

**Minutes of the Meeting of Finance held in Rickards Hall on 27 January 2025 at 7:30 pm**

---

Present: Cllrs. Angela Baker, Sarah Compton (*Vice-Chairwoman*), Michael Gemmell Smith, Carey Jacques, Alan Layland, Stuart McGregor, Michael Stockdale  
In attendance: Town Clerk  
The Meeting started at 19.30

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologise where accepted from Cllrs Read and Sumner.

**2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination**

None.

**3 Public Questions and Statements**

None.

**4 To confirm the minutes of the Finance Committee held on 18 November 074/01-5**

**Resolved:** minutes of the Finance Committee held on the 18th November 074/1-5 signed by the Deputy Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

**5 Matters arising from the minutes for report and not covered elsewhere (for Information Only)**

**5.1 Business Stream dispute re billing for Blossoms Park toilets: to receive an update**

Update given on the water supply and waste removal from Blossoms Park. The Cricket Club had the forms to be completed and return to Sutton and East Surrey (SES) Water.

**6 Financial Statement and Analysis of Receipts and Payments (financial Report Pack)**

Members noted the financial reports for the months October - December 2024.

**6.1 To ratify the expenditure up to 31 December 2024**

**Ratified:** the list of expenditure up to 31 December 2024.

**6.2 To approve the list of expenditure for payment**

**Resolved:** the list of payments and expenditure.

**6.3 To review expenditure over £500 up to 31 December 2024**

Members noted expenditure items over £500 were published on the website under Finance and Transparency pages.

**6.4 To receive the income up to 31 December 2024**

Members noted the received income report up to 31 December 2024. There were no comments.

**6.5 To receive the Financial I&E Budget Comparisons report**

Members noted that at the December Finance meeting a predicted underspend would possibly be around £23k, due to unbudgeted expenditure (for example the Kubota); this was now estimated around £13k.

Received the Financial Comparison report, there were no questions.

**6.6 To confirm the I&E Accounts summary**

Members confirmed the Income and Expenditure accounts summary up to 31 December 2024.

**6.7 To receive and confirm the Consolidated Balance Sheet**

Members noted that the Football Foundation Grant annual return had been submitted, this had been approved and the second year funding would be released. The Earmarked Reserves (EMR) had £2,644 grant to be moved back to General Reserves (GR). Members received and confirmed the Consolidated Balance Sheet. There were no anomalies noted or questions.

**6.8 To receive and confirm the Financial Summary Cashbook**

Members received and confirmed the Financial Summary Cashbook.

**6.9 To confirm the Bank reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for October, November and December 2024**

Cllr Layland confirmed he had checked the bank accounts and procurement card reconciliations for October, November and December. There were no issues. The reports are available for Members to view any time.

**Resolved:** to confirm the Bank Reconciliation statements and Procurement Card for October, November and December.

**6.10 To approve and accept the transfers into, out of and between bank accounts**

Members received the report on bank account transfers, as reported with the meeting papers and

**Resolved:** to confirm the transfers into, out of, and between bank accounts.

**6.11 To note and advise on invoices outstanding over 3 months**

Members noted there are no outstanding invoices.

**7 Other Financial Business**

**7.1 Charities Accounts**

Members noted that all the Charities accounts have been submitted to the Charities Commission website.

**7.2 Lloyds Bank: to receive an update on issues with closing and transferring the funds**

Members were informed that the issues with Lloyds Bank had been resolved and the funds had been moved into the Council's main current account. These funds would be invested into the CCLA account going forward as it provides higher interest returns. The Lloyds bank would be closed.

**7.3 To note: The Precept 2025/26 submitted to SDC following full Council resolution (January) confirming and approving the budget**

Members noted that the Precept request for 2025/26 had been submitted to Sevenoaks District Council for £804,054.00.

**7.4 To note: Projects in the current budget year to move in to Earmarked Reserves**

Members noted that the movement of uncompleted projects and potential funds from Earmarked Reserves (EMR) would be reported at the end of the year at the March meeting.

**7.5 To review the consolidated budget and predicted year-end (31 March 2025)**

Members reviewed the consolidated budget and predicted year end (31 March 2025); there were no questions.

## 8 Governance

### 8.1 To receive new and updated policies and strategies and consider recommendation to council for adoption

Members received the new and updated policies and strategies and recommend they are presented to full council for adoption.

#### 8.1.1 Digital Communications and Social Media Policy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the Digital Communications and Social Media Policy.

