



Appleton Parish Council

Appleton Parish Hall, Dudlow Green Road, Appleton, WA4 5EQ

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Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Thursday 1st February 2024 at 9.45am

Present: - Councillor L Chapman, Councillor G Chapman, Councillor M Jervis, Councillor H Speed, Councillor M Delaney, Councillor K Critchley and Councillor P Lewenz.

Clerk, Mrs J Monks and Assistant Clerk, Mrs I Derbyshire.

Parish Ranger, Mr D Pearce for agenda items four, ride on mower and agenda item five, Parish Van.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Councillor L Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councillor C Critchley sent her apology for the meeting.

2. Members Code of Conduct

Councillor P Lewenz declared a nonpecuniary interest in relation to item 7 as he had written part of the grant application for the footpath improvement works in the Dingle.

3. Matters Arising

The clerk reported that the plaque at Hillcliffe has been purchased and will be installed shortly and that the cavity wall insulation was undertaken on 21st December 2023.

4. Ride on mower and storage

The purchase of a ride on mower and storage was considered. The Parish Ranger stated it would be necessary to purchase a ride on mower if additional grass cutting was required on the grass verges.

RESOLVED that;

A small working party will consider and review the purchase of a ride on mower and storage.

5. Purchase of a van

RESOLVED that;

The purchase of a replacement van would not be considered at this time.

The clerk noted that Councillor H Speed abstained from voting on this agenda item.

6. Update on grant budget with expenditure to date

The clerk confirmed the grant budget for 2023/2024 was £6,000.

The following grants have been awarded to date;

Stockton Heath Festival Grant	Grant	1,100.00
Appleton Thorn Primary school	Bawming Grant	600.00
St Mary Mags Church	Xmas tree donation	150.00
Royal British Legion	Donation for wreaths/remembrance Sunday	200.00
Tuesday Litter picking team	Grant for litter picking equipment	275.00
Lumb Brook Millennium Green	Grant for running costs	3,000.00
Warrington Foodbank	Grant for running costs	500.00
Open Door at Xmas	Grant for running costs	400.00
	Total	6225.00

The grant budget for 2023/2024 overspent by £225.00.

RESOLVED that;

The expenditure to date for the grant budget was noted.

7. Dingle grant application from Warrington Borough Council

Councillor P Lewenz declared a nonpecuniary interest in relation to item 7 as he had written part of the grant application for the footpath improvement works in the Dingle.

Recommended that;

A grant of £2283 was approved for a 50% contribution towards the footpath improvement works in The Dingle.

The clerk reported that if this was to be approved then Warrington Borough Council would have to manage the project and be responsible for employing the contractor to undertake the works. The amount of £2283 will be paid on completion via an invoice from Warrington Borough Council.

8. BYP project grant application

Recommended that;

A grant of £2,950 was approved for the funding of a School and Community Youth Worker for the BYP project, subject to the BYP providing a full job description and clearer bank statements. A representative from the BYP project was asked to attend

the Parish Council meeting in February if the documentation is provided in time for this to be an agenda item.

It was noted that no grant can be awarded automatically every year. The BYP project would have to apply for a grant via the grant procedure for any future funding.

9. Stockton Heath Festival Grant application

Recommended that;

A grant of £1,100 was approved for a contribution towards running the Stockton Heath Festival for 2024.

If awarded by the Parish Council payment would have to be made in April 2024, with the funds to be taken out of the grant budget for 2024/2025.

10. Parish Hall Income and Expenditure and Hallmaster reports

The quarterly budget review and Hallmaster reports for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 for the Parish Hall were reviewed.

Parish Hall income & expenditure (net)				
Apr-23	Income	Accumulative		Expenditure
			Caretakers wage	985.37
Parish Hall	2830	2830		
Monthly Expenditure	2946.49	-2946.49	Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	488.52
		-116.49	Utilities	1401.64
			Window Cleaning	0
			Safety Inspections	0
			Refuse	70.96
				2946.49
May-23			Expenditure	
			Caretakers wage	985.37
Parish Hall	2100			
Monthly Expenditure	-3667.17		Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	1131.83
			Safety Inspections	0
Total	-1567.17	-1567.17	Window Cleaning	0
		-1683.66	Utilities	674.59
			Refuse	875.38
				3667.17
Jun-23			Expenditure	
			Caretakers wage	985.37

