



FINSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

Email: clerk@fininstallparishcouncil.gov.uk

NOTICE OF PARISH COUNCIL MEETING Tuesday 3rd October 2023, 7.30pm at Fininstall Village Hall

Elected members are summoned to attend this meeting to transact the business set out on the following pages.

Gill Lungley

Gill Lungley, Clerk/RFO

26th September 2023

Elected parish council members:

Norman Hewer, Malcom Molloy, Wendy Molloy, Christine Orr-Cooper,
Rosemarie Ryan, Caroline Spencer, Will Taylor (Chairman).

The meeting is open to members of the public who are welcome to address the council at agenda item 5 (Public Forum) to put comments and questions to the meeting regarding this agenda or for future consideration. Individual speaking time may be restricted at the Chairman's discretion, which also applies to any non-member representations at any other time in this meeting.

A G E N D A

1. **Chairman's welcome**
Chairman is to welcome everyone to the meeting and declare it open.
2. **To receive any apologies for absence.**
3. **Declarations of interest:**
 - a) All councillors are reminded to keep their Register of Interests up to date; it is available [online](#).
 - b) All councillors must declare any interest ie. Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest, in items on the agenda and their nature. In keeping with the council's code of conduct, members must leave the meeting during the discussion relating to the item in which the interest has been declared.
4. **To consider any request from a councillor for a dispensation to be allowed to stay in the meeting after declaring an interest.** Such request, in writing, must be given to the Clerk before the meeting starts.
5. **Public Forum.**
 - a) Presentation on Smart Water by Amy Brice, from We Don't Buy Crime, Towns & Villages Project.
 - b) An opportunity for members of the public to raise matters of interest or concern relating to this agenda or for future meetings.
 - c) County and District Councillors and community representatives are invited to present an update on their activities.

6. **To consider the minutes of the previous Council Meeting** held on 5th September 2023 and recommend approval (see pp 3 – 8).
7. **To comment on any planning consultations received and note planning authority decisions made.**
No consultations received at the time of issuing this agenda.
To note an explanation has been requested regarding the non-consultation of application ref. [23/00456](#), The Piggery, Dusthouse Lane (It may be that the parish council is not expected to comment in this instance, re CUPRIO)
8. **FINANCE**
 - a) To note the bank reconciliation (attached page 9).
 - b) To agree the budget comparisons (budget v actual, attached page 10) and agree appropriate revision.
 - c) To consider and authorise payments (schedule attached, page 11).
 - d) To agree to pay regular monthly outgoings by standing order, ie salary and Microsoft 365.
 - e) To agree to pay the annual ICO fee (£35pa) by direct debit.
 - f) To agree the appointment of Internal Auditor, DKE Audit, for 2023/24.
 - g) To consider the purchase of bookkeeping software, Scribe Lite (pp11-12).
 - h) To agree to consider an Internal Controls Policy at the next meeting.
 - i) To agree the Risk Management Policy (pp 13-14)
 - j) To agree the Reserves Policy (pp15-17).
 - k) To note update to HMRC PAYE online account.
 - l) To adopt the updated Asset Register (work in progress) (page 18) and agree the safe disposal of the un-used laptop, item 12.
9. **Clerk's reports for information:**
 - a) Loan arrangements with Bromsgrove DC.
 - b) Solar powered VAS and speed awareness notices.
 - c) To note the WorcsCALC AGM to be held 17/10/2023, 7pm Droitwich
 - d) Updates to:
 - road sweeping request.
 - Lengthsman appointment.
 - play equipment position.
 - newsletter
 - Christmas carols event and to consider road closure procedures and costs.
10. **To consider the following:**
 - a) **The installation of a second-hand bouncer on playing field.** As noted at the previous meeting, Bewdley TC is giving away surplus play equipment which is in good condition and includes a digger.
 - b) **Support for the [Street Watch Scheme](#)** and see page 19.
 - c) **To adopt the General Power of Competence:** report attached pp20-24
 - d) **To consider an application to the Local Council Award Scheme:** Clerk to provide a verbal report.
11. **To note correspondence received:**
 - [Slow Ways](#): connect to the national walking network.
 - [UKSPF Funded Projects](#) (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)
12. **Members to raise items for discussion at next meeting.**
13. **Date, time and venue of next meeting:**
Tuesday 7th November 2023, 7.30pm at Fininstall Village Hall.



All minutes are draft
until approved at
the next meeting.

FINSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

Ref: 07/23 pages 1295 – 1300

MINUTES of the PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 5th September 2023, 7.30 pm at Finstall Village Hall, Finstall

Councillors present: Cllr Will Taylor, Chairman
Cllr Norman Hewer
Cllr Molly Molloy
Cllr Wendy Molloy
Cllr Rosemarie Ryan

Councillors not present: Cllr Christine Orr-Cooper, vice-Chairman,
Cllr Caroline Spencer

In attendance: PCs Jane Brothers and Joanne Barnes (Safer Neighbourhood
Team, for part of meeting)
Gill Lungley, Clerk/RFO

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence.

Both Cllr Christine Orr-Cooper and Cllr Caroline Spencer had submitted apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of interest.

None.

4. Dispensation requests.

None.

