**Minutes of the Saddleworth Parish Council Finance Committee held on Thursday 15th February 2024 at 7pm at the Civic Hall, Uppermill.**

**Present**: Councillors: S. Al-Hamdani (Chairman)

K. Phillips

H. Bishop

L. Dawson

K. Dawson

P. Walsh

RFO: J Price; Clerk: K Allott

**609. Apologies for Absence: Cllrs** R. Blackmore, K. Barton, G. Sheldon

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

**611. Minutes from the last meeting on Thursday 14th December 2023**

These minutes were accepted as correct and signed off at the meeting by the Chairman.

**612. Year End reserves figure**

The RFO tabled a report and it was discussed. As at 31/3/23 the year end general reserves held were £109,122 (5.7 months v precept). As at 30/9/23 the half year general reserves held were £99,743 (5.2 months v precept). Cllr Al-Hamdani asked when the precept income is received. The RFO advised twice annually 1st April and 1st October. There was discussion around concerns over the cost of repairing the car park wall and that if the initial estimating costings received so far are accurate, it would seriously deplete the reserves held. More information on this issue will be shared as soon as it is available.

**613. Chairman’s Allowance/Regalia**

There was some discussion around whether the current allowance is sufficient. It was agreed that the Chairman Cllr Dawson would share a report of his expenditure to date to share at the next meeting.

The Clerk/RFO would continue to keep a record of expenditure incurred by the Chairman and deputising councillors over the next few months and it will be shared at the 2025-6 budget setting meeting so a recommendation can be made for the next budget year.

The RFO advised that expenditure on repairing the Chairman’s medal this year alone was £250. Regalia spend in total is £1,200. There was some discussion around the insurance of these items and the clerk confirmed they are listed separately on our policy and are still covered when taken away from the building. (*Post meeting note: the Chairman's Chain & Jewel & Consort's Chain is insured for £8,701 and the medallions are insured for £723 each with an excess of £100*).

Cllr K Dawson confirmed that the chains are awkward and uncomfortable to wear. And some Parish and Town Councils do not use them anymore. After some further discussion it was agreed that the Finance Committee would recommend to Full Council that the chains are kept in the safe but remain accessible for civic occasions and that the medallions would be fitted onto ribbons to be worn for more regular use.

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

Nothing to report at this meeting.

**615. Civic Ball – report and funding discussion**

The RFO shared a report on income and costs. £137.90 net cost. Cllr K Dawson agreed to donate £137.90 from the money raised on the night from the raffle so the event breaks even. There was some discussion around how we could improve it next year, and be able to reduce the cost of tickets, running our own bar, or putting the bar out to tender were a couple of suggestions.

Saddleworth Parish Council cannot subsidise this event; it must be self-funding. Further meetings will be held nearer the time by the Civic Functions Committee.

Cllr Al-Hamdani thanked the staff and everybody involved in arranging this event; it had been a success; we had broken even and still managed to raise money for the Chairmans’ Charities.

**616. Point to note – Asset Management decision to not impose 5% pay increase on hire charges**

At the previous Assets Management meeting a resolution was passed not to increase the previously agreed hire charges by 5% from 1st April 24 and to defer the decision for 6 months. As the 5% increase had already been added into the budget calculation and agreed in December, the RFO wished to make Councillors aware that he estimated a reduction in budgeted income of £2700. After some discussion it was agreed that the Finance Committee ask that the impact of this decision on the budget be added to the next Assets Management agenda and ask for a response.

**617. Items for the next agenda**

Year end 2023-24

Chairman’s Report into civic expenditure

Report on Councillor Expenses when deputising for Chairman

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 21st March 2024 @ 19.00hrs**