



Garstang Town Council

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Finance and Amenities Committee Meeting, 31st October 2023 Minutes

Minutes of the Finance and Amenities Committee meeting, held at Garstang library, on 31 October 2023, 7.30pm.

Present

Chairman: Councillor Atkinson
Councillors present: Atkinson, Allan and Rogers
Councillor Pearson (ex-officio members)

Also present: Town Clerk/RFO Edwina Parry

016(2023-24) Apologies for Absence

Councillors Dyer and Halford.

017(2023-24) Declaration of Interests and Dispensations

No declarations of interest were received.

The Town Clerk/RFO approved the dispensation form for Councillors Allan and Rogers (who live within the township of Garstang) as per standing orders 13 hi)

018(2023-24) Public Participation

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

019(2023-24) Minutes of Finance Committee meeting, 11 July 2023

A copy of the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 11 July 2023 had been circulated.

Resolved: The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 11 July 2023 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

020(2023-24) Appointment of Deputy Chairman

Resolved: Councillor Allan was elected deputy Chairman of the Finance and Amenities Committee.

021(2023-24) Receipts and payments account year 2023/24 (Q2)

The Committee noted that Full Council have access to Scribe.

The RFO was asked to resend the link to all Councillors and check that they have accessed the accounts. It was agreed that the Finance and Amenities Committee should have a 'Introduction to Scribe' tuition from the Scribe team.

The Committee were asked to approve Q2 receipts and payment and approve the bank reconciliation at 30 September 2023.

The RFO explained the background to why there was a minus figure against the Lloyds payment card. Scribe had offered accounting advice to the RFO to ensure that this figure would be detailed positive going forward.

Councillor asked for an explanation on codes 12 Room hire and 13 Office Accommodation Chair responded and recommended that going forward for 2024/25 the 2 codes would be merged into 1.

Resolved: The Committee approved Q2 receipts and payment and the Chair signed a copy of the approved bank reconciliation at 30 September 2023.

022(2023-24) Review of Income Streams as per financial regs

The Committee noted that the Town Council's financial regulations state:

9. INCOME 9.3. The council will review all fees and charges at least annually, following a report of the Clerk.

Councillors were asked to consider the fees, as detailed below and make any recommendations for the Full Council to approve.

a) Allotments rent

Currently as per tenancy agreement (11th January 2010), annual increase of £1 (2023; £44)

Resolved: It was noted that the allotments working party would be meeting with the current tenants and that, as part of the working party's review, recommendations would be brought forward, for Full Council approval.

b) Scout Hut rent Currently the rent is £60 (approved Full Council 106 (2019-20). The tenancy agreement states that the rent is to be reviewed every 5 year period. Next review May 2025.

Resolved: The Committee recommended no changes and that the rent be reviewed in May 2025, as per the tenancy agreement.

023(2023-24) Appointment of Internal auditor

The RFO reported that she had received notice that the internal auditor, used for the last 2 years, would cease trading from the 31 October 2023.

The RFO advised that a new internal auditor is appointed. Guidance on appointing an internal auditor can be found on [JPAG section 4](#)

The RFO had sought quotations and summarised the responses, along with individual quotes, on Teams.

Resolved: The Committee considered the quotations received and appointed Supplier D, Account-ant Yorkshire, to carry out the Internal Audit for year end 2024.

024(2023-24) Review of Reserves policy

The RFO reported that as part of the budget review and good practice, the Committee should review the [Council's Reserve policy](#). To assist a reference point is [5.24 – 5.35, JPAG](#).

Resolved:

- a) The Committee accepted the RFO's advice and asked the RFO to update the Elections Reserve section, along with the reference to the JPAG Governance & Accountability Practitioners' Guide 2021 with JPAG, March 2023.
- b) It was noted that the Council does not hold an Insurance reserve – to enable the Council to meet the excesses of claims not covered by insurance. The Committee amended the policy to recommend that any excess claims be met by Reserves (code 52) or Legal & Consultancy contingency (code 51)

The Committee agreed to make these recommendations to Full Council for approval on 20/11/2023.

025(2023-24) Risk Register, quarterly review

The Chair reported that he and Councillor Rogers had met to discuss a review of a revised format for Risk Management purposes.

A lengthy discussion took place about the 'Risk management' documentation that Councillor Rogers had been working on, in consultation with the Chair.

The RFO reminded the Committee of minute 09(2023-24) Risk Register, quarterly review

Resolved: That the Chair of Finance Committee, Councillor Rogers and the RFO sit together and review the risk register and what can be done to improve it.

The RFO had not yet been included in any discussions and that before any further discussion took place, a meeting should be held as per the minute. Any documentation should be relative to the size of the Council.

Resolved: The Council's approved Risk register was considered, the following point were noted:

Point 24 Risk assessments were still outstanding and detailed 'Red'; Chair of Finance and Personnel to engage with the RFO to address completion of assessments and report back to the next Finance Committee meeting.

The Committee further resolved that minute 09(2023-24) be adhered to and that the documents prepared by Cllr Rogers be reviewed against the existing approved Council documentation.

