

Minutes of the Fremington Parish Council Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on Tuesday 26th November 2024 at 10am in The Parish Council Offices, The Beechfield Centre, Beechfield Road, Fremington

- Present: Cllrs, F Biederman (Chairman), J Bridgeman, S Haywood, S Kingdom and H Walker
- Mrs V Woodhouse, Executive Officer
- 2411/14 **Apologies**
None.
- 2411/15 **Declarations of Interest**
Cllr Walker declared a Personal Interest in Item 2411/19 due to her involvement in the project.
- 2411/16 **Public Participation**
None.
- 2411/17 **Minutes**
It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary and one abstention, that the minutes of the Finance & Personnel Committee held on the 22nd October 2024 be approved.
- 2411/18 **Staff Salaries**
It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to approve the staff salaries, expenses, PAYE/NI and pension payments for the month of November 2024.
- 2411/19 **Accounts Due for Payment and Receipts for the period from the 19th October to 22nd November 2024**
It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to approve the payments totalling £40,103.29 and receipts totalling £10,768.28 copies of which are attached as Appendix One.
- 2411/20 **Tomlin Hall**
Members were informed that the Management Committee had been investigating refurbishment of the building and had discovered that two sides do not have foundations. A cost had been received to refurbish the building and address the issue and a cost to rebuild, it was note that it would not be financially viable to refurbish, and the Management Committee was seeking support to demolish the existing building and build a new Tomlin Hall on the site. Members discussed the proposals and agreed that the project should be considered in principle and a business case established along with the possibility of creating a new dual-purpose facility nearby. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, for Cllrs Walker, Biederman and Bridgeman to meet with officers and stakeholders to investigate the long-term vision for

Bickington and Woodville and for the officers to support the Management Committee in seeking grants and funding.

2411/21

Budgets and Precept

The draft budgets for 2025/2026 were circulated. It was noted that running costs had continued to increase, the Parish Council's insurance had increased significantly for the second year running and contract costs had also increased along with utilities. The impact of the Government's change in employer's National Insurance contributions had been incorporated into the draft budgets. A provision had also been included in the budgets for some of the project costs for the completion of the building at Tews Lane.

Members had expressed concerns previously about the cost of replacing play equipment and the lack of financial provision, it was proposed to increase the new play equipment budget, although the budgetary provision was still minimal given the cost of play equipment. Additional budgetary provision had been included for grass cutting of additional areas such as the Cemetery extension, which is now in use, and the open space at Maple Grove which had now exhausted the commuted sum that was provided when transferred. There had been an increase in receipts from the hire of the Beechfield Centre which had consistently exceeded the budgeted figure and this had been increased for 2025/2026.

Members reviewed the Parish Council's reserves, it was noted that the Parish Council's net expenditure is approximately £30,000 a month, the JPAG (Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance) Practitioners' Guide 2023 states that generally the appropriate level of reserves should be between 3 and 12 months expenditure. Members noted that there was currently £50,000 in a minimum reserve and £30,000 in general reserves and this would be reviewed along with Ear Marked Reserves at the end of the year.

Based on the draft budgets the recommended precept was £310,985.76 which based on a Band D Property and last year's tax base is an annual increase of £1.33. Members were informed that second homes will now be subject to 100% Council Tax and this could increase the tax base.

It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to accept the budgets and to recommend to Full Council that the initial precept request for 2025/2026 is submitted at £310,985.76.

2411/22

It was **resolved** that under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it involves the likely disclosure of confidential information.

PART B

2411/23

Staffing Matters

Members were informed that the National Pay Award for 2024 had been agreed and the backdated pay included in the November salaries. It was **resolved**, with no votes to the contrary, to note the information.

The meeting closed at 11.08am

Signed  Dated 28.1.2025