work was carried out it would be updated. The Clerk advised that quotes would be invited for the high priority and medium priority, within 6-12 months; these would then be used to populate the budget.

Some of the work required could be carried out by Site staff, although while we are still one caretaker down it will not be done as quickly as we would like.

It was agreed we did not now require a building condition survey to be completed by a property management company.

The Clerk advised her main concerns were inspection of the roof and the older wiring in the building. Cllr Al-Hamdani advised a family member would be able to support us in surveying the roof, probably in the Spring.

The high priority items were discussed and these can now be populated into the budget figures:

Replacement lift c £25,000

Ramp fire doors c £2,000

Additional fire safety works possible following the next Fire Risk Assessment due in October.

Community toilet signage scheme replacement c £3,500 - deferred to next Assets for discussion.

Funding was discussed for the lift replacement, the Clerk advised that any applications for funding made to date had been refused; not many charities support Local Government/Parish Councils. But she is still exploring options. A loan was also discussed. The Clerk also asked whether the Assets Committee would look into releasing some of the earmarked cemetery reserves due to the large income stream this year. This will be considered.

The RFO suggested charging a maintenance fee for the cemetery. This will be discussed at the next Assets meeting.

Cllr Al-Hamdani suggested that if the Parish Council could provide some of the capital, with the measures already discussed, the balance could be funded through borrowing.

Cllr Bishop suggested some companies may lease lifts. The Clerk said she would look into it.

1. **Current Reserves Position**

This report was tabled at the meeting and it was discussed. Current forecast is holding 3.7 months. Councillors agreed the ideal is to hold 5 months of reserves. The vat issue and being able to claim back some payments should improve the reserves position.

1. **Update of Bank Account Switch**

This item was deferred due to time pressures.

1. **External Audit Report**

The RFO advised this report had not yet been received, it will be discussed at the next meeting,

1. **Financial Management Treasury Policy**

The Clerk advised the policy was in draft form, but cannot be completed until we have moved bank accounts as the investment strategies will be different. Deferred to next meeting.

1. **Backdated VAT Claims update**

The RFO explained he was up to date with the backdated claims, and he would be working on it over the next few weeks.

1. **Councillor expenses when deputising for Chairman**

The Clerk advised there was nothing to report.

1. **Report on Future Costs for Cemetery-first discussion**

This was discussed earlier in the meeting but not in detail. It was agreed to defer to the next meeting.

The RFO then left the meeting.

1. **Health & Safety update**

The Clerk shared the quotes received for a video entry system at the Civic Hall. After discussion it was agreed to give this work to Link Fire & Security £1388 plus vat (£1666 incl). Proposed Cllr Wrigley, seconded Cllr Thompson, carried.

The Clerk advised the defibrillator we have outside the Civic Hall is now obsolete and we are struggling to buy replacement pads and batteries. It was agreed to purchase a new one through Defibrillator Saves Lives for £800 (discounted from £1200). They will take our old one away to use for training. The Clerk will then explore funding options through The Round Table and Rotary, as well as asking for support from OMBC Councillor budget. Proposed Cllr Philips, seconded Cllr Wrigley, carried.

*(post meeting note, when cancelling the outstanding order for pads and batteries for the original machine (order date April 25), the Clerk was informed they had been despatched that day! We will need a new defibrillator eventually but we should now be ok for the next 12-18 months).*

1. **Property & Maintenance**

It was agreed to go ahead with the quote from Archway UK to replace the damaged ceiling tiles throughout the building. £718.25 inc. Proposed Cllr Philips, seconded Cllr Thompson, carried.

It was agreed to go ahead with the quote from Rhodes & Son to repaint the line marking of the Civic Hall carpark £580 plus vat (£696 incl, VAT should be reclaimable). Proposed Cllr Thompson, seconded Cllr Philips, carried.

Cllr Bishop suggested an extra two spaces be made for staff parking. The Site Manager and Clerk agreed to look into this.

It was agreed to go ahead with the quote from M Bowden to repair the flashing on the roof above the JH Suite and to replace the wooden fascia at the side of the building car park entrance.

Total £1000 incl which includes scaffolding. Proposed Cllr Philps, seconded Cllr Thompson, carried.

The Clerk advised that the Site Manager is obtaining two quotes to replace the lights outside the front entrance of the Civic Hall. Bulbs cannot be replaced as corroded. Scaffolding will be required.

The Clerk advised there was an issue with the security lights at the car park entrance, they fuse when it’s wet. We have requested JWS to investigate and repair if possible. If not we will look at replacing them.

1. **Allotments Update**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

**Date of next meetings – Assets Management Monday 10th November at 10.30am**

**Finance Thursday 23rd October at 7pm**