

Minutes of the SPC Finance Committee held on Thursday 8th December 2022 at 7pm at the Civic Hall, Uppermill.

Present: Councillors : S. Al- Hamdani (SA-H) (Chairman)

G. Sheldon (GS)

K. Phillips (KP)

B. Lord (BL)

H. Bishop (HB)

L. Dawson (LD)

RFO: J Price (JP); Clerk: K Allott (KA)

538. Apologies for Absence Cllr M Woodvine (MW)

539. Absent Cllr J Hudson (JH)

540. Declarations of interest None declared

541. Minutes from the last meeting Thursday 6th October 2022

Cllr Dawson advised she had sent her apologies for the previous meeting. This has been noted and amended. These minutes were accepted as correct and signed off by the Chairman.

542. Matters Arising None

543. Final Accounts 2021-22 Audit Update

JP advised the meeting that the AGAR final accounts, certification of completion, has now been signed off and has been published on the website. A copy was shared with Councillors.

Cllr S A-H commented that these had been submitted and signed off late the last two years.

Cllr KP asked why this was and JP advised that this year there had been IT issues through June and July which had caused numerous issues and resulting in late submission to the Auditors PKF Littlejohn. Now resolved and there isn't any reason why there would be any further delays going forward.

JP also advised that the same auditors has been appointed by NALC for the next 5 years.

544 Proposed Budget 2023-2024 Update.

JP advised that he was still working on the budget as he was spending much more time on it this year to ensure it was as accurate as possible and that he was committed to having it ready to share at the next Finance meeting 18th January.

Cllr S A-H advised that this was too late; he said that to ensure the budget was ready to be shared with OMBC at the full council meeting 1st March 2022, it needed to have been signed off at SPC full council meeting 23rd January 2023. Neither the RFO or Clerk had been aware of this deadline for 23rd January and apologised for the confusion. The previous minutes had stated that the budget needed to be presented to SPC full council in February. Although it had also been minuted that the plan was to have the budget proposals completed for December.

The Clerk advised that there had been time pressures over the last few weeks due to staffing issues; holidays and long-term sickness which has impacted on both herself and the RFO in that they aren't always able to concentrate on their individual roles due to the need to cover for absent staff etc. A plan was now in place for the RFO to work from home more without these constant interruptions to ensure we meet the new budget deadlines.

After some discussion it was agreed to bring forward the January meeting dates for Asset Management and Finance meetings to earlier in January to ensure everything had been signed off in time for the 23 January Full Council meeting. The RFO will ensure the budget is fully completed and ready to share at these meetings; he also advised it was minuted at the previous Assets that he would be able to send out their budget proposal via email prior to Christmas so they had time to digest before the next meeting.

The Environment budget had already been agreed at the last meeting, and the Communications budget would be confirmed at the 3rd January 23 meeting once more investigation had been done into the cost implications of advertising.

There was some discussion over the precept and the RFO advised it will be presented properly when the proposed budget is completed.

There was some discussion around the costs of energy and advice received is that it may easily triple when our fixed rate ends on June. Also some discussion on whether we would be able to carry out the planned refurbishment of the civic hall, as well as the additional energy costs and essential maintenance that need doing. All of the costings will be put into the budget to see if it is workable; it has to be a balanced budget.

The Clerk advised that income would hopefully increase with the new charges for hiring the hall for commercial events – now £950 – and that we already had quite a few bookings in the diary for the New Year.

The RFO asked the Chair about two amounts in the current budget - £7k for Election and £3.5k in for Neighbourhood Plan - with no spend to date. These will be added to next year's budget.

545. Timings regarding salary payments

The Clerk shared the request from the Staffing Committee to take their proposal to the Finance Committee:-.

“Currently all Local Government staff are paid on the 15th of every month; 2 weeks in arrears, 2 weeks in advance, whereas SPC pay in arrears. The Staffing Committee agreed that SPC needed to be brought in line with Local Government. Decision that from 1st April 2023 the Staffing Committee would like to propose this to the Finance Committee. Once agreed staff will enter a 30 day consultation period in the New Year and the change will be implemented from 15 April 2023”

After some discussion, the Finance Committee agreed to this proposal. This will now be taken forward with staff being notified in the New Year.

546. Banking Arrangements

The RFO advised that due to the already mentioned time pressures, not much work had been done on this. But he did advise that as well as looking into SPC moving to Virgin Bank and Lloyds, a bank called Unity had been recommended as the preferred bank of choice for some other Parish Councils. Cllr S A-H advised he had experience of Unity although it was a few years ago, the overall feedback was very good. It was agreed the RFO would ensure the comparisons analysis is completed in February and that once agreed the changeover would be from the new financial year. (note an additional meeting will need to be called in February to discuss this as the next planned meeting after January isn't until May 2023).

.

547. Items for next Agenda

Proposed Budget 2023-4 for sign off

548. Next Meeting Dates

Thursday 12th January 2023 at 7pm

Wednesday 18th January 2023 at 7pm (if required)

A meeting towards the end of February to be arranged.