

Sevenoaks Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held on 12th June 2023 in the Council Chamber, Town Council Offices, TN13 3QG

Livestreamed and available to view on YouTube until approved by Council:

<https://youtube.com/live/GPnNdsP9Lzo?feature=share>

Meeting commenced: 7:00pm

Meeting Concluded: 8:10pm

Present:

Cllr Tony Clayton (Chair)	Present	Cllr Victoria Granville	Present
Cllr Nigel Wightman (Vice-Chair)	Present	Cllr Chloe Gustard	Present
Cllr Libby Ancrum	Present	Cllr Claire Shea, Mayor (ex-officio)	Present
Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet	Present	Cllr David Skinner OBE	Apologies
Cllr Peter Dixon	Present		

Substitute	For
Cllr Catherine Daniell	Cllr David Skinner OBE

In attendance: Cllr Nick Varley, Cllr Gareth Willis, Town Clerk, Responsible Finance Officer and Senior Committee Clerk.

Also present: Cllr Richard Streatfeild, Sevenoaks District Council & Kent County Council

Representation received from Member of the Public: None

KALC Community Award Presentation

Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) Community Awards are presented to acknowledge and recognise those who have made a significant contribution to their community.

The Mayor, Cllr Claire Shea, presented the award for 2022/23 to Hinal Patel and her team of 80+ volunteers, who delivered an extremely successful covid vaccination programme at Sevenoaks Pharmacy. The Mayor thanked her and her team for all their hard work supporting the Sevenoaks community at that time, and for the work they continue to do.

117 Chair and Vice-Chair

It was noted that at the Annual Council meeting held on 15th May 2023, the following appointments were made:

- 1) Chair of Finance & General Purposes Committee – Cllr Tony Clayton
- 2) Vice-Chair of Finance & General Purposes Committee – Cllr Nigel Wightman

118 Apologies for Absence

As noted above.

119 Dispensations: There were no requests for dispensations.

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120 Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest.

121 Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 24th April 2023
RESOLVED: to receive and sign the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 24th April 2023 as a true record.

122 Finance Reports to Year End 2022/23

122.1 Management Accounts to 31st March 2023

The Committee received and noted, for the year end 2022/23, the Responsible Finance Officer's Report with Variance Analysis, Income and Expenditure, Working Capital Summary, Statement of Fund Balances and Capital Expenditure and funds, together with:

- Suppliers Accounts for period 1st to 31st March 2023, total gross invoices £144,919.59
- List of Payments for Town Council's Nat West Account for period 1st to 31st March 2023, total £221,265.16
- List of Payments for Mayor's Charity Account for period 1st to 31st March 2023, total £2,839.00
- Payroll Accounts for period 1st to 31st March 2023, total £87,241.73
- Petty Cash Accounts for year period 1st to 31st March 2023, total payments £418.11

It was noted that the year-end position at the end of March 2023 gave a revenue surplus of £20,681, in line with the aim of the 2022/23 budget to deliver a surplus of £20,000 as part of the Town Council's strategy to increase its general reserves. Following movements to reserves, the Town Council was £681 favourable to budget full year. Variances to budget and use of Contingency were noted.

It was noted that working capital at year end was £1,571,819, and fund balances £1,665,479.

RESOLVED: that: the Management Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2023 be received and accepted.

122.2 Hospitality and Gifts Register: None received for the period 1st to 31st March 2023

122.3 Review of Internal Controls

The Committee received and accepted:

- Internal Audit Report for End of Year, Visit 4
- Statement on the System of Internal Control

It was noted that no weaknesses had been identified in the Internal Audit End of Year Report but some minor issues raised for consideration regarding the booking of sports pitches and the amending of financial regulations to clarify Sevenoaks Town Council practice in relation to the authorisation process for Purchase Orders.

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RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Internal Audit Report for End of Year, Visit 4, be received and accepted

- 2) the Statement on the System of Internal Control be approved and signed by the Chair of the Committee and Responsible Finance Officer.

122.4 Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31st March 2023

The Committee received and considered the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, comprising: Annual Internal Audit Report 2022/23; Annual Governance Statement 2022/23; Accounting Statements 2022/23; and supporting papers for submission to External Auditors. It was noted that once the Annual Governance and Accountability Return documents had been approved and signed by the Town Council, they would be passed to the External Auditor for review and sign off.

The Committee reviewed and confirmed the Annual Governance Statement as follows:

1.	We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	Agreed
2.	We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	Agreed
3.	We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	Agreed
4.	We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Agreed
5.	We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	Agreed
6.	We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	Agreed
7.	We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	Agreed
8.	We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	Agreed

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RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 be approved and RECOMMENDED to the full Council meeting for adoption and signature by the Mayor and the Town Clerk

122.5 Annual Return for the Year Ended 31st March 2023

The Committee reviewed and confirmed the Accounting Statements 2022/23 and the supporting papers to be submitted to the External Auditors.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Accounting Statements 2022/23, signed by the Responsible Finance Officer, be approved and RECOMMENDED to the full Council meeting for adoption and signature by the Mayor;
- 2) That the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2022/23, including the Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Accounts to 31st March 2023, and supporting papers for submission to the External Auditors, be RECOMMENDED to full Council for adoption; and
- 3) That the approved accounts be made available for public inspection for 30 working days, from 15 June to 26th July 2022

123.1 Management Accounts to 30th April 2023

The Committee received and noted, for the period ended 30th April 2023, the Responsible Finance Officer's Report with Variance Analysis, Income and Expenditure, Working Capital Summary, Statement of Fund Balances and Capital Expenditure and funds.

