**Minutes of the Saddleworth Parish Council Finance Committee held on Thursday 13th March 2025 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 B Beeley (observing).

RFO: Mr J Price, Clerk: Mrs K Allott.

**696. Apologies for Absence:** Cllr K Barton, Cllr L Dawson, Cllr G Sheldon.

**697. Declarations of Interest:** None declared

**698. Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 13th February 2025**

The minutes were accepted as correct and signed at the meeting by the Chairman. Proposed Cllr Phillips, seconded Cllr Blackmore.

**699. Budget 2024-25 update (11 months to 28/2/25).**

This report had been shared prior to the meeting and it was discussed. The RFO advised that the expenditure on code 307 Repairs had slowed down as expected, but we were still predicting an overall overspend for the year. Total overspend for 11 months is £21,832 which compares to £29,471 at half year.

The budget was discussed line by line.

Under salaries, Cllr Phillips advised the Staffing Committee had discussed succession planning and options that we could take to manage the Parish Council’s functions in case of sickness absence. She requested that in order to upskill a staff member in basic administrative skills the Staffing Committee were asking for a budget of £525 over a 15 week period to be added to code 103, administrative salaries, and for this to be reviewed following this period.

After more discussion this was proposed by Cllr Al-Hamdani, seconded Cllr Phillips, carried.

The Clerk advised that should a locum Clerk be required, the cost would be between £40- £50 per hour, including all oncosts.

**700. Budget 2025-26**

This report had been shared prior to the meeting. Cllr Al-Hamdani stated that the agreed budget proposed taking an additional £12,000 from reserves, which could potentially take us below the 3 month’s target.

The budget was discussed line by line looking at where additional savings could be made.

Cllr Al-Hamdani suggested the Environment Committee could look into the costs of the Community toilet scheme, to be added to the Environment Committee’s next agenda.

It was also discussed whether the Asset’s Management Committee could reduce the projected spend on code 311 Renewals & Improvements, to be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

Cllr Al-Hamdani advised that the Communications Committee would be examining options to increase revenue, with the introduction of an online booking system, dedicated events website, and fundraising ideas, to be added to the agenda of the next meeting.

Cllr Bishop suggested we look at refinancing the current repayment loan. Cllr Al-Hamdani suggested we could investigate the option of extending the length of the loan to reduce monthly payments.

It was agreed that the cost of security, which is recharged, should be recoded between expenditure code 318 and income received code 730 from April 2025.

**701. Clarification on Reserves**

The RFO confirmed that the reserves amount is based on the net revenue expenditure and the recommendation is to hold between 3 months and 12 months. For larger councils like SPC, a minimum of 3 months is a reasonable balance to hold.

* **current reserves position**

This report was shared by the RFO and discussed. The prediction for year end is just 3 months, due to the high expenditure this budget year on essential health & safety works. Cllr Al-Hamdani stated that we should be aiming for a 5 months cushion; with only 3 months we are vulnerable. It was agreed this would need careful monitoring.

The £3,500 Neighbourhood Plan earmarked reserves was discussed. Cllr Al-Hamdani advised it probably will not be needed but it was agreed to keep it there for the moment and discuss at the next Strategic Planning meeting.

Cllr Al-Hamdani thanked the RFO for pulling all the information together.

**702. VAT report**

The RFO explained he was still waiting for the report from the VAT advisor, which was imminent but they had confirmed some points. They have advised that we would be able to claim back vat on the cost of the wall as it is classed as non-business, this would reflect in next year’s budget. We can also claim some vat back on the cemetery costs, eg maintenance, as these are also non-business.

The RFO stated that the VAT Consultant advised that SPC had a potential registration issue as Rochdale United Charities administrative fee, and the Civic Ball revenue, plus security recharges, are all business services. This would be addressed over the summer months.

The RFO also confirmed that the claim for the 1st quarter of 2021-22 would be actioned by 31st March 2025.

**703. Report on Councillor Expenses when deputising for Chairman**

Nothing to report

**704. Bank Account progress**

This agenda item was deferred due to time pressures

**705. Update of Financial regulations**

This agenda item was deferred due to time pressures

**706. Items for the next Agenda:**

Final Budget & Reserves Report 2024-25

Budget 2025-26

* + Feedback from Committees

VAT Report & Update

Bank Account Progress

Report on Councillor Expenses when deputising for Chairman

**Dates of next meeting: Thursday 8th May 2025 @ 19.00hrs**