#### 8.1.2 Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the Digital Communications and Social Media Strategy.

#### 8.1.3 Communications and Community Engagement Strategy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the Communications and Community Engagement Strategy.

#### 8.1.4 Recording and Filming of Council and Committee Meetings Policy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the updated Recording and Filming of Council and Committee Meetings Policy.

#### 8.1.5 Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the Digital IT and Cyber Security Policy.

#### 8.1.6 Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the updated Digital IT and Cyber Security Strategy.

#### 8.1.7 Market Gazebos and Structures including in Adverse Weather Policy

**Resolved:** to recommend to Market Gazebos and Structures including Adverse Weather Policy,

### 8.2 To confirm a council written style guide

Members note the new style guide was the first draft and that an updated version would be presented to Council, and

**Resolved:** to recommend to Council to adopt the new written style guide.

## 8.3 Leases

### 8.3.1 To receive and confirm the renewal draft lease for the Eden Valley Museum

*Cllr Layland advised a personal interest as a trustee of the Museum, and did not take part in the discussion or voting.*

Members noted that the lease renewal for Eden Valley Museum as tenants of Church House had been being reported to council. The Lease Negotiation Group and the Town Clerk had reviewed the draft lease renewal and liaised with the Council's solicitor over some of the points in the lease. Council had raised the question of considering a peppercorn rent. As far as establishing best rental value, the advice received back from the solicitor was that provided Council can show that it has considered all aspects of the letting and not just monetary income (things such as added community value, etc.) then it could show a peppercorn rent and could be considered suitable in this instance. If this was to be considered the Service Level Agreement amount would need to be reduced commensurate. For now, the draft lease has assumed an annual rent based on current rental charges. Members discussed this and noted that the Council currently provided a and SLA grant to cover the rent, but if at some point decided to change this or that the Museum financial

position changed, the peppercorn rent would prevent Council from ensuring best value is obtained. It could also be setting a precedent.

Members unanimously,

**Resolved:** to confirm issuing the draft lease in its current form so that the EVM trustees could view and consider, and then report back to the Lease Negotiating Group.

**Resolved:** to continue with annual rent fee and on an annual review using the RPI as per other rent agreements and the fees and charges.

### **8.3.2 To receive update on the Forge Musical Theatre (formally Forge Singers) draft lease**

Members noted the Forge Musical Theatre (FMT) lease arrangements had been being reported to Council since May 2023. A meeting had taken place recently with members from the FMT, Cllr Baker and the Town Clerk. It had been agreed to revisit the draft lease to address some of its language and terms, with a new draft was to be issued and a follow-up meeting arranged to discuss any questions that may arise. Members of the Lease Negotiation Group would review the updated lease and the final draft to be presented to Governance Committee to confirm. There were no questions.

### **8.4 Health and Safety Audit Report**

Members noted WorkNest had attended on 17 January for another Health and Safety (H&S) audit. The July audit had focused on the Council's buildings and sites with several recommendations which were being worked through including legionella assessments for five of the Council's buildings. Overall the July audit had no urgent actions and was pleased to see that the H&S standards were good, and that there was a good understanding for H&S requirements. The recent audit, the Town Clerk had asked to focus on the Council's administration and record keeping and the online systems.. All open spaces monitoring was well maintained with appropriate weekly, monthly and quarterly checks; the office monitoring records and council buildings monitoring needed more regularity with the checks. During the audit, time was spent on updating the monitoring forms with more pertinent questions. There was still work to be done on this area and developing monitoring forms for other areas (for example, community warden and market recording moving to online). At the time of this meeting the full audit report is yet to be received.

Familiarisation and training had been given to all staff over the past week. Some new monitoring forms were being prepared including for the buildings. In addition the E-learning portal had several H&S sessions. To bring the online H&S monitoring system up to date and with the right forms was considerable project which required specific time allocated to it.

There were no questions.

### **8.5 Internal auditor: To confirm and recommend to council to continue with the current auditor Keith Robinson for the next 3-years**

Members noted February 2020 Keith Robertson was appointed as the internal auditor, initially for one year with a further 3-years if satisfied. Full Council confirms the appointment annually as part of its annual contracts confirmation. Both the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk had found Keith to be extremely helpful and had helped to develop improved controls and governance, and recommended that Council continue with the current auditor. It was good practice for council to review its internal audit arrangements as a minimum three yearly. Members unanimously,

**Resolved:** to confirm and recommend to Council to continue with Keith Robertson as internal auditor for a further three years.

The Meeting ended at 20.29