



DEEPING ST JAMES PARISH COUNCIL

The Institute, 38 Church Street, Deeping St James, Peterborough PE6 8HD

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Parish Clerk: Julie Fortnum

Dear Councillors Bowell, Gilbert, Halls, Hosking, Shinkins-Hoppe and Stevens.

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Policy and Personnel Committee held in the meeting room at the Institute 38 Church Street Deeping St James PE6 8HD at 7.00pm on Tuesday 10 December 2024.

Present: Councillors Bowell, Gilbert, Shinkins-Hoppe and Stevens.
The minutes were taken by the Parish Clerk.

25.36 To receive apologies of absence.

Apologies had been received and accepted from Councillors Halls and Hosking.

25.37 To receive any declarations of interest.

None declared.

25.38 To adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 1 October 2024.

Agreed and signed.

25.39 To receive the Clerk's report.

-Since 2020 NALC and various county associations across England have received feedback from local (parish and town) councils that when they have encountered genuine banking or financial service problems with their banks or financial providers in the ordinary course of their financial business – and not had satisfactory resolution of them, they have often been told by the Financial Services Ombudsman (FSO) when seeking to make a complaint to it, that they were ineligible to do so. NALC engaged with the FSO in 2020 with the Kent Association of Local Councils and produced a short guidance note (available from NALC on request) which specified that FSO could initially look at submissions from local councils in their roles as trustees of an associated trust, or in relation to a connected charity, but that otherwise only on a case by case basis as usually local councils could not be defined as a micro-business under relevant legislation. Accordingly, NALC met with the Kent, Surrey and Cornwall associations of local councils in August 2024 and agreed that a national sector campaign should immediately commence to lobby government to ensure that local councils be added under law (section 228[2] of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000) to the list of eligible bodies able to complain to FSO. To gather evidence to assist with this ongoing campaign the group agreed that a national sector survey would kick-start this process. There was a short survey to complete (deadline Friday 1 November 2024) which the Clerk has completed advising that DSJ Parish Council has never had cause to complain to the Financial Services Ombudsman however it does feel that local councils should be added to the list of bodies eligible to make a complaint to FSO under section 228[2] of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000

-The Society of Local Council Clerks have advised that the government has issued their local government finance policy statement, which sets out government proposals for 2025 to 2026, alongside longer-term plans for funding reform. It has been confirmed within the statement that, 'There are no council tax referendum principles for mayoral combined authorities or town and parish councils' for the upcoming financial year. This means that there is, again, no centrally imposed cap on the amount by which local council precepts in England may rise.

[Local government finance policy statement 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-finance-policy-statement-2025-to-2026)

-Several pockets of money have been transferred between the Unity Trust current account and the instant access account as follows:

Funday Sunday kitty - £1636.87 to be transferred from the current account to the instant access account (new earmark reserve)

Bus Shelters remaining s106 monies - £3842.29 to be transferred from the current account to the instant access account (new earmark reserve)

Open space/premises purchase - £5000.00 to be transferred from the current account to the instant access account (to add to the earmark reserve)

Allotment improvements - £1000.00 to be transferred from the current account to the instant access account (to add to the earmark reserve)

Grant to Citizen Advice South Lincs - £3500.00 from instant access account (community heritage and amenities earmark reserve) to current account.

Purchase of third speed indicator device - £1550.00 from instant access account (reactive speed sign reserve) to current account.

25.40 To receive a report of the financial position as at 4 December 2024.

Noted.

25.41 To receive a report on the income and expenditure against budget for the period 1 April 2024 to 4 December 2024.

Noted.

25.42 To consider and agree the budget and precept requirement for 2025-26 prior to making a recommendation to Council.

A report had been prepared by the Parish Clerk, who is also the Responsible Financial Officer, which advised that an increase of 30% (£24.20) on the Band D charge would be required to cover the budget requirements for 2025/26.

Using the report, the committee considered each budget heading individually either agreeing with the figures presented, or after discussion amending the following:

Council Vehicle (cost code 210) – reduced from £15,500 to £10,500

Grounds maintenance machinery (cost code 212) – reduced from £40,000 to £15,000

Village Cross/Heritage Telephone Kiosk (cost code 402) – increased from £500 to £1,000

These changes meant the increase on the Band D charge would be 15.9% (£12.84)

The committee **RECOMMEND** that the revised budget (which includes an increase in maintenance and office working hours of 20 and 5 respectively and the purchase of grounds maintenance machinery via a 5 year hire purchase agreement) and the precept figures should be accepted by Council

25.43 To note the date of the next meeting – 8pm on Tuesday 11 February 2025.

The meeting finished at 8.15pm