026(2023-24) Asset Register

The Committee noted that the current Asset register will be superseded, by using the [Asset register within Scribe](#). The RFO is required to enter the data onto the register.

027(2023-24) Amenities

A) Committee Scope

The Committee noted that at the June 2023 council meeting Councillor Atkinson raised the following Agenda Item, which was subsequently withdrawn due to limited meeting time being left to have a thorough discussion on the topics

Amenities Management, Councillor Atkinson – for decision

The workload associated with the management of the Council's amenities is significant and the amenities form a central pillar of the council's investment in the community. Despite efforts to bring this into the Finance Committee (through the formation of the Finance and Amenities Committee) there is still not enough focus on of Councillors time in this area, and more work is required. Last year Councillor Brooks proposed that a separate group organisation should be formed, and in the discussion, it was noted that with the Council only just taking on Kepple Lane Park it was too early to tell, the proposal was then withdrawn. Councillor Atkinson is raising this now that a new Council has been formed as to whether there is a new way forward required, any new ideas or drivers in the council to take the management of the Amenities forward productively. No proposal is suggested through the hope of a discussion through which the Council can decide how it wishes to proceed

The Finance and Amenities Committee was asked if the agenda item should be referred back to Full Council with any appropriate comments.

Resolved: The Finance and Amenities Committee agreed that the item should be referred to Full Council. The Committee further resolved that the Committee did not believe that the Council staff resources or Councillors currently do not have the capacity to proactively manage Council's amenities.

B) Current Amenities Issues

As part of a continued effort to highlight potential or current issues with the Council Amenities Councillor Atkinson has developed the list detailed below, a number of these are already on the radar of the committee but included for consistency

Multiple Assets/Other

- Grass cutting contract not formalised with Wyre Council
- Title deeds do not show up on land registry website (likely due to the age of the deed transfers)
- Drum-beat of Tree Surveys (KLP and MLP recently surveyed but regularity required, and Pat Seed Garden and War Memorial never surveyed in recent history)
- Ongoing review of Allotments underway
- Council storage facilities

Scout Hut

- Tenancy Agreement requires alteration due to incorrect boundary being detailed

Kepple Lane Park

- Trim Trail Gym Instruction Sign Damaged

- Musical Panel broken in the Toddlers Play Area
- Matting required to be replaced on the Spinning Arm, Large Rope swing and potentially the zip wire
- Goal mouth on Kepple Lane Park (also raised by Councillor Rogers)
- Boundary with Elite Motors require attention
- Long term annual maintenance contract not tendered
- Dip space requires 'a plan' (plan made and shared with Committee but not implemented)
- Storage units require painting due to ASB
- Removal of old plastic planters (transferred to the Town Council)

Moss Lane Park

- Poor field drainage
- Tree issue with neighbouring resident
- Agreement for Junior Football Club to utilise the field not yet formalised
- Concern raised informally by Tree Surveyor around boundary wall and dead trees in neighbouring property
- Continued lack of drainage within the trampoline
- Damage to fence around play area caused by strimming of grass
- Gates at Police Station and Church Street entrance as a minimum require re-painting
- Plan for ex-Councillor Leech's Mayoral Funds which have been transferred to the Council
- Goalmouths on the football pitch are excessively and unnecessarily muddy and grassless like those at Kepple Lane.

War Memorial

- Requires areas of re-pointing and inspection
- No disabled access
- Tree surveys

Pat Seed Garden

- Long term plan for repaving
- Tree surveys

The Committee were asked to review the list and consider the most appropriate next steps.

Resolved: The Committee agreed that the list be referred to Full Council along with Item A, with the following additions.

- a) under Multiple Assets/Other add the potential acquisition of Cherestanc Square
- b) Add under both parks, the rolling replacement of play equipment

028(2023-24) Budget 2024/25, RFO and Councillor Atkinson

Background Information

Reference [The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners' Guide March 2023 section 5.24 – 5.27](#)

The Town Council's budget is comprised of its anticipated revenue expenditure for the year, based on the annual running costs and what information the RFO has received from Councillors about any new projects which need to be included. This sits alongside decisions by the Council on reserve levels.

The Town Council's principal income is derived from its precept. The precept is calculated as follows:

- The Tax base is calculated each year after receipt from the Valuation Office of the latest Valuation list.
- A "tax base" is the number of Band D equivalent dwellings in a local authority area. To calculate the tax base for an area, the number of dwellings in each council tax band is adjusted to take account of any discounts, premiums or exemptions.
- The Town council is notified of the Tax Base (set by Wyre Council, around 2nd/3rd week of December). The TC will then be able to use this information to calculate the Band D equivalent, by taking the precept requirement divided by the tax base.

Councillors noted the budget timetable (in the Appendix).

Councillors considered the circulated draft budget to consider alongside the current position of the Councils reserves and overall finances.

The precept has been set at zero to highlight the shortfall.

In terms of Band D equivalent this would need to be determined following receipt of the Tax Base from Wyre Council. The historical precept figures are detailed below.