Parish Hall	1800			
Monthly Expenditure	-2366.45		Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	798.96
			Utilities	393.12
Total	-566.45	-566.45	Window Cleaning	0
			Safety Inspections	0
		-2250.11	Refuse	
			Booking System	189
Jul-23			Expenditure	2366.45
			Caretakers wage	985.37
Parish Hall	1760		Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	617.79
Monthly Expenditure	-2216.98		Utilities	613.82
			Safety Inspections	0
Total	-456.98	-456.98	Window Cleaning	0
		-2707.09	Refuse	0
			Training associated with Hall	0
			Expenditure	2216.98
Aug-23			Caretakers wage	985.37
Parish Hall	1365		Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	1228.37
Monthly Expenditure	-2692.75		Utilities	411.01
			Safety Inspections	0
	-1327.75	-1327.75	Window Cleaning	68
Accumulative loss for year to date		-4034.84	Refuse	0
			Training associated with Hall	0
Sep-23				
				2692.75
			Caretakers wage	985.37
Parish Hall	2410		Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	735.38
Monthly Expenditure	-2111.43		Utilities	390.68
			Safety Inspections	0
	298.57	298.57	Window Cleaning	0
Deficit		-3736.27	Refuse	0
			Training associated with Hall	0

				2111.43
Oct-23			Caretakers wage	985.37
			Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	781.64
Parish Hall	2660		Utilities	703.06
Monthly Expenditure	-2470.07		Safety Inspections	0
	189.93	189.93	Window Cleaning	0
			Refuse	0
Deficit		-3546.34	Training associated with Hall	0
			Total	2470.07
Nov-23			Caretakers wage	985.37
			Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	410.86
Parish Hall	1930		Utilities	731.01
Monthly Expenditure	-2127.24		Safety Inspections	0
	-197.24	-197.24	Window Cleaning	0
			Refuse	0
Deficit		-3743.58	Training associated with Hall	0
			Total	2127.24
Dec-23			Caretakers wage	1609.7
			Parish Hall Improvements & Maintenance	2116.31
Parish Hall	1750		Utilities	1039.67
Monthly Expenditure	-5154.68		Safety Inspections	0
			Window Cleaning	389
	-3404.68	-3404.68	Refuse	0
Deficit		-7148.26	Training associated with Hall	0
				5154.68

The clerk reported that Parish Hall income was lower in December as many groups did not hire the hall due to Christmas and the Parish Hall income is always significantly lower in July and August due to the school holidays.

The reports show that for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 the hall has made a loss of £7148.26. There is however another three months of running costs left for the current financial year.

Recommended that;

The Parish Hall income and expenditure report and Hallmaster reports were accepted by the Parish Council.

Councillor L Chapman asked if the report could be amended to include a cumulative total. The report will be added for the financial year 2024/2025.

Councillor M Delaney left the meeting at 10.30am.

11. Quarterly budget review for all income and expenditure

The income and expenditure for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December was discussed and Councillor L Chapman raised minor amendments.

The income and expenditure from 1st April 2003 to 31st December 2023 is as follows;

	Budget	Actual (to 31.12.2023)	Budget Balance
Precept	173799	173799.00	0.00
Bank Interest	1000	2414.20	-1414.20
Parish Hall	20000	18605.00	1395.00
Other	0	117.95	-117.95
Use of reserves to balance budget	16079	0.00	16079.00
		0.00	0.00
Net		194936.15	-
VAT		4465.86	-4465.86
Total Receipts	210878	199402.01	11475.99

The clerk reported that the Parish Council has benefitted from having large reserves and high interest rates which has resulted in a substantial amount of interest being received. A further amount of £1,873.70 interest has been received on 2nd January 2024 and is not in the above figures as these show 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023. There is no further interest which will be paid this financial year, 2023 to 2024 as the Nationwide is now a one-year fixed rate bond which expires in November 2024 and interest from the Skipton will be paid in next financial year 2024/2025.