5. Public Forum

a) **Members of the public.** No representations.

b) **County and/or District council representatives.** No representations.

c) **PCs Jane Brothers and Joanne Barnes** reported:

- i. No progress with identifying what has happened to the 'speed wagon' ie the speed detection unit that used to operate on the Finstall Road.
- ii. The new Safer Neighbourhood Team details would be issued shortly.
- iii. A new PCSO has been appointed.
- iv. Police Surgeries are held in places of higher footfall; one is held in Aston fields each month and advertised via social media. FPC members would like one in Finstall and could perhaps tie in with one of the village hall's coffee mornings.
- v. There have been no reports of break-ins in Finstall.
- vi. Would find out about the police surveillance operation that is being undertaken on the Oakalls re CCTV and ANPR.
- vii. Would try to attend the council's next meeting which is to receive a presentation about SmartWater.

The Chairman thanked the PCs for attending.

6. To read and consider the minutes of the council meeting held 04/07/2023.

The minutes of the council meeting held 4th July 2023 were:

AGREED a true record of that meeting and signed by the Chairman.

7. PLANNING

To (a) comment on any planning consultations received and (b) note planning authority decisions made, if any.

- a) No consultations had been received.
- b) No updates or decisions had been received.

8. FINANCE

a) To note the bank reconciliation.

The HSBC bank statements to the end of July had been provided, thus the bank reconciliation to 31/07/2023 is as follows:

For period 01/04/2023 – 31/07/2023		
Opening bank balances 01/04/2023	19,370.07	
Add actual receipts for year to date	5,662.24	
Less actual payments for year to date	- 2,869.21	
Add u'p chqs from list below	567.15	
Total	A	£22,730.25
Bank balances as at 31/07/2023		
HSBC Business account	5,018.66	
HSBC Deposit account	1,711.59	
Unity Trust Bank	500.00	
Bromsgrove DC Loan account	15,500.00	
Total	B	£22,730.25
	-	A=B=balance
Unpresented payments at 31/07/2023		
Finstall Village Hall (cheque)	260.00	
St Godwalds PCC (to be paid online)	24.75	
Internal Audit (to be paid online)	282.40	
Total unpresented	567.15	

It was noted that HSBC had not yet transferred the funds to the new bank account which was holding up all payments. The Chairman and Clerk would contact the bank to find out the reason for this and make progress.

It was noted that the cheque for £260 to Finstall Village Hall had not yet been presented to the bank for payment and that it would not be; members agreed to pay the £260 online when the funds have been transferred.

b) To agree the budget comparison (budget v actual).

Due to the delay by HSBC in closing the account and transferring the money, two budget comparisons were presented to show (A) the actual amounts paid out and received and (B) the committed amounts that have yet to be paid, both shown below on page 1300.

c) To consider and authorise payments.

The Clerk, as RFO, confirmed each invoice had been checked to ensure:

- i. Expenditure has been agreed prior to receipt of invoice
- ii. The budget for each purchase had been agreed.
- iii. Each invoice complies with the purchase order and is as expected.
- iv. Each invoice is arithmetically correct including appropriate VAT calculation.
- v. The goods and services have been provided as contracted for.

It was **AGREED** to pay the invoices listed on the schedule below.

Payments for approval at this meeting...			Gross	VAT
Mr W Taylor	Keys to the notice boards for the clerk's use.		18.00	0.00
BWP Creative Ltd	Website deposit	(i) New website agreed 04/07/2023 minute no 10(ii) to ParishCouncilWebsites.co.uk, account name BWP Creative (ii) to be paid for ex-budget, from loan reserve.	238.98	39.83
	Website completion		443.82	73.97
	Website domain registration		144.00	24.00
	Website hosting for 1 year		273.60	45.60
Mrs G Lungley	M/soft 365 Apps for business	(i) Monthly payment for administration tools, (ii) from general admin budget.	10.32	1.72
Mrs G Lungley	Training presentation	(i) Agreed 04/07/2023 minute no. 9€(1) (ii) from training budget.	89.12	0.00

These payments would be effected as soon as the funds have been transferred to the new bank account..

d) To progress the Internal Audit recommendations:

i.To review the council's approach to risk management.

A document had been prepared outlining some of the statutory duties expected of the parish council and other procedures of good practice set out in the Local Council Award Scheme. By identifying these procedures and adopting the relevant policies, the council would minimise its vulnerability relating to governance risks and show it is operating at least at Foundation Award level. The document would be presented to the next council meeting for approval.

For managing finance-related risk, an internal control policy would be presented to the next council meeting for discussion and adoption.

- ii.To adopt a Reserves Policy** which follows the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG) guidance; to assess and set the level of general reserve required (its working balances) and earmarked reserves (sums set aside for future planned commitments). During discussion of this matter, members agreed to use part of the loan reserve (£15,500 currently on loan to Bromsgrove DC) to pay for projects during this financial year, such as new website and playground repairs. A Reserves Policy would be presented to the next council meeting for discussion and adoption.

iii.To ensure compliance with HMRC PAYE requirements.

The payroll provider submits monthly PAYE and NI notification to HMRC. The Clerk is making progress regarding the online gateway account..

- iv.To review the Asset Register** to comply with current guidance and transparency requirements and establish the terms of the investment with the District Council. It was noted that the Transparency Code requires the council to publish details of public land and building assets. The parish council has no public land assets (the playing field and allotments site are both leased from the district council) and the only building assets are the two bus shelters. However for the sake of transparency, it was agreed to publish the list of all council assets. A more detailed register would be maintained showing greater detail of each asset to include both the original cost, date purchased, seller's details, warranty, insurance value and the replacement cost.

e) To consider the grant application from Citizens Advice.

Members considered the total amount provided by the district's parish councils last year and the relevance of this council's contribution.

It was AGREED to donate £300 and to revise the grants budget accordingly.

9. Clerk's reports for information:

e) Loan arrangements with Bromsgrove DC.

As discussed above, steps would be taken to release a portion of the loan.

f) Solar powered VAS and speed awareness notices.

