**Minutes of the Saddleworth Parish Council Finance Committee held on Thursday 24 July 2025 at 7pm at the Civic Hall, Uppermill.**

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

 Cllr K Barton, Cllr H Bishop, Cllr K Phillips, Cllr G Sheldon, Cllr P Walsh.

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

**718. Apologies for Absence:** Cllr R Blackmore, Cllr L Dawson, Cllr L Thompson.

**719. Declarations of Interest** None were declared.

**720. Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 8th May 2025**

The minutes were accepted as a true record and signed at the meeting by the Chairman, Proposed Cllr Sheldon, seconded Cllr Phillips.

**721. Internal Audit and Final Accounts / AGAR 2024/5**

The Internal Audit Report and Final Accounts had been shared prior to the meeting and were discussed

The Annual Governance Statement was then discussed and Councillors agreed with the explanation prepared by the RFO to be published on the website,

**AGAR Internal Audit Report**

The report confirmed that the council’s system of internal controls is in place and adequate for the purpose intended and effective apart from some points which were highlighted. The auditor had annotated most points with references back to the IA report. The RFO explained each qualification in turn with what actions had been taken or were still ongoing.

The RFO explained that the general reserve figure of c. 18% quoted at p4 in the full Internal Audit Report was understated by a double count of £15.5k relating to an election costs provision which is also covered in the elections earmarked reserves. Without this the general reserves would be 24%.

Cllr Al-Hamdani advised that once the Neighbourhood Plan had gone to cabinet the £3500 earmarked reserves could probably be released back into general reserves. If this was the case, general reserves would be approx. 28% which falls within the sector guidance of 25%-100%.

**Annual Governance Report (AGAR Section 1)**

The RFO pointed out that two boxes are recorded as NO. Point 2 is due to the outstanding VAT issues where work was ongoing and Councillors agreed this was in hand. Point 5 is due to no financial risk management published for the year. The Clerk confirmed work had started on this sometime ago and it was now complete. It had to be re written as the current one was no longer fit for purpose. Once ratified by Council it would be displayed on the website.

**Accounting Statements (AGAR Section 2)**

The RFO explained the major variances which were in Other Receipts and Staff Costs and all other payments.

It was agreed that the 3 documents along with the explanation notes could be presented for formal approval at the upcoming Full Council meeting on Monday 28th July 2025. Proposed Cllr Al-Hamdani, seconded Cllr Barton, carried.

**722. Update on Current Budget Position (first quarter)**

Due to time pressures these figures were not available. It was agreed the RFO and Clerk would work on them and share with the Committee. A decision will then be made whether an additional meeting is required in August to discuss or whether it would be covered in the planned September meeting.

**723. Current Reserves Position**

Already discussed

**724. VAT update**

The RFO advised that May 21 and June 21 claims had been settled but there was a query with HMRC on April 21. All invoices had been located and he would be agreeing the rationale for all future claims with our VAT expert over the next 2 to 3 months.

Cllr Al-Hamdani asked whether this would be completed by mid August. The RFO explained he was on holiday in August so there was no confirmed timeframe currently.

**725. Annual Programme of works**

This was reviewed and progress was in line with the programme.

**726. Asset Management Committee Requests**

* **Replacement Ceiling Tiles quotes**

Cllr Sheldon explained the quote received for £728.25 plus vat was to replace all the damaged tiles across the Civic Hall. As the first quarter budget figures were not available, it was agreed that once these have been prepared, and if the spend to date on reactive maintenance budget code is in line, this work can go ahead.

* **Tree Survey Work quotes**

Cllr Sheldon explained the recent tree survey had identified that 7 trees in the cemetery needed urgent felling due to ash die back.

.

Two quotes had been received, one for £1000 plus vat and one for £1400 plus vat.

One contractor has recommended a total clearance which would be cheaper in the long run and this was discussed. Only one quote for clearance had been received to date, £6500 plus vat and we were waiting on the second one. Cllr Sheldon advised this needed acting on ASAP due to health & safety concerns.

It was agreed that the removal of the 7 trees could go ahead now with the £1,000 plus vat quote. Assets Management would then explore the option of felling the rest of them next year. Proposed Cllr Sheldon, seconded Cllr Bishop. Carried.

Cllr Bishop requested we ask Ben Caine, OMBC, to survey the trees for us. This was agreed.

**727. Financial Risk Management Assessment 2025**

This document had been shared prior to the meeting and it was discussed. The Clerk advised the Internal Auditor had advised it must be updated annually, but due to time pressures it was only ready for approval in June. It was discussed. Cllr Al-Hamdani suggested we add likelihood v severity and it was agreed this could be considered in the future. The document was accepted and Councillors would recommend it for approval at full Council. Proposed Cllr Al-Hamdani, seconded Cllr Barton, carried.

**728. Report on Chairman’s Allowance 2024/5**

This item was deferred.

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

Nothing to report**.**

**730. Items for the next Agenda**

Update of Bank Account Switch

Report on Future Costs for Cemetery (first discussion)

Backdated VAT Claims

Budget Setting 2026-27 (first discussion)

Assets Management Spend

Current Reserves Position

Councillor expenses when deputising for Chairman

**Dates of next meeting:18th September 2025 & 19.00hrs (joint with Assets)**