

**EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL**

**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 26<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024 at 7.00pm**

Committee Members: Cllr Farren\* (Chair)  
Cllr M Belsey (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Ody (Town Mayor)  
Cllr J Belsey\* (Deputy Town Mayor)  
Cllrs: Barnett\*, Gibbs\* Gibson, Peacock\* and Reeves\*

Others present: Deputy Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer  
\*\* present on zoom = not an official attendance

\*= absent

156. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public present, therefore the Chairman moved along to the next item.

157. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were accepted from:

Cllr. Gibbs	Personal Commitment
Cllr. Peacock	Personal Commitment
Cllr. Farren	Work Commitment
Cllr. Reeves	Personal Commitment
Cllr. J. Belsey	Personal Commitment

Substitutions:

Cllr. Hughes for Cllr. Peacock
Cllr. Whittaker for Cllr. Reeves

RESOLVED: To accept the above apologies and substitutions.

158. MINUTES

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the meeting dated 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and the minutes from the Personnel sub-committee on 24 June 2024.

Ian Gibson noted that he attended the NALC Neighbourhood Plan seminar which was disappointing and the only relevant item in respect of the future of Neighbourhood Planning was information on funding and he was looking to claim back the fee of £40. It was noted that no staff had attended this event.

159. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations.

160. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

It was noted that the budget setting process has begun, and the working group will shortly be meeting to progress this.

161. TO RECEIVE THE LIST OF APPROVED PAYMENTS

The Committee received the payment lists for June 2024, July 2024 and August 2024. The RFO reported that the total payments for the three months was £373,684.31 which were detailed in the appendix within the report.

RESOLVED: The account entries were approved.

162. TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES - POSITION STATEMENT

The committee noted the position. Concerns were noted about the underspend in staffing costs. The RFO noted this was due to the cost of living pay increase not yet being agreed for the current financial year, once this was settled any increase would be backdated from April 2024, therefore, this is the reason behind the underspend.

It was noted the Civic Pride had a substantial favourable variance. This is due to a grant of £5,000 being received in relation to the fountain, the sale of the tractor and other contributing factors.

It was noted that more than 50% of our expected income has been received due to summer events ie weddings, with less bookings over the winter months.

The RFO was asked to provide a forward forecast for the end of year and noted this was difficult currently as we are not yet halfway through the financial year plus the situation with staff salaries as noted previously. However, it should be possible to produce a forecast for the December meeting. It was noted that this information would be helpful for the budget working group.

163. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS & HR UPDATE

The Committee noted the report on the current KPI's for invoices and absence.

164. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: To support the A & T Committee recommendation to increase the cemetery fees from April 2025 by 10%.

165. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decision to sell the tractor for the sum of £1,500 plus VAT was noted and that the VAT would be payable back to the Inland Revenue.

166. COMMUNITY REVENUES GRANT

RESOLVED: To agree the allocation of funds as detailed below for the Community Revenue Grants.

Organisation	Recommendation
East Grinstead CAP Debt help	£800
The Ukaholics	£250
Arise Counselling Services	£700
Meridian FM	£300
Menshare Listening Group	£1,200
4Sight Vision Support	£800
East Grinstead Flower Club	£50
Imberhorne School	£400

The late application for Imberhorne School was accepted and it was noted that EGBA provide additional support and mentoring for the scheme. Many charities are currently resource stretched and therefore it is good to be able to support them, in particular those that support mental wellbeing and provide such services as counselling which can be difficult to access.

It was noted that the Twinning Association are holding an event in 2027 – and a plan for finances for this will be required and Council need to consider budgeting to support this. This item was not relevant to the grants, but the Deputy Town Clerk was asked to check if a working group had been set up at the previous council meeting.

It was noted that the ring-fenced grants have previously been approved.

167. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

The report was noted and that the new Clerk will be in position for this event.

Cllr. Whittaker noted that he had met with the Town Clerk prior to her departure, and everything is in place and the Royal British Legion are grateful for the Town Council's involvement in respect of the road closures and recruiting of volunteers.

168. INSURANCE CONTRACT

The RFO reported that the Council have been offered the option to extend the current agreement for a further 2 years on the same basis which would extend the agreement up to August 2027. In addition to this the RFO has negotiated with the broker that if the contract extension on offer is taken then the Council will be eligible for a refund on this years fees of £1,621 which will in turn lower the premium actually paid this year and will ensure that the Council can start the 2 year extension period from a lower point

RESOLVED: To agree a 2-year extension period to August 2027 which will ensure rate stability which will in turn protect the Council from any unexpected large increase in cost and will ease the process of accuracy of budgeting for insurance expenditure in future years.

It was noted that in general all insurances have increased over the past 12 months and thanks was given to the officer for negotiating the longer-term deal on behalf of the Council.

169. EARMARKED RESERVES

The report was noted.

It was noted that election cost reserves are budgeted for over the 4-year period in between elections and another £6,000 will be added to this reserve at the end of this financial year.

Neighbourhood Plan reserves include funding for projects within the plan such as St Margarets Loop.

All earmarked reserves will be reviewed at the budget setting process.

170. STAFFING AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEMES

It was noted that after 6 years of service, Sarah Jones is leaving her role and Ellie Lester who has been working for the Council for the past 6 months has taken on the position of Cemetery and Compliance Manager. Jazmin Merricks returns from maternity leave on the 30 September and will be reducing her hours from 37 to 30 and the additional hours will be picked up by Claire Woodcock. Richard Botting left his position as caretaker in September and Joyce Nokes has been recruited and started her employment in September. Sam Heynes the replacement Town Clerk will start on the 1<sup>st</sup> November.

RESOLVED: The staff changes were noted, and it was approved that Ellie Lester, Joyce Noakes and Sam Heynes join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

There being no other business the Chair announced that the next meeting of the Committee will be held on **Thursday 19 December 2024** and ended the meeting at 19.48pm

SIGNED:

CHAIRMAN