The County Councillor has been asked for advice on the installation of such devices, and his response is awaited.

g) New website now online.

The new website was demonstrated and members were asked to provide information relating to their potted biography, head and shoulders photo, historical background of the parish and of Finstall, and photos of the parish.

h) Bank account update.

Discussed above.

i) To note the next WorcsCALC area committee meeting 13/09/2023.

All members are welcome to attend the online quarterly meeting.

j) To note attendance at Code of Conduct training.

It was noted that Cllrs Will Taylor, Christine Orr-Cooper and Caroline Spencer had attended this online training provided via Bromsgrove District Council, as had the Clerk.

k) We Don't Buy Crime officer to attend next parish council meeting.

This relates to Smart Water property protection, and was noted.

l) Parking complaint update (cars parked in Penmanor blocking in residents).

The resident who had raised this complaint has contacted the county councillor who has contacted the relevant highways officer. The suggestions put forward by the parish council, such as attaching a notice to the windscreen was not well received.

10. To agree the following:

i. The appointment of Lengthsman to fulfil the annual WCC contract.

Despite best efforts it has been difficult to access the Bromsgrove DC Lengthsman team, but if possible arrangements would be made to meet to discuss the scheme.

ii. Appointment of contractor to attend to the surface under the swings at the Penmanor play area and fit new swing chains: £927.

Following a meeting of the Chairman and Clerk with the contractor the work that needs to be done was explained, ie to make up the ground under the swings, fit new swing chains and small repair to the igloo; the cost would be met from the loan reserve.

It was AGREED to appoint the contractor M Wakeman to complete the work required for the cost of £927.

iii. The next newsletter to include an explanation of what the parish council does (as suggested by a resident); agree content, cost and distribution.

Members wished to discuss this in greater detail and agreed to set up a sub-committee consisting of Cllrs W Taylor, N Hewer and if agreeable, C Orr-Cooper and C Spencer.

iv. Arrangements for the annual Christmas carols event (road closure / choir etc).

The date of the annual event was set at Friday 15th December, to start at 7pm. Cllr Caroline Spencer had forwarded information to support the event which was approved and enquiries would be made regarding the road closure arrangements.

11. To respond to consultations.

Members had been provided with the consultation documents and commented as follows:

o) [Boundary consultation](#) on division patterns extended to 19/09/2023.

No comment at this time.

- o) Bromsgrove District Council – [Licensing Policy](#)
No comment at this time.
- c) Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.
No comment at this time.

12. To note correspondence received:

The following documents had been circulated to members:

- WorcsCALC area committee seeks new clerk.
- WorcsCALC updates 23/08 and 23/09.
It was noted that Bewdley Town Council has two pieces of play equipment (bouncy spring seat and a sit on hand-operated digger) surplus to requirements and being offered to a good home for free. The clerk was asked to find out if still available.
- Royal British Legion commemorative statues.
- Invitation to BDC Chairman's golf tournament and BBQ.
- [8 Hills Regional Park](#) proposals (National Trust).
- Wellbeing in Partnership e-bulletin, August 2023.

13. Members' comments on this meeting and for future consideration.

- With reference to the national defibrillator registration scheme, it was noted that Finstall Village Hall's defibrillator is registered.
- A Dementia Café currently meets in Finstall Village Hall every month but will have to meet elsewhere after the end of 2023 since the hall is to be alternatively hired. It was thought a nearby hall might be available to house this popular group.
- A quantity of straw was noticeable on the side of Finstall Road outside the St Godwald's churchyard, that may have been blown off a hay-wagon passing along the road. Bromsgrove DC street sweeping team would be notified.
- An increase in dog fouling has been noticed along local pavements.
- Cars parked along the sides of Heydon Road are causing a nuisance, particularly if parked on the pavement and impeding pedestrian progress.

14. Date, time and venue of next meeting:

Tuesday 3rd October 2023, 7.30pm at Finstall Village Hall.

This meeting ended at 9.55pm.

Signed..... Date
Chairman, Finstall Parish Council

Two budget analyses to show A actual receipts and payments and B committed expenditure

A – INCOME	ACTUAL 2022/23	BUDGET 2023-24	ACTUAL TO 31/07/2023
Worcs CC (P3 + Lengthsman Grant)	£1,984.50	£2,700.00	951.75
VAT Repayment	£133.56	£150.00	0.00
Allotments	£0.00	£45.00	0.00
Interest	£6.58	£85.00	355.49
Grants	£0.00	£100.00	0.00
Precept	£8,090.00	£8,710.00	4,355.00
TOTAL	£10,214.64	£11,790.00	5,662.24
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs (Salary + Ex's)	£3,064.61	£3,090.00	174.45
General Admin	£1,211.79	£1,600.00	456.20
Computer	£83.32	£300.00	50.00
Bus Shelters, Verges	£1,175.00	£600.00	0.00
Training	£0.00	£250.00	0.00
Insurances + Subs	£874.10	£900.00	949.04
Grants	£250.00	£250.00	0.00
Playing Field	£1,534.00	£1,300.00	458.00
Allotments	£0.00	£50.00	0.00
P3 + Lengthsman	£2,322.00	£2,700.00	391.50
Section 137	£0.00	£0.00	0.00
Election Costs	£0.00	£200.00	0.00
Misc. incl. Village Hall	£987.65	£300.00	284.75
VAT	£146.46	£150.00	105.27
Contingency	£0.00	£100.00	0.00
TOTAL	£11,648.93	£11,790.00	£2,869.21

