

Springfield Parish Council

Minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee Meeting

The Council met at 7.00pm on **Monday 3rd June 2024** in the Council Chamber, Springfield Parish Centre, St Augustine's Way, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 6GX.

Councillor I Fuller chaired the meeting.

Present- Councillors J Pioli, K Hine, E Aluko, S Byrne-Laguerue and R Carson

In Attendance- Clerk to the Council and the Administration and Committee Clerk.

001/24. Apologies for Absence

No apologies received. Cllr R Lee was not present at the meeting.

002/24. Declarations of Interest

Cllr S Byrne-Laguerue advised that she is also a Councillor for Chelmer Village Council.

003/24. Minutes

Minutes from the Finance and Policy meeting held on the 12th February 2024 were received, agreed and signed by Cllr I Fuller.

004/24. Election of Vice Chair

Cllr E Aluko was elected as Vice-Chair. Proposed by Cllr J Pioli, seconded by Cllr R Carson and agreed unanimously.

005/24. Public Question Time

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

006/24. Clerk's Report

An update was given on the CCLA in which the mandate has been completed this evening for adding the Clerk and Cllrs I Fuller and R Carson. This will be sent to the CCLA.

The Sage contract has been cancelled as of 1st July 2024.

The Fire/Intruder alarm at the centre has been installed and is working well.

007/24. Furlough Reclaim from HMRC

Cllr E Aluko and Cllr R Carson explained that after further investigation, it was agreed that the calculations made for furlough were incorrect, being that the full working hours were claimed for, rather than the furlough percentage allowance, and therefore the reclaim from HMRC is correct and payable. The full amount was paid on the 30th May 2024. The council will likely receive another invoice for interest due, which will also be paid. It was retrospectively agreed to pay the reclaim. Proposed by Cllr K Hine, seconded by Cllr R Carson, and agreed unanimously.

008/24. Direct Debits Financial Year 2024/2025

The direct debits were discussed and agreed. The Clerk will apply for a Barclay card for herself so that the previous Clerk's card can be cancelled. The committee discussed the monthly payment for the office card reader, it was agreed that a new

card reader will be looked into to lower the monthly payment, due to how often the current card reader is actually used.

It was also agreed that the Clerk will look into another fuel card, as there is a fee on each transaction and the council are currently paying multiple direct debits over the month for fuel as and when it is needed.

The Clerk recommended that the Council set up a direct debit with HMRC for VAT payments, to avoid any future penalties. The committee agreed and also advised that a VAT expert be consulted so that they can look into what VAT the council are paying and why. The remaining direct debits including salaries were agreed, for recommendation to Full Council on 1st July 2024. Proposed by Cllr J Pioli, seconded by Cllr K Hine and agreed unanimously.

009/24. Financial Regulations 2024/25

The new Financial Regulations for the financial year 2024/25 were agreed for recommendation to Full Council on 1st July 2024. Proposed by Cllr S Byrne-Laguer, seconded by Cllr J Pioli and agreed unanimously.

010/24. Financial Transactions

The income and expenditure for the month of May 2024 was received and agreed. Proposed by Cllr K Hine, seconded by Cllr J Pioli and agreed unanimously.

011/24. Financial Review

The bank reconciliations for all accounts for May 2024 were received and agreed. The budget summary up to the end of May 2024 was circulated, and council discussed how some budgets were previously agreed and have since subsequently gone over budget. Cllr I Fuller also suggested that a spreadsheet showing the splits between Springfield Parish Council and Chelmer Village Council is created so that all members are up to speed on what Springfield Parish Council pay and what Chelmer Village Council contribute towards salaries and bills. Proposed by Cllr K Hine, seconded by Cllr J Pioli and agreed unanimously.

012/24. Bank Mandate

The Clerk went through the current mandate and asked that more councillors be added so that the responsibility of authorising payments is expanded, making sure there is always someone available to sign which is good practice and allows for prevention of fraud. Cllrs K Hine, E Aluko and R Lee have all agreed to become signatories, along with the Clerk.

The Clerk also advised that online banking requires three authorisations. One person to input the payments on the bank and two councillors to log onto the bank and authorise. Currently there is only two authorisations. The change is good practice and helps to ensure that the council keeps up to date with current financial regulations.

It was also agreed that going forward not just the Chair is authorised to make changes to the mandate, as this person can change from one year to the next. Once the Clerk has full access to the bank, she will be able to look into all procedures, which should be within the next two weeks.

A further discussion took place in regards to the automatic transfer of funds between the deposit and main accounts. This means that staff must input all of these transactions in order to reconcile at the end of each month which is unnecessary. The Clerk has asked that she maintain and keep an eye on the accounts and only transfer funds as and when needed. Council agreed to all of the above for recommendation to Full Council on 1st July 2024. Proposed by Cllr K Hine, seconded by Cllr E Aluko, and agreed unanimously.

013/24. Franking Machine

The Clerk advised the franking machine that is charged yearly to the council is not needed anymore, after discussions with all members of staff who stated it is not used apart from on very rare occasions. Council agreed the contract for the machine could be cancelled, and stamps used accordingly instead. Proposed by Cllr R Carson, seconded by Cllr E Aluko and agreed unanimously.

014/24. Energy Contract

After the list of prices for new energy contracts was circulated to councillors, it was agreed that the council will go ahead with the 12-month contract with Valda, also recommended by the council's broker, as United Gas and Power the current provider could not provide a more competitive quote. This will be reviewed again in 6 months' time, with new contracts to be looked into. Proposed by Cllr K Hine, seconded by Cllr J Pioli and agreed unanimously.

015/24. Reserves

The Clerk advised on the reserves that the council has at present. It was decided that the Mower fund would be increased from £100 to £500. The Council agreed that the stage curtains could be cleaned and re flame resistant guarded. This cost will come out of the reserves. Further reserves will be looked into and recommended by the Clerk at the next meeting. An earmarked reserve of £4,000 will be allocated to the replacement radiators for the nursery. Proposed by Cllr K Hine, seconded by Cllr S Byrne-Lagrué and agreed unanimously.

016/24. Updates from Councillors and Matters for Information.

Cllr E Aluko is attending councillor training in July. The Clerk advised that all councillors should keep up to date with any training offered.

With no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.35pm.