It was noted that the year-to-date position at the end of April 2023 gave a revenue deficit of £5,278. Adjusted for required Bat & Ball Station Management & Maintenance Reserves movement to be actioned at year end, which offsets the Bat & Ball Station year to date deficit of £7,335 the adjusted position was a year-to-date surplus of £2,057.

Committee members suggested that in view of current interest rates, investments be reviewed as there may be opportunity to improve interest received. Cllrs Wightman and Dixon offered to assist with this review.

In response to a query, the Responsible Finance Officer confirmed that gas supply was on a long-term fixed rate to March 2026 but that the electricity contract was due for review in March 2024.

The Committee noted virements proposed by the Responsible Finance Officer including the following uses of contingency via virement:

- £10,083 in respect of staff costs at House in the Basement Youth Café as the increased number of young people attending needed higher staffing levels to meet safeguarding requirements

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- £10,092 in respect of Central Office staff costs to meet overtime payments as staff often cover work beyond their core duties

RESOLVED:

- 1) To accept the Management Accounts 1st to 30th April 2023
- 2) To approve the virements set out in the Responsible Finance Officer's report, including the following uses of contingency (as outlined above):
 - £10,083 to House in the Basement staff budget
 - £10,092 to Central Office staff budget
- 3) That Cllr Dixon, Cllr Wightman and officers review the Council's Investment Policy and report back to a future meeting.

123.2 The Committee received and noted:

Suppliers Accounts for:

- 1st to 30th April 2023, total gross invoices £72,911.50

List of Payments Sevenoaks Town Council Nat West Account

- 1st to 30th April 2023, total £173,319.17

List of Payments Mayor's Charity Account: None

Payroll Accounts for:

- 1st to 30th April 2023, total payments £85,073.49

Petty Cash Accounts for:

- 1st to 30th April 2023, total payments £371.82

123.3 Hospitality and Gifts Register

The Committee received and noted the following, for the period 1st to 30th April 2023:

Received by	Date	Item	From Whom	Value
Town Clerk	17.04.23	Gold brooch	Cllr Andrew Eyre	Unknown
Town Clerk	25.04.23	Bottle of Champagne	Cllr Simon Raikes	£25

124 Review of Financial Matters in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders

The Committee received and noted financial matters in accordance with the Town Council's Standing Orders, adopted at the Annual Council Meeting on 15th May 2023 (*Minute 81, 15.05.23 refers*).

It was noted that whilst working well, the Complaints Procedure was due a review. Cllrs Clayton and Granville undertook to research good practice models.

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It was also agreed that the Social Media & Electronic Communication Policy should be reviewed. Cllrs Daniell, Gustard and Varley agreed to consider this.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the following be received and noted:
 - Valuation of Building Assets (*F&GP, Minute 20.3, 11.04.22 refers*)
 - Insurance Cover with Zurich Municipal for 2023/2024 (*F&GP, Minute 41.2, 24.04.23 refers*)
- 2) that the following be received and re-adopted:
 - Complaints Procedure
 - NALC Guidance LTN37 as the basis of the Town Council's Freedom of Information Procedure; and the Freedom of Information Publication Schedule
 - Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy
- 3) That the Complaints Procedure be reviewed by Cllr Clayton, Cllr Granville and officers and reported back to a future meeting
- 4) That the Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy be reviewed by Cllr Daniell, Cllr Gustard, Cllr Varley and officers and reported back to a future meeting

125 Sevenoaks Day Nursery

The Committee considered a request from Sevenoaks Day Nursery that the Town Council consider the following matters:

- To provide permission for the increase of the rent for use of the Club Room
- To reconsider the current lease agreement in relation to the Club Room being made available during term time to another childcare provider and return the facility 100% of the time to Sevenoaks Day Nursery from September 2023

The Committee expressed reservation about the level of the proposed rent increase and requested further discussion with Sevenoaks Day Nursery on this matter. The Committee also felt that further discussion was needed with the Nursery and the Montessori Play group provider in respect of the use of the Club Room going forward, including retaining the variety of childcare provision during term time.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Town Clerk discuss with Sevenoaks Day Nursery whether a temporary supplement could be added to the room hire rate whilst utility costs remain high, rather than raising the rent of the Club Room permanently
- 2) That the request to reconsider the legal agreement with Sevenoaks Day Nursery regarding the joint use of the Club Room is not agreed at this stage, but that discussions continue with the Nursery and the Montessori Play Group to reach a mutually acceptable way forward to improve the childcare services on site

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126 No 8 Bus Route

The Committee considered a report outlining the background to the No.8 Bus Service and explaining current funding arrangements. It was noted that current funding by Kent County Council (KCC) was due to expire in July 2023. Further information was awaited from KCC following the tendering process.

RESOLVED: To receive and note the report

127 Participatory Budgeting

Cllrs Clayton and Ancrum advised of a Participatory Budgeting Workshop they had attended, organised by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and The Arts). They advised that it was a practical decision-making process that had the capacity to increase the level of democratic buy-in, engaging the community in what an organisation does, and suggested that a pilot project be considered.

RESOLVED: That a working group comprising Cllr Clayton, Cllr Ancrum, Cllr Dr Canet and the Town Clerk be established to look at ideas and the process for a project, and report back to a future committee meeting.

128 Current Matters & Priorities

The Committee considered the updates received.

It was noted that the Town Council Priorities would be reviewed in a few months' time.

RESOLVED that the updates on the Current Matters and Town Council Priorities be received and noted.

129 Press Release: None

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting.

Signed

Chairman

Dated