	2022/23	2023/24
Precept	£97,033	£114,188
Tax base	1,838.05	1,883.41
Band D Equivalent	£52.79	£60.63
Change on Previous Year	£2.32	£7.84
% Change on Previous Year	4.6%	14.85%

The Committee considered the following reports:

- Forecast report 2023/24 (summary and monthly)
- Draft budget 2024/25
- Budget notes
- Current EMR balances

Project Fund Requests and EMRs

Reference

148(2023-24)Precept/Budget 2024/2025, Councillor Atkinson and RFO

Councillor Atkinson explained that the Finance Committee would meet on 31 October 2023 to discuss the budget for 2024/2025. Councillors were asked to provide projects and associated finance requirements/budgets (based on estimates obtained) so that they may be included in next year's precept.

Resolved: Councillors put forward the following projects:

- i. Cherestanc Square – any foreseeable costs relating to the possible Town Council ownership of the Square (non-recurring and annual)
- ii. Refurbishment of the 2 Council Parks; Kepple Lane and Moss Lane.
- iii. Moss Lane Park – works to tackle the drainage issues.
- iv. Garstang Waves project.
- v. Community Events e.g. Switch on of Christmas Lights, celebration of The Olympics 2024.
- vi. Allotments
- vii. Christmas Lights
- viii. Consider increasing the grants budget
- ix. Replacement of assets
- x. Community Hall funding.

Resolved: The Committee members reviewed the budget for 2024/2025 and recommended the following:

Receipts	Discussion and action	Recommendations to Full Council
Code 4	What was £17.50? Refund of bank charges RBS. Remove 2024/25 budget figure of 524.96 code 4 Rename code 4 Other receipts. £17.50 should be allocated to Code 22 receipt	None
Code 60	£420 Cllr Leech's charity monies	Proposal move into Moss Lane EMR
Code 5	increase budget receipt figure to 750	
Staff costs	Put in a 5% uplift/increase. Clerk reported Pay awards are imminent	
Payments		
Code 12 & 13		Amalgamate both codes into one code

Code 16 Insurance	Allowed for additional insurance for G&RD chain. Increase to £1775	
Code 23 H& S	Move into an EMR if not spent	1/4/24 any underspend move into an EMR if not spent
Code 24 Audit	Further to earlier internal audit resolution include an extra £50 £793.80 + £50	
Mayoralty Cost centre		
Code 28	Discuss Full Council future of G&RD chain	Discuss Full Council future of G&RD chain
Amenities		
Code 30	High Actual cost due to external grass cutting staff cover payment	
New EMR for Staff contingency under Administration	Add code for overtime and reserve for unplanned absence/leave and additional supplier required	For discussion
Codes 31 & 32	If don't spend monies by end 2024 transfer any surplus monies into one EMR titled Lengthsman Assets	For discussion
Code 38	Any underspend by end 2024 transfer to a new EMR	Any underspend by end 2024 transfer to a new EMR
Code 40 & 42	Merge codes together for 2024/25	
Community Internal		
45 Remembrance Sunday	Any underspend by end 2024 transfer to a new EMR	Any underspend by end 2024 transfer to a new EMR
Code 61 Garstang Waves	Nil impact to budget	
Code 47		Review grant policy, possible amendment to submit applications by certain date.
Code 49 Christmas Lights	Wyre confirmed increase of £700. Clerk to check if this will be reoccurring additional monies for future years.	
Ear Marked reserves		

Code 35 Kepple Lane playing field	£8,000; £4k to save, £4k to spend	
Code 36 Moss Lane playing field	Reduce from £6,000 to £4,000	
Code 62 Drainage	Reduce from £10,000 to £5,000	
Code 63 Allotments	Reduce from £7,000 to £3,000	
Code 64 Community Hall	Reduce from £10,000 to £5,000	
Code 58 Heritage banners	Transfer £5,000 into Moss Lane Park Drainage	Recommend to Full Council transfer £5,000 into Moss Lane Park Drainage
Code 59 GGPB	£4,375.61	Full Council is this figure required?
Totality October's meeting asked for an extra £48,000 Increase 47% on last year's tax base		

029(2023-24) Date of next meeting
9 January 2024.

The meeting finished at: 10.03pm

Appendix

Budget 2024/25 Timeline

Date	Meeting	Information
16 October 2023	Full Council Meeting	Councillors were given notice that they will need provide budgetary figures at October's meeting. Councillors are asked to ensure that suitable estimates are obtained to support budget requests.
20 November 2023	Full Council Meeting	Draft precept figure and budget for comment by Full Council.
9 January 2024	Finance Committee Meeting	Finance committee meeting will include agenda item for finance committee to make any final changes to the budget, which will at this time include the Tax Base as provided by Wyre Council. Finance Committee will approve a draft to be submitted to Full Council for approval. This to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget paper• Band D equivalent using tax base provided by Wyre Council.• Any changes to EMRs
15 January 2024	Full Council Meeting	Full Council to approve Precept figure and budget.