B – INCOME	ACTUAL 2022/23	BUDGET 2023-24	Committed to 31/08/2023
Worcs CC (P3 + Lengthsman Grant)	£1,984.50	£2,700.00	1,359.75
VAT Repayment	£133.56	£150.00	0.00
Allotments	£0.00	£45.00	0.00
Interest	£6.58	£85.00	355.49
Grants	£0.00	£100.00	0.00
Precept	£8,090.00	£8,710.00	4,355.00
TOTAL	£10,214.64	£11,790.00	6,070.24
EXPENDITURE			
Staff costs (Salary + Ex's)	£3,064.61	£3,090.00	1,322.64
General Admin	£1,211.79	£1,600.00	482.80
Computer	£83.32	£300.00	257.50
Website set-up	0.00	0.00	569.00
Website hosting (inc 2yrs' domain reg)	0.00	0.00	348.00
Bus Shelters, Verges	£1,175.00	£600.00	0.00
Training	£0.00	£250.00	89.12
Insurances + Subs	£874.10	£900.00	949.04
Grants	£250.00	£250.00	0.00
Playing Field	£1,534.00	£1,300.00	458.00
Allotments	£0.00	£50.00	0.00
P3 + Lengthsman	£2,322.00	£2,700.00	1,087.50
Section 137	£0.00	£0.00	0.00
Election Costs	£0.00	£200.00	0.00
Misc. incl. Village Hall	£987.65	£300.00	284.75
VAT	£146.46	£150.00	331.89
Contingency	£0.00	£100.00	0.00
TOTAL	£11,648.93	£11,790.00	£6,091.12

BANK RECONCILIATION		
For period 01/04/2023 - 20/09/2023		
Opening bank balances 01/04/2023	19,370.07	
Add receipts for year to date	6,076.13	
Less payments for year to date	- 6,232.23	
Add u'p chqs from list below	3,355.04	
Total	A	22,569.01
Bank balance as at 20/09/2023		
HSBC Business account now closed	-	
HSBC Deposit account now closed	-	
Unity Trust Bank (statement verified)	7,069.01	
Bromsgrove DC Loan account	15,500.00	
Total	B	22,569.01
	-	A=B=balance
Unpresented payments as at 20/09/2023		
Finstall Village Hall	260.00	
Lengthsman x 3 months May-Jul	696.00	
Salary x 3 months Jun - Aug inc	1,148.19	
Laptop	249.00	
and printer inks	22.99	
New keys to notice boards	18.00	
Website balance	443.82	
Website hosting and emails for year	273.60	
Website registration and domain, 2yrs	144.00	
Microsoft 365 Apps x 1 month	10.32	
Training presentation	89.12	
Total unpresenteds	3,355.04	
Signed councillor:		
Signed councillor:		
Checked & evidenced against bank statements to date and spreadsheet		
Prepared by Gill Lungley, Clerk & RFO, 24/09/2023		

B – INCOME	BUDGET 2023-24	Actual to 20/09/2023	Adjustments	Revised budget for year
Lengthsman Reimbursement	£2,700.00	1,359.75	May be less if no Lengthsman is appointed.	2,200.00
VAT Repayment	£150.00	0.00	To be reclaimed annually.	600.00
Allotments	£45.00	0.00	For discussion.	60.00
Interest	£85.00	361.38	May reduce if requesting part of loan is repaid this yr. Is loan interest paid annually? No interest paid by UTB	361.38
Grants	£100.00	0.00	Unknown quantity.	0.00
Precept	£8,710.00	4,355.00	Expect full amount by end 09/2023	8710.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS	£11,790.00	£6,076.13		11,931.38
Staff costs (Salary)	£3,090.00	1,322.64	The Clerk is paid on salary scale SCP 23; 10 months @ £407.42 pcm	4,249.20
General Admin inc bank charges	£1,600.00	528.96	UTB bank charges £6pcm. Ongoing printer ink and MS365 charges. + Proposed bookkeeping software £12pcm. + stationery.	1,400.00
Computer	£300.00	257.50	Purchased.	260.00
Website set-up	0.00	569.00	Purchased.	569.00
Website hosting (inc 2yrs' domain reg)	0.00	348.00	Purchased.	348.00
Bus Shelters, Verges	£600.00	0.00	To appoint contractor.	450.00
Training	£250.00	89.12	Training is available.	250.00
Insurances + Subs	£900.00	949.04	Total for year.	949.04
Grants	£250.00	0.00	Agreed grant of £300 to CAB	300.00
Playing Field	£1,300.00	458.00	Agreed repairs £927 + regular maintenance	1,500.00
Allotments	£50.00	0.00	To be discussed	50.00
Lengthsman	£2,700.00	1,087.50	As above (income)	2,200.00
Section 137	£0.00	0.00	Total allowance available is £5,600.52, if FPC does not adopt GPoC, see below.	0.00
Election Costs	£200.00	0.00	Awaiting notification	200.00
Hall hire	£300.00	284.75	Ongoing	300.00
VAT	£150.00	337.72	Depends on vatable purchases.	600.00
Contingency	£100.00	0.00	Good practice.	100.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£11,790.00	£6,232.23		13,725.24

Payments for approval...			
To	Reason	Gross amount	VAT paid
S Skeys	Lengthsman, August. <i>Final month prior to resignation.</i>	288.00	0.00
Citizens Advice, Bromsgrove & Redditch	Grant (annual) <i>As agreed 05/09/2023, minute no. 8e.</i>	300.00	0.00
Mrs G Lungley	Microsoft 365. <i>Admin tools, monthly payment (August).</i>	10.32	1.72
Mrs G Lungley	Staff salary, September 2023. <i>Monthly admin cost relating to employment.</i>	407.42	0.00

Agenda item 8g

To agree the purchase of bookkeeping software, Scribe Lite.

