

NORMANTON TOWN COUNCIL



MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Held on Tuesday 30th April 2024 at 1:00pm at Normanton Town Hall

Present: Councillor A Bones
Councillor B Mayne – Chairman
Councillor P Mayne
Councillor P Sampson
Councillor R Seal – Vice-Chairman
Councillor K Wilson, JP
D Johnston – Town Clerk & RFO

Absent: Councillor E Blezard
Councillor M Jennings
Councillor H Jones
Councillor J Pritchard

055. Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED that apologies be received on behalf of Councillor E Blezard, Councillor M Jennings, Councillor H Jones, and Councillor J Pritchard.

056. Members Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

057. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 (Minute Numbers 038-054; Page Numbers 11-18) be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

058. Budget Review 2023/24

Members considered the budget at the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

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It was noted that there were some small overspends in some areas of the budget, however these could be easily absorbed by budget savings elsewhere within the budget.

It was reported that income was £358,483 against a budget of £346,821 and expenditure was £351,977 against a budget of £406,794.

The opening balance at the start of the 2023/24 financial year was £219,709 which was made up of earmarked reserves of £99,691 and a general reserve of £120,018.

The closing balance at the end of the financial year was £226,216 which was made up of earmarked reserves of £81,124, a general reserve of £132,303 and a contribution to reserves for 2024/25 of £12,788.

In accordance with proper practices, members reviewed the general and earmarked reserves to ensure that a general reserve of around three months net revenue expenditure was maintained.

The earmarked reserves were agreed as follows:

Elections	£25,000.00
Community Centre Repairs & Renewals	£20,000.00
Town Hall Refurbishment	£35,000.00
Community Infrastructure Levy	£3,688.37
Allotments	£20,000.00
Small Grants	£674.58
Talking Newspaper	£2,559.26
Mayors Allowance 23/24	£284.55
Mayors Appeal 23/24	£4,497.91
Deposits Held	£65.00
IT / Website	£5,000.00
Town Hall Repairs & Renewals	£10,000.00
National Events	£9,500.00
	£136,269.67

The general reserve is therefore £89,946.00 which represents 3 months net revenue expenditure in line with the Practitioners Guide.

RESOLVED that the budget report be received and the earmarked and general reserves be agreed.

059. Internal Audit Report

The report of the internal auditor following the end of the 2023/24 financial year was circulated.

There were nine recommendations:

1. That improvements are made to the budget document to demonstrate how all income and spending plans come together taking into account the opening and closing balances, general and earmarked reserves and how this is linked to the level of precept to be levied.
2. That the reasons for any variances in excess of 15% are recorded in the council minutes with the proposed action of how any overspends will be met.
3. That the General Reserves Policy be updated to reflect the calculations for general reserves as per requirements of the Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide.
4. That all reserves (general and earmarked) be reviewed and justified regularly (i.e. at least annually) and as part of the budget setting process.
5. That the asset register be updated to reflect all current fixed assets and equipment in use by the council at purchase or nominal value. Obsolete assets that are no longer in use or are awaiting disposal should be clearly recorded in a register for audit purposes. Consideration should be given to developing an Asset Register and Disposal Policy which includes a valuation policy for all fixed assets, and which reflects the requirements of the Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide.
6. That the council ensures that the compliance requirements of Financial Regulation 14.6 be implemented (review of assets annually).
7. That the accounting statements be reviewed by the RFO and updated accordingly prior to submission to council members for formal approval.
8. That the council fully complies with the requirements of the Local Government Data Transparency Code.
9. That the Publication Scheme be published on the Town Council website.

The Council notes the recommendations and makes the following comments:

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Point 4 – all reserves are reviewed annually, usually in April once the financial year end has been completed. The Council will carry out this task as part of the budget setting process.

Point 5 – the Council has stated that it is in the process of reviewing the entire asset register to ensure compliance with the Practitioners Guide. This is an ongoing piece of work and will be completed in time for the next audit.

Point 7 – The RFO has raised a query with the Yorkshire Local Councils Associations to clarify the advice given by the internal auditor in relation to the accounting statements.

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Report be received.

060. Quarterly Internal Audit Checks

RESOLVED that the Internal Audit Checklists for Q3 and Q4 of the 2023/24 financial year be received.

It was noted that the debit card payments from January were missed from the list that was reported to Council. A supplementary list will be circulated to the next available meeting of Council.

061. External Audit

Due to the queries raised with the Yorkshire Local Council's Association, the draft external audit documents were not available for review.

These would be presented to the next available meeting of Council.

062. Budget 2024/25

RESOLVED that the budget report for the 2024/25 financial year showing the previous year's budget, current year's budget and next year's budget be received.

063. HP Instant Ink

RESOLVED that the Instant Ink subscription continue with HP at a cost of £15.41 + VAT per month.

This expenditure is affordable from within the printing budget.

064. IT Infrastructure and Support

RESOLVED that a report on IT infrastructure and support be received and that:

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- i) Interest be expressed with Pro-Logic for the Dark Web Scan service.
- ii) The price increase from Pro-Logic be noted.
- iii) Further information be obtained for a gov.uk domain name.
- iv) Canva be renewed at a cost of £99.99 for the year.
- v) The PDF Escape Subscription be upgraded to ultimate to enable e signatures to be used on council documents at a cost of around £71.00 dependant on exchange rates.

This expenditure is affordable from within the IT Software budget.

065. Hanging Baskets

A report was circulated on the hanging baskets and the ongoing difficulties with column testing being carried out by Wakefield Council / Amey.

It was reported that the planned expansion of the baskets could not go ahead this summer until the position with column testing was clarified.

It was noted that there was now a change of £21 per basket for relocations through First Impressions and nine baskets had been relocated already at a cost of £189.00.

There were 8 locations currently available without sponsors but if existing columns fail, they will be needed to relocate existing sponsors as a priority.

No new sponsors would be allocated until the current sponsors are dealt with.

RESOLVED that the report be received, and the position be reviewed for Spring 2025.

066. Mayors Appeal

It was reported that the Mayor had raised over £4,000.00 for her chosen good causes.

This would be distributed to the Alice Bacon Trust, Prince of Wales Hospice, Royal British Legion, Normanton Scouts, Altofts Scouts and The Well Project.

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RESOLVED that the Town Clerk be delegated authority to distribute the funds, in consultation with the Mayor, subject to the payments being listed at the next available meeting of Council before being paid.

In the absence of any further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.