

MIDDLETON-ON-SEA PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting
Wednesday 17th April 2024

PRESENT – Councillors Mrs Haywood (Chairman), Allsopp, Newton and Mrs Pendleton

1. APOLOGIES – Mr Mansfield

2. MINUTES – Approval of the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on the 15th November 2023 were proposed by Mr Allsopp and seconded by Mr Newton and agreed unanimously by members following approval the minutes were signed.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – Councillor Mrs Pendleton declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 3 being a Trustee of Middleton Pond & Green.

4. PUBLIC DISCUSSION PERIOD – No members of the public were present.

5. MATTERS ARISING

1) Update on actions from previous meeting – There are none

2) Review of Parish Council Actual Accounts for 2023/2024

It was noted that Administration costs had increased by £10k (basically staff/pension costs) so in accordance with the Financial Rules dated 30th March 2015 the General Contingency must now be increased to £15k (+£5k). This will reduce the Operating Fund to £22.5k.
Clerk please action

3) Review of 2024/2025 Budget

It was agreed that the budget is very tight with no spare cash. Anything spent outside the budget will have to come from reserves (Sinking Fund) and there is no capacity to save for future years. It was agreed that it is necessary to replace 4 benches (outside The Cabin, opposite Main Drive and two on Shrubbs Field). Total cost £2k + recoverable vat. These will be funded by CIL receipts of £570 plus the balance from the Sinking Fund which will reduce the latter to £15.6k. Clerk please action.

It was noted that Middleton News is losing close to £1k per edition so there is a real need to increase advertising revenue. Quarterly costs are £1.8k (printing and co-ordinator).

There are very few opportunities to reduce costs save stopping the £1.8k per annum that is contributed to ADC for Shrubbs Car Park.

Councillor Newton asked why we fund the Trustees of the Pond & Green and Councillor Mrs Pendleton agreed. She said funding in the early years was needed but now it is capable of raising funds and that public fund raising events were popular so there is now a case for stopping the funding.

It was recognised that scope for funding projects such as SID machines or TROs for traffic schemes must have real benefits to the community before being approved. It was therefore agreed that the Finance Committee will bring forward a new scheme for prioritising the financing of any capital outlay in the future. This will be laid before the full council at the

July full council meeting for approval. Essentially anyone wishing to propose a new capital project will have to develop a detailed business case showing how it will benefit the community together with costings and will have also researched the availability of grant support. The case will have to be submitted to the Clerk no later than 1st September each year and all the proposed projects will be discussed at the September full council meeting. Projects with potential will be referred to the Finance Committee which will assess whether it can fund the project in the next financial year (1st April). By doing this much better control of the finances can be achieved.

It was also agreed that the council must soon take a decision on future finance policy. It can either continue raising its precept by only 5% per annum (broadly in line with inflation) which will keep parishioners happy but capital spending restrained. Alternatively, if it wants to spend more money on capital projects it will be necessary to raise the precept significantly. This has the potential for a significant adverse reaction from parishioners so any policy change will need to be explained to residents fully (via Middleton News/public meeting?).

Finally, it was agreed that the playground repairs identified in the ROSPA report which will cost £3.2k (inclusive of vat) will be paid for by the Trustees of Middleton-on-Sea Playing Fields.

6) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.43 p.m. The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.