The council's Financial Regulations state, at regulation 1.9, 3rd bullet point that the RFO (Responsible Financial Officer) determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and accounting control systems.

The accounting records system used by FPC is a simple excel spreadsheet that shows the relevant information required by the council. However it is limited to the user's knowledge of spreadsheets and requires constant review to ensure all the algorithms are current and working, thereby impacting on the user's time and availability. Additionally, compared to the sector-specific software available, it is both limited in its functionality and bears a higher likelihood of error and fraud.

To help reduce the time impact and associated risks, the RFO has reviewed the sector-specific software available. As a small council with an annual budget well under £25,000, the costs of software have been prohibitive, however Scribe has just introduced '[Scribe Lite](#)' which is aimed at such councils and costs £12 pcm / £144pa.

The RFO has experience of working with three out of the four systems mentioned and, in line with Financial Regulation 1.9, would seek to purchase Scribe Lite.

Comparable quotes have been requested from Scribe Lite £144pa, Rialtas Business Systems, Alpha, (tba), Edge IT (Advantedge Lite) £186 pa for 5-year contract, and from Semata 'Parish Council Accounts' £75pa. See next page for comparisons.

Scribe Lite

Features include:

1. 20 Cost Codes (Fixed)
2. 3 Bank Accounts
3. 2 Reserves
4. 2 Users
5. Receipts & Payments
6. S137 & VAT 126
7. Bank Reconciliation
8. Annual Budget
9. AGAR
10. Cloud Access
11. Data Backups
12. Asset Register
13. 2-Factor Authentication

Support Included:

1. Knowledge Base
2. On Demand Training
3. Support Forum
4. Group Training
5. Email
6. Phone
7. 1:1 Zoom

Semata

- [Installation](#)
- [Setup](#)
- [Cashbooks](#)
- [Accounts](#)
- [Adding and Reversing Entries](#)
- [Loading Entries](#)
- [Bank Reconciliation](#)
- [Budgets](#)
- [Annual Return](#)
- [VAT and Refund Claims](#)
- [Suppliers](#)
- [Backup and Restore](#)
- [Menus](#)
- [Reports](#)
- [Examples](#)

RBS: Alpha Features

- Both Income and Expenditure and Receipts and Payments systems are available, allowing you the choice of which to use
- Single entry through a simple cash book updates all reports
- VAT reclaim compiled as you go in a form acceptable to HM Revenue & Customs
- Making Tax Digital for VAT compliant
- All payments automatically marked off against estimates
- Ability to set up next year estimates during the current year
- All year-end accounts guaranteed acceptable to audit
- Unique on-line training

Edge IT: Advantedge

- Comprehensive reporting e.g. budget comparisons and annual return
- Cash book
- Produce sales invoices and purchase orders
- Manage regular payments and receipts
- All reports are easily previewed, printed, exported to PDF or Word, and emailed directly to recipients
- Quick bank Reconciliation
- Online VAT submission
- Protect against mis-administration with a built in 3 stage automatic locking process
- Precept calculator
- Manage Budget/Nominal Headings
- Structure by committee/cost centre with 3 levels of sub-headings
- Control budget for 3 year period including a revised budget
- Budget journals
- Manage earmarked reserves and reserve movements
- Section 137, Section 106 expenditure and CIL
- Asset Register links to AdvantEDGE Asset Manager module
- Access to previous years accounts
- Reports only access available for auditors and councillors
- Payment authorisation facility for budget holders
- Payment approval facility for councillors.



FINSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY STATEMENT OF RISK MANAGEMENT

Adopted date	/2023	Minute reference:
Next review date	2024	

INTRODUCTION

As a local authority, Finstall Parish Council must manage all risks that may cause damage, harm and loss. The purpose of this policy is to outline how that will be managed to ensure the effective and efficient use of public funds.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 state the council's responsibility for internal control includes effective arrangements for the management of risk and to ensure that risk is appropriately managed.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All councillors will be involved in the ongoing process of identifying, assessing and mitigating risks. Every decision made by the council will refer to, and include the identification of, risk and how it can be managed to ensure the decision has no adverse impact on the community. Council members may also be involved in the annual process of checking the viability of each asset.

The council's Financial Regulations state the accounting control systems determined by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) shall include measures to ensure that risk is properly managed. Alongside this, the Clerk/RFO will support members in their ongoing responsibility towards risk awareness. The Clerk will also notify the parish council of the annual procedures and provide the relevant paperwork to the council for annual review.

On the matter of health and safety, it is the responsibility of the council as employer to ensure the wellbeing of its employee(s), and it is expected that staff member(s) will be mindful of upholding that responsibility for workplace health and safety, including at council events and meetings.

RISK IDENTIFICATION

Finstall Parish Council faces a variety of risk, such as:

- Financial e.g. lack of funds to complete projects, unexpected costs.
- Operational e.g. staff illness, damage to property, loss of meeting venue.
- Legal e.g. non-compliance with the law, change of processes.
- Reputational e.g. code of conduct complaint, poor decision-making.

RISK ASSESSMENT

In each instance, the specific risk will be identified in the Risk Assessment file and quantified on a scale of low / medium / high.

The Risk Assessment Schedule will identify all strategies and measures the council will take to mitigate, control, or otherwise deal with identified risks. Once approved, the Risk Assessment Schedule will be reviewed annually for continuous improvement and will be monitored at least quarterly.