Parish Hall income remains on target to meet or exceed the budget of £20,000. Previous year income for the Parish Hall is as follows;

Payments	Budget 2023/24	Actual (to 31.12.23)	Budget Balance
Staff Costs	122078	87255.76	34822.24
Maintenance of Parish Council Assets	2000	0.00	2000.00
Utilities	29000	6358.60	22641.40
Insurance	2000	1732.22	267.78
Office Supplies	3500	3280.20	219.80
Annual Subscriptions	500	266.00	234.00
Elections	4000	21662.14	-17662.14
Website	400	320.00	80.00
Grants	6000	5825.00	175.00
Chairman's allowance	100	0.00	100.00
Training	1000	200.00	800.00
Refuse Collections	1000	959.94	40.06
Window cleaning	600	457.00	143.00
Equipment	500	746.98	-246.98
Parish Hall Improvements & maintenance	9000	8316.11	683.89
Bank charges	200	154.20	45.80
Environmental Working Group	4000	1949.22	2050.78
PCSO	20000	13649.50	6350.50
Ranger costs	4000	2803.34	1196.66
Events Committee budget	1000	2170.00	-1170.00
Net Payments		158106.21	52771.79
VAT		4580.83	
Total Payments (excluding ear marked reserves)	210878.00	162687.04	52771.79

The clerk reported the utility budget will be considerably under budget as energy prices have fallen and the assistant clerk had secured a cheap deal for the gas and electric.

The cost of the local election in September 2023, £21662.14 has resulted in a considerable overspend on the election budget.

The grant budget for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 shows a balance of £175.00 remaining. However, a further grant of £400.00 has been paid in January 2024 to Open Door at Christmas therefore the grant budget will be overspent by £225.00.

In addition to this, further grant applications have been received, £2283 contribution for the footpath in The Dingle and £2,950 contribution for Broomsfield Youth Project. Potentially if both grants were awarded by the Parish Council this would result in the grant budget being overspent by £5,458.

The grant budget for 2024/2025 however has been increased to £10,000, the 2023/24 budget having been £6,000.

The equipment budget for 2023/2024 was £500.00 and £746.96 has been spent which means that this budget is overspent by £246.98 already and there is three months left of this financial year. The equipment budget for 2024/2025 has been increased to £1,000, the 2023/24 budget having been £500.

The clerk noted that the events committee budget was set at £1,000, however the replacement of the Christmas lights outside the Parish Hall cost £2170.00. As such this budget has been overspent by £1170.

Recommended that;

The review of income and expenditure for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 was approved by the Parish Council.

12. Ear Marked Reserves

The earmarked reserves for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December was discussed and Councillor L Chapman raised a minor amendment.

The expenditure to date from the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 was as follows;

Ear-Marked Reserves	Reserve for 2023/24	Utilised Reserve	Budget Balance
Elections (ER)	10000.00	0.00	10000.00
Parish Hall (ER)	40000.00	3718.60	36281.40
Youth Work (ER)	30000.00	0.00	30000.00
Parish Ranger Van Replacement (ER)	20000.00	0.00	20000.00
Environmental Improvement Schemes (ER)	10000.00	0.00	10000.00
Community Scheme/ consultant costs for Local Plan (ER)	30000.00	3545.28	26454.72
South Warrington Library, Stockton Heath (ER)	1500.00	0.00	1500.00
Contingencies (ER)	50950.00	0.00	50950.00
Budget deficit 23/24 (ER)	16079.00	0.00	16079.00
Public Health (ER)	37500.00	0.00	37500.00
Public Amenity (ER)	37500.00	0.00	37500.00
Totals	283529.00	7263.88	276265.12

The total amount spent of the reserves was £7263.88 for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023.

This was for work for the installation of the new windows (£700) and a new fire exit door (£2725) and purchase of replacement new chairs (£293.60). These amounts will be taken from the Parish Hall earmarked reserve and a payment of £3545.28 has been taken from the community costs/consultation costs for PDO earmarked reserve. The clerk reported that she had contacted Lymm Parish Council as no invoice has been received since September for the Local Plan costs.

Recommended that;

The earmarked reserves have been noted as above.

13. Five Year Review of income and expenditure

This is based on a 5% increase for 2025/2026 and a 3% increase for every year after this. There is however concern about the current rate of inflation.

The clerk was asked to amend the five-year review of income and expenditure to a 3% increase for 2025/2026 and then 3% for each additional year, rather than a 5% increase for 2025/2026.

