



DEEPING ST JAMES PARISH COUNCIL

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

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Parish Clerk: Julie Fortnum

The minutes of the Finance, Policy and Personnel Committee meeting held in the meeting room at the Institute 38 Church Street Deeping St James PE6 8HD at 8.00pm on Tuesday 11 February 2025.

Present: Councillors Howell, Gilbert, Halls, Hosking, Neville, Shinkins-Hoppe, Stevens and one member of the public.

The minutes were taken by the Parish Clerk

25.44 To receive apologies of absence.

All present.

25.45 To receive any declarations of interest.

None declared.

25.46 To adopt the minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 10 December 2024.

Agreed and signed.

25.47 To receive the Clerk's report.

DSJPC have been successful with several grant applications – Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, Jubilee Park Improvements consultation and design, Cemetery biodiversity project, Jubilee Park biodiversity project, Coronation Community Orchard Scheme, Replacement of 6 and 2 additional noticeboards within the Parish and an information board at the Deeping Lakes promoting other points of interest and facilities in the Deepings. Separate accounts are being maintained to track income and expenditure to assist in year-end completion of annual governing and accounting return .

The contracts of the two members of staff who will be increasing their hours from 1 April 2025 have been agreed, amended and signed.

The contract with British Telecom has been renewed and an Engineer attended on Friday 7 February 2025 to install new equipment as the phone service will now be digital one offering a considerable saving.

Both Unity Trust Bank and Barclays Bank have advised the Parish Council that the interest rates on the savings accounts will be reducing from 2.60% to 2.50% and 1.40% to 1.35% respectively

Hinckley and Rugby Building Society have made contact offering a savings account tailored to the needs of Parish Councils which may be worth investigating as they are offering the following current variable rate accounts:

- Local Council Easy Access Account 2.40% Gross/AER
- Local Council 45 Day Notice Deposit Account 2.85% Gross/AER
- Local Council 90 Day Notice Deposit Account 3.60% Gross/AER

The funding awarded via SKDC for the Cemetery and Jubilee Park biodiversity projects have been received including 20% VAT in error as the funding cannot cover VAT. The Clerk will arrange to return this amount to them. Please note DSJPC are able to reclaim VAT on non-business activities.

25.48 To receive a report of the financial position as at 5 February 2025.

It was noted that a total of £312,963.22 was being held in the Parish Council's bank accounts of which £63,241.83 was general reserves and £117,624.46 was earmark reserves.

25.49 To receive a report on the income and expenditure against budget for the period 1 April 2024 to 5 February 2025.

The contents of the report generated from the Scribe accounting system was noted with no areas of concern being raised.

25.50 To consider recommendations or matters arising from the 2023/24 internal auditor's narrative report received in June 2024 following the resolution at Council on 18 June 2024 that the report should be referred to the finance policy and personnel committee to consider.

The Internal Auditor is currently auditing the financial year 2024/25 and has commented that the recommendations put forward in his narrative report for 2023/24 (compiled on 17 March and 4 June 2024) have not been considered. The report was included on the June 2024 council agenda where the task of considering the recommendations was delegated to the FPP committee. This has not as yet happened. The committee worked through the Internal Auditor's recommendations as follows:

1. Extend the schedule of reviews and updating to all policies as some are still undated or overdue for review.

ACTION: *The Clerk was asked to bring to the next FPP meeting on 8 April 2025, a list of all the council policies for a review schedule to be agreed and copies of all the non-controversial policies for them to be readopted.*

2. Council should consider increasing the level of general reserves to between 3-6 months of general expenditure

Minute 24.121.3 of January 2024 resolved to increase general reserves by £7,454. This transaction was completed on 22 April 2024 and general reserves are currently £63,241.83

3. Councillors are encouraged to take action where this is required to make sure that the council has access to bank accounts and council funds.

Minutes from April 2024 (24.48) June 2024 (25.12) and August 2024 (25.17) advise that additional signatories have completed applications to become bank signatories but the process has not been completed. The three Councillors concerned were encouraged to complete the process.

4. Publish more detailed expenditure and income reports as part of the minutes available to the public.

The Clerk forwarded reports for 2024/25 to the Webmaster on 3 February 2025 and they have been added to the Parish Council's webpage. Whilst doing this the Webmaster (who is also an Internal Auditor) took the decision to remove documents for previous years, stating that once the AGAR has been signed off by the External Auditors it is no longer necessary for them to be available.

5. A clear resolution should be made giving the specific figures for the approved budget prior to the resolution to set the precept.

This recommendation was acted upon when the budget and precept was set at the December 2024 meeting (minute 25.98)

6. Check the Terms of reference of this committee (including Standing Orders) to make sure that risk management and aspects of financial control are clearly identified as a specific area of responsibility

ACTION: *The Clerk to obtain guidance to clarify what should be included in the FPP Terms of Reference and then bring the amended Terms of Reference to Council to be agreed.*

7. Check the new Model Financial Regulations at a point at which the council considers adopting them. In particular section 1.6 is in bold which indicates it is statutory and cannot be changed – The Council must not delegate any decision regarding ...addressing the recommendations from the internal or external auditor. Further comment – the Council is in a position to tailor these new model Financial Regulations to meet DSJPC's purposes rather than waiting for the re-issued version from NALC.

This will be completed when the Council (and Clerk) are able to do so. In the meantime, DSJPC will continue to use their current Financial Regulations

The committee **RECOMMEND** that full council resolves to accept the responses stated.

25.51 To consider quotations for grass cutting at Jubilee Park and Woody Heights
The quotations that had been received from three contractors were considered and it was proposed to **RECOMMEND** to full council that both contracts should be awarded to Glendale Managed Services at a cost of £152 and £53.50 per cut.

25.52 To receive an update regarding the purchase of maintenance machinery and storage facilities, and agree any actions required.

As the recreation areas are required to be cut from March 2025 onwards and no machinery has as yet been purchased, as more work is needed to investigate suitable options, therefore Council staff had not been trained to use it, the recommendation under minute 25.51 was being put to Council.

Following receipt of the grass cutting quotations from the contractors and re-visiting the cost and responsibilities around purchasing, owning and using machinery (insurance, secure storage, training and maintenance), in accordance with Standing Order 7a, this committee **RECOMMEND** that the previous Council resolution (minutes 25.97.1 and 25.98 of the December Council meeting) to purchase machinery and a storage facility be overturned.

It was acknowledged that it may be re-visited at a future date.

25.53 To consider reviewing the contracts of employment for all staff.

ACTION: The Clerk was asked to obtain some advice from a Human Resources Advisor, with a view to standardising the current employee's contracts.

25.54 To note the date of the next meeting – 8pm on Tuesday 8 April 2025.