REPORTING PROCESS

In the event of damage, harm or loss occurring the Clerk/RFO, in discussion with the Chairman and vice-Chairman at the very least, has the delegated authority to take all steps necessary to deal with the occurrence. Following which a full report will be presented to the next meeting of the council.

If the damage, harm or loss is so severe, an Extraordinary Meeting may be called to determine any action to be taken.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS

It is important to ensure all council members and staff continue to be aware of risk management practices, and specific training is available on this topic.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually to ensure all those involved in spending council funds are aware of the risks involved.

DOCUMENTATION

This policy must be read in tandem with the council's adopted Risk Assessment Schedule. The schedule will be updated on an ongoing basis to cover any risk management activities (such as training attendance), incident reports and revised mitigation plans.

COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

Following adoption, this policy will be published to the council's website and reviewed at least once each year.

~end~



FINSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

RESERVES POLICY

Adopted date	/2023	Minute reference:
Next review date	2024	

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for managing and maintaining financial reserves for Finstall Parish Council.

2. Definitions

Key terms used:

- **General reserve** is the amount of money available for expected payments during the financial year, ie the budgeted amount of expenditure.
- **Contingency reserve** is the amount of money retained for use in an emergency and may be used to cover unexpected expenses or for mitigating downturns in the economy.
- **Earmarked reserves** relate to funds saved for specific capital projects.

3. Principles

The establishment and use of reserves for Finstall Parish Council will adhere to the following fundamental principles. These principles help ensure responsible financial management and maintain transparency and accountability as follows:

1. **Prudent Financial Management:** Reserves will be established and managed prudently to safeguard the financial stability of the council. They will be used to mitigate financial risks and ensure the council can continue to provide essential services.
2. **Transparency:** All decisions related to setting-up, funding, and use of reserves are to be transparent and well-documented. This transparency helps maintain public trust and accountability.
3. **Accountability:** The council and its officers, including the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, are accountable for the proper management of reserves. Clear procedures and records are to be in place to demonstrate how reserves are managed and used.
4. **Compliance with Legal Requirements:** Reserves should comply with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements. This includes any specific legislation governing the use of reserves for parish councils.
5. **Specific Purpose Reserves:** The council's reserves will have either a specific purpose or be designated for a particular use. This ensures that reserves are not used indiscriminately and that they serve their intended function, such as covering unforeseen expenses or funding capital projects.

6. **Regular Review:** The level of reserves and their purpose will be reviewed regularly to ensure they align with the council's financial needs and priorities. Adjustments should be made as necessary.
7. **Conservative Budgeting:** Reserves should not be used as a substitute for responsible budgeting. The council will adopt conservative and realistic budgeting practices to minimise the need to dip into reserves for day-to-day expenses.
8. **Approval Process:** Approving the use of reserves will be consistent with the council's decision-making procedures.
9. **Balancing Long-Term and Short-Term Needs:** Reserves should strike a balance between addressing short-term financial challenges and planning for the council's long-term sustainability. Different categories of reserves are likely to be established to address these varying needs.
10. **Reporting and Communication:** Regular reporting on the status of reserves will be provided to council members, staff, and the public. This reporting will include reserve balances, the purpose of each reserve, and any changes in reserve levels.
11. **Legal and Professional Advice:** If the council has any concerns about reserve management or compliance with legal requirements, it will seek legal and financial advice from qualified professionals.

By adhering to these fundamental principles, the parish council will be expected to effectively establish, manage, and use reserves to ensure its financial health and the continued delivery of services to the community.

4. Reserve Categories

Finstall Parish Council will manage the following:

- General reserves
- Contingency reserves
- Earmarked reserves.

5. Reserve Levels

- General reserve will maintain between 50% to 100% of annual precept and the funds will be kept in the council's current bank account.
- Contingency reserve will maintain funds relating to 50% precept. The funds will be kept in an easily accessible account that may earn interest.
- Earmarked reserves will build towards the target amount and will not be retained for longer than five years. The funds will be kept in an interest-bearing account with easy access.

6. Funding Reserves

Reserves will be funded through the allocation of surplus funds from the annual budget, income via 'planning gain' such as Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or s106 agreements, or other sources.

7. Use of Reserves

Reserves will be used for their stated purpose. They are not to be used to reduce the impact of the precept on the council tax payer.

8. Approval Process

If the council is required to make use of funds from either the contingency reserve or the earmarked reserve, the resolution to do so will be included on the next meeting's agenda.

9. Reporting and Transparency

The status of reserve balances and activities will be reported to each meeting alongside that month's bank reconciliation.

10. Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed one year after first adoption and at least annually thereafter. It will be updated to reflect changing circumstances and financial needs.

11. Legal Compliance

Good practice guidance requires the parish council to have regard to the need to put in place a General Reserve Policy and have reviewed the level and purpose of all earmarked reserves.

It is noted that as the parish council has no legal powers to hold revenue reserves other than those for reasonable working capital needs, or for specifically earmarked purposes, whenever the year-end general reserve is more than three times higher than the annual precept, an explanation must be provided for audit purposes.

~end~

Updated Asset Register (part).

