

**Minutes of a Meeting of Doddinghurst Parish Council Finance and Resources Committee held on
Wednesday 15th November 2023 at 7.30pm in Parish Room (adjacent to the Parish Room),
Church Lane, Doddinghurst CM15 0NJ**

Present: Cllrs. Mrs D Dicker (Chairman), M. Capon, J Le Page, G Smith and A Smith.

Also Present: Mrs C Fuller – Clerk/RFO

1. Apologies for absence: None

2. Declaration of Interests: None

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 17th May 2023

👉 Resolved to approve.

4. Public Representation: None

5. Staff Salary Review:

It was noted that the 2023-24 National Salary Award had been agreed and is to be implemented from 1st April 2023. The new pay scales will be applied retrospectively to the Clerk and other staff employed under the model contract.

6. 2023/24 Budget Review and Forecast to the end of March 2024:

Members noted the budget review and forecast to the end of March 2024 which had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted that the full Council had resolved not to purchase tablets for each councillor, so the projected spend on this budget item (Computers & Printers) could be reduced by £3,000.

It was further noted that the Draft Budget as presented would result in a deficit balance of £27,804. Members wished to bring the balance closer to nil, whilst maintaining services, maintaining Earmarked Reserves of at least £100,000 (split between the future maintenance of the Cemetery and ultimate replacement of Recreation Ground equipment), and maintaining an acceptable level of General Reserves.

7. Projects for Implementation in the Financial Year 2024/25:

👉 Resolved to recommend the following to full Council:

i) Capital Works: Remove £20,000 for the Nature Trail. Members noted that the budget as presented would result in a negative balance and felt that, without increasing the precept to cover this amount, this project could not be afforded. Instead, the Nature Trail to be cleared of vegetation and any obstructions as part of maintenance works. If there was an under-spend at the end of the current financial year, this could be reviewed.

8. Budget and Precept Recommendation 2024/25 for approval at Full Council in January 2024:

👉 Resolved to recommend the budget for the year 2024/25 to the full Council with the following amendments under Expenditure:

i) Community Bus: Reduce to £1,000 to correspond with Income, making the activity self-funding.

ii) Village Organisations: Reduce to £5,000, to include donations to the Wellbeing Hub and applications to the new Grant Scheme.

iii) Donations/Village Hall Electricity: Increase to 2,900.

iv) Salaries/Pension/HMRC: Increase to £45,000 to reflect salary increases and corresponding increases to HMRC and Pension contributions.

v) Training: Leave unchanged at £1,000, but to include MiDAS training for volunteer bus drivers.

At 9.30pm it was Resolved to suspend Standing Order 3x to enable to meeting to continue beyond two hours.

After much discussion Cllr. A. Smith proposed that the Precept be raised by £3,000 to £80,400. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Capon.

✋ Resolved to recommend to the full Council a Precept of £80,400 for the year 2024/25.

9. Interest Rates

Members noted the interest rates being paid to the Parish Council from bank and building society accounts.

There was a brief discussion on whether to consider repaying the Council's two Public Works Loan Board loans, but in light of the negative impact this would have on the budget, this was not pursued.

10. Any Other Urgent Business:

None.

The meeting was closed at 10.00pm

Signed: Deborah Dicker (Chairman)

Dated: 22nd May 2024