Payments	Budget 2024/2025	Projected 2025/2026	Projected 2026/2027	Projected 2027/2028	Projected 2028/2029	Projected 2029/2030
		3% increase	3% increase	3% increase	3% increase	3% increase
Staff Costs	130500	134415	138447	142601	146879	151285
Maintenance of Parish Council Assets	2000	2060	2122	2185	2251	2319
Utilities	15000	15450	15914	16391	16883	17389
Insurance	2000	2060	2122	2185	2251	2319
Office Supplies	4000	4120	4244	4371	4502	4637
Annual Subscriptions	500	515	530	546	563	580
Elections	4000	4120	4244	4371	4502	4637
Website	500	515	530	546	563	580
Grants	10000	10300	10609	10927	11255	11593
Chairman's allowance	100	103	106	109	113	116
Training	1000	1030	1061	1093	1126	1159
Refuse Collections	1200	1236	1273	1311	1351	1391
Window cleaning	800	824	849	874	900	927
Equipment	1000	1030	1061	1093	1126	1159
Parish Hall Improvements & maintenance	10000	10300	10609	10927	11255	11593
Bank charges	250	258	265	273	281	290
Environmental Working Group	4000	4120	4244	4371	4502	4637
PCSO	20000	20600	21218	21855	22510	23185
Youth	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ranger costs	4000	4120	4244	4371	4502	4637
Events Committee budget	1000	1030	1061	1093	1126	1159
Totals	211850	218206	224752	213494	238439	245592

Recommended that;

The five-year review of income and expenditure was approved by the Parish Council once it has been amended to a 3% increase every year.

14. Phone/mobile/Broadband contract

RESOLVED that;

The Parish Council was to take out a new fixed term contract with BT for a two-year contract for the landline/Broadband and for four mobile phones at the cost of £77.95 plus VAT (prices subject to increases) with a £20 conversion charge to retain the landline telephone number.

Costs of up to £100 plus VAT were approved for the hire of IT reconfiguration if required.

15. Loft insulation for the Parish Hall

The assistant clerk has obtained three quotes for loft insulation.

RESOLVED that;

UK Insulation is appointed to undertake loft insulation work at the Parish Hall at the cost of £1610.25 plus VAT.

Councillor P Lewenz reported that it would be interesting to monitor energy consumption after the loft has been insulated and the cavity wall insulation has been done.

16. RAAC concrete survey for Appleton Parish Hall

RESOLVED that;

No further action was required.

17. Purchase of replacement office shreddier

RESOLVED that;

The expenditure for a new replacement shreddier was approved up to £300 plus VAT.

18. Buckinghamshire Building Society account

The assistant clerk noted that the account was subject to the following conditions:

The Parish Council can only withdraw up to a maximum of £20,000 at a time and/or make two withdrawals without incurring a penalty.

Once the account has been opened and the Parish Council has the account details a bank transfer of £10,000 will be made as an initial deposit.

RESOLVED that;

The terms of the account were noted and the conditions for each bank account will be considered when transferring funds.

19. Trade Waste Contract for 2024/2025

The Parish Council currently has a waste collection contract with Warrington Borough Council which is due to end on 31st March 2024.

The current contract for the financial year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 is £803.04. (no VAT is charged) and there is no weight restriction.

In the past the Parish Council has employed Veolia and whilst the initial costs may be low, there was a fuel surcharge and weight surcharge which continually adds costs throughout the year. Veolia charged £958.12 for the financial year 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

The three quotes for trade waste collection for 2024/2025 were considered.

RESOLVED that;

The Parish Council would renew the contract with Warrington Borough Council for the trade waste collection at the amount of £913.64 for 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

20. Average speed cameras

Councillor K Critchley had circulated a proposal for the Parish Council to fund two average speed cameras in Appleton Thorn at the cost of £57,856.17.

The clerk had contacted the Society of Local Councils Clerks for legal advice. They have confirmed the following;

A Parish Council only has power to enter such projects with the consent of the Highway authority. In my view you are being asked to make a grant to the Police commissioner to enable them to carry out the project in conjunction with the Highway Authority. The terms of the funding agreement appear to confirm this view It is therefore not a contract as such to provide the service and does not need to comply with the Council's financial regulations. It does however have to comply with any conditions that the Council has regarding grants.

Councillor K Critchley stated that the Parish Council would have to sign the contract with the Police and Crime Commissioner before May 2024.

The clerk expressed concern that the Police and Crime Commissioner may not be re-elected in May and that the Police and Crime Commissioner had not supplied a written proposal. The legal advice is that the Police and Crime Commissioner would have to apply via the grant procedure. There was also concern over some unknown costs for the project which included a possible £10,000 per annum reoccurring cost (£5,000 per speed camera) for calibration of the speed cameras. It was not known if this cost was included in the maintenance package offered.

Recommended that;

The Parish Council considers funding two average speed cameras in Appleton Thorn at the cost of £57,856.17.

It was however noted that further details and clarification would be required.