SCHEDULE OF FIXED ASSETS AT 01/09/2023				
	Description	Date Acquired	Cost Value	Where sited
1	Bus shelter	01.09.2011	£6,425.00	Finstall Road at junction with Penmanor
2	Bus shelter			Alcester Road opposite junction with Finstall Rd Road
3	3no. H/ways flower boxes	1995	£900.00	Various roadside sites
4	Slide	1.1.1998	£2,609.00	Penmanor playing field
5	Double Bay Swings	Not known	£923.00	Penmanor playing field
6	Millennium Bench	2.11.1999	£315.00	Penmanor playing field
7	Metal Bench Seats	Not known	£2,250.00	Penmanor playing field
8	Goal Posts x 1	1.10.02	£1,840.00	Penmanor playing field
9	Wooden Bench	Not known	£117.00	Penmanor playing field
10	Wooden Bench/Table	Not known	(611)	Vandalised?
11	Metal Climbing Frame	4.2.2003	£2,441.00	Penmanor playing field
12	HP Laptop	05/06/14	(405)	Clerk's home, to be disposed of as agreed.
13	HP Envy5030 Scanner/Printer	06.02.2018	£66.99	Clerk's home
14	Chairman's Chain of Office	1.9.2005	£850.00	Chairman's home
15	Notice Board At Village Hall	10/01/14	£723.00	Finstall Village Hall
16	3 benches in Penmanor	23/06/14	£1,272.00	Junction of Penmanor with Finstall Road
17	Speed Indicator Device	09/12/19	£3,150.00	Alcester Road
18	Laptop, ASUS	07/06/23	£207.50	Clerk's home
		Total assets	£24,089.49	
Assets leased from Bromsgrove DC				
	Penmanor Playing Field			
	Penmanor allotments			

This continues to be 'work in progress' whilst efforts are made to identify manufacturer, dates of purchase and warranty details.

Other detail included in the full Asset Register includes the purchase reference and serial number of the item; to also include the original cost (as here), the insurance value and replacement cost.

In future, each asset will be inspected and photographed annually with a record maintained on the council's database.

From email received 07/09/2023

[StreetWatch](#) has greatly benefited this week, after 33 new volunteers signed up to be a part of the scheme.

These new volunteers are made up of local people from different backgrounds, from across Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire who want to meet new people, get some exercise, and help keep their local communities safe.

They will go through an induction period where they will receive formal training and high vis jackets, as well as lamp post, window and wheelie bin stickers which can they display within their community. These volunteers will have their first walk on September 18th, with more walks planned after that.



Launched earlier this year, StreetWatch is a community led watch scheme which allows local people to make a difference to where they live. It is made up of groups of volunteers from our local communities who carry out street walks, (you can bring your pet!), but have no police powers.

It allows local people to help improve the neighbourhoods they live in by walking their own streets and providing visible reassurance and appropriate engagement in local issues that matter most.

StreetWatch is not just about helping keep your streets safe, it is also about meeting new people in your community and making new friends who share the same values as you. StreetWatch Volunteers often meet before or after their walks for a coffee, where they can chat and make plans to meet outside of the walks.

Could you be a StreetWatch Volunteer?

Becoming a StreetWatch Volunteer is a fantastic way to help **keep your community safe**, to **meet new people** in your community who share the same values, **improve community engagement** with the police, and to **keep fit and healthy**.

[Apply to be a StreetWatch Volunteer today.](#)

Report on Adopting the General Power of Competence (GPC)

Introduction:

The General Power of Competence (GPC) is a statutory provision that empowers eligible parish councils to take on additional responsibilities and functions. This report outlines the key aspects and considerations for Finstall Parish Council to adopt the GPC.

Background:

When making decisions, and spending public funds, every parish council must ensure it is acting within the law. This requires identification of the specific statutory power that authorises the council to act. The Localism Act 2011 introduced a new way forward for eligible town and parish councils, such that as long as:

- a) the decision to spend is for the benefit of the parish community,
- b) the action is something an ordinary person can legally do, and
- c) there is no statute that prevents the council from acting

then the GPC may be used to undertake all actions.

Purpose:

The main purpose of the General Power of Competence is to empower local councils, including parish councils, to undertake any action or function that is not specifically prohibited by law. This means that councils with the GPC have the legal authority to act in the best interests of their communities and make decisions that benefit their residents, as long as those decisions are within the bounds of the law.

Key aspects of the GPC's purpose include:

1. **Empowerment:** The GPC empowers local councils to take on a broader range of responsibilities and services beyond their statutory duties. This allows councils to be more responsive to the unique needs and aspirations of their communities.
2. **Local Decision-Making:** It promotes local decision-making and reduces dependence on central government directives. Councils can determine their priorities and policies based on local circumstances.
3. **Community-Led Initiatives:** The GPC encourages councils to support and facilitate community-led initiatives, promoting community engagement and participation in local governance.
4. **Flexibility:** It provides flexibility for councils to adapt to changing circumstances and address emerging issues within their areas.

Overall, the General Power of Competence aims to strengthen local democracy, enhance community engagement, and enable local councils to play a more proactive role in shaping the future of their communities. It's an important tool for local government in England to meet the evolving needs of their constituents.

Eligibility:

- To be eligible the council must meet two criteria (see box below):
 1. Two-thirds of members must have been elected.
 2. The Clerk must be qualified to the appropriate standard.
- Confirmation of eligibility.
 1. At the election held on 4th May 2023, the seven current members stood for election and were elected unopposed. Even though there was no ballot, the criterion has been met.
 2. The current clerk has the CertHE in Local Policy and CiLCA s7, 2015 and has completed the relevant training.

The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012

SCHEDULE Conditions of eligibility

1. The council has resolved at a meeting of the council and each subsequent relevant annual meeting that it meets the conditions in paragraph 2 below.

2.—(1) At the time a resolution under paragraph 1 is passed —

(a) the number of members of the council that have been declared to be elected⁽³⁾, whether at ordinary elections or at a by-election, is equal to or greater than two-thirds of the total number of members of the council;

(b) the clerk to the parish council holds—

(i) the Certificate in Local Council Administration;

(ii) the Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy;

(iii) the Certificate of Higher Education in Local Council Administration; or

(iv) the first level of the foundation degree in Community Engagement and Governance awarded by the University of Gloucestershire or its successor qualifications; and

(c) the clerk to the parish council has completed the relevant training, unless such training was required for the purpose of obtaining a qualification of a description mentioned in paragraph (b).

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph “relevant training” means training—

(a) in the exercise of the general power;

(b) provided in accordance with the national training strategy for parish councils adopted by the National Association of Local Councils, as revised from time to time.

Duties

Councils in England that have adopted the General Power of Competence (GPC) have specific duties and responsibilities associated with its use. These duties are outlined in the Localism Act 2011 and other relevant legislation, as follows:

1. Compliance with the Law:

- Councils must ensure that any actions or decisions taken under the GPC are within the bounds of the law. This includes compliance with all relevant statutes, regulations, and legal requirements.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true of all council actions at any time.

2. Code of Conduct:

- Council members (councillors) must adhere to a Code of Conduct for councillors, which includes principles of ethical behaviour and integrity.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true for all councils at any time.

3. Financial Responsibility:

- Councils must manage their finances responsibly, including budgeting, financial reporting, and auditing, to ensure transparency and accountability.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true of all council actions at any time.

4. Community Engagement and Consultation:

- Councils should consult and engage with the local community, seek their views, and involve residents in decision-making processes where appropriate.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true for all councils, eg when seeking to take out a loan, or when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Transparency and Accountability:

- Councils must maintain transparency in their operations and decisions, making relevant information accessible to the public. They should keep accurate records of meetings and decisions.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true for all councils.

6. Annual Review:

- Councils should annually review their eligibility to use the GPC and ensure that they still meet the necessary criteria.

NB This is good practice; the eligibility review takes place every four years (after the ordinary elections).

7. Training and Development:

- Council members and staff should receive appropriate training and development to understand the legal framework and responsibilities associated with the GPC.

8. Avoiding Conflicts of Interest:

- Council members must avoid conflicts of interest and declare any interests that could potentially influence their decisions.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true of all councillors at any time.

9. Best Interests of the Community:

- Councils should always act in the best interests of their community and consider the long-term well-being of residents when making decisions.

NB This is not confined to GPC, it is true of all council actions at any time.

10. Legal Advice:

- Seek legal advice when necessary to ensure that actions or decisions under the GPC are legally sound.

It's important to note that the GPC grants councils the power to do anything that individuals generally may do. However, councils must exercise this power responsibly and in accordance with their legal obligations. Failure to do so could result in legal challenges or sanctions.

Risks and Challenges:

Operating under the General Power of Competence (GPC) in England grants local councils, including parish and town councils, greater autonomy and flexibility. However, there are certain risks and considerations associated with using this power, such as:

1. **Legal Compliance Risk:**
The GPC allows councils to take actions that are not specifically prohibited by law. However, councils must ensure that they are in compliance with all relevant laws, statutes, and regulations. Failure to do so can result in legal challenges or sanctions.
2. **Financial Risk:**
Using the GPC may involve financial commitments. Councils must manage their finances responsibly and ensure that they have the necessary funds to support the activities and services they undertake. Financial mismanagement can lead to financial instability.
3. **Community Discontent:**
Council decisions made under the GPC can sometimes be controversial or unpopular within the community. There is a risk of community discontent or opposition to certain actions, which can impact the council's reputation and relationships with residents.
4. **Conflicts of Interest:**
Council members (councillors) must avoid conflicts of interest and declare any interests that could potentially influence their decisions. Failure to do so can result in allegations of impropriety and undermine public trust.
5. **Legal Challenges:**
Decisions made under the GPC can be subject to legal challenges. Councils may face judicial review or other legal actions if their decisions are deemed to be unlawful or outside the scope of their powers.
6. **Resource Limitations:**
Councils may have limited resources, both in terms of staff time and financial capacity. Taking on new responsibilities under the GPC can strain these resources, potentially affecting the council's ability to deliver core services effectively.
7. **Governance and Accountability:**
Operating under the GPC requires a high level of governance and accountability. Councils must maintain transparency, record-keeping, and public engagement to ensure that their decisions are accountable to the community.
8. **Reputational Risk:**
Decisions made by the council can impact its reputation in the community. Controversial or poorly executed actions may harm the council's standing and credibility.
9. **Changing Legal Landscape:**
The legal framework governing local government can change over time. Councils must stay informed about legislative updates and adapt their practices accordingly to remain in compliance.

To mitigate these risks, councils should:

- ✓ seek legal advice when necessary,
- ✓ maintain transparent and accountable governance practices,
- ✓ conduct thorough risk assessments before taking on new responsibilities,
- ✓ engage with the community to understand their needs and concerns, and
- ✓ undertake ongoing training and development for council members and staff.

Conclusion:

- Finstall Parish Council is eligible to adopt the General Power of Competence.
- The duties associated with adoption of GPC are not additionally onerous to those currently faced by the parish council.
- The risks associated with GPC are the same as those currently faced by the parish council.

In summary, the General Power of Competence empowers local councils to play a more proactive role in shaping the future of their communities, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among residents, and enhancing local democracy and governance. It's a tool that aligns with the principles of localism and community empowerment.

Next Steps:

- If the council is in favour of adopting the GPC, it will need to pass a resolution to that effect at this meeting, stating it meets the eligibility criteria.
- If the council decides against adoption of GPC, no changes will be made.

~end~

Report prepared by Gill Lungley, Clerk to the Council.

25/09/2023