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**STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET PARISH COUNCIL F&GP COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10th January 2024 in The Mountfitchet Exchange, Crafton Green, 72 Chapel Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

**PRESENT** Cllr J O’Brien (Chair), Cllrs M Caton, J Hogg, P Jones, A Khan and G Sell

**ATTENDING** Mrs Ruth Clifford – Clerk

Mrs Emma Philbrick – Deputy Clerk

Cllr A Barnes

1 member of the public – via Zoom

**312 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE -** None

No apologies received from Cllr Ghosh

**313 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -** None

**314 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH DECEMBER 2023** The Clerk advised that she had missed an action point off the minutes and 295 – Clerk to circulate the EMR to all members has been amended on the minutes.

**RESOLVED** To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2023 as a true and accurate account with the above amendment made.

**315 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS FROM THE LAST MEETING**

295 – Clerk to circulate the EMR to all members - done

**316 TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIR, CLLR JOHN O’BRIEN**

Attached

**317 LIGHTING**

**a) TO RECEIVE AN OUTAGE REPORT**

St Mary’s Drive – UKPN – Contractor chasing them for an update

Chapel Hill – UKPN Issue

Lower Street – UKPN Issue

St Johns Crescent – UKPN Issue

St Johns Road – Issue with access door to column

**b) TO RECEIVE A GENERAL REPORT ON LIGHTING**

The project to switch the majority of our lights to part-night lighting is almost complete.

**318 FINANCE**

**a) TO APPROVE THE LIST OF PAYMENTS FOR AUTHORISATION**

The payment schedule was checked against the invoices before the start of the meeting by Cllr Jones. The last item for P Knight Plumbing should be £52.50 not £40.00

The list of payments was approved with no questions.

**b) TO RECEIVE THE SUMMARY INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023**

Circulated to members ahead of the meeting and no queries raised.

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**319 BUDGET 2024/25 – TO RECEIVE A DRAFT FOR CONSIDERATION AND TO MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE FULL COUNCIL FOR THE PRECEPT FOR 2024/25,**

The second draft budget had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. The Chair reiterated the uncertainty regarding energy price increases in late 2024, particularly those relating to our street lighting which is by far our largest contract.

Questions from members were raised relating to the increase in the trees budget and the decision not to raise money to increase the cemetery reserve fund. With no additional site yet identified, members agreed that it was preferable to keep the precept increase as low as possible but if there is a surplus on energy costs at year end 2025, this will be paid into the Cemetery EMR.

Reverting back to the increase in energy costs, it was noted that the increase in the use of community buildings is actually a bonus but with that comes increased running costs. It was agreed that whatever precept is agreed by the Council, a detail explanation for the increase will be made available to residents via The Link, our Website and social media. A final query was raised with regard to the CCTV system. It was generally agreed that the Council would be unwise to dispose of it at the present time and that a new server was therefore be required.

Cllr Jones proposed the following:

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Council approve the second draft budget for the financial year 2024/25

Having been seconded by Cllr Hogg, it was unanimously agreed.

Cllr O’Brien proposed the following:

**RECOMMENDATION** That the Council should set its precept at £477,766 which is an increase of 9.09%, raising the Band D tax to £139.51. This is equivalent to an increase of 24p a week.

Having been seconded by Cllr Caton, it was unanimously agreed.

**320 GIGACLEAR – TO CONSIDER ADVICE RECEIVED FROM SOLICITOR REGARDING CONTROL BOX AT FIVE ACRES**

**RESOLVED** That under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 in view of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed, the public and press be instructed to withdraw.

Meeting closed to the press and public at 8.03pm

Members discussed this agenda item

Meeting re-opened to the press and public at 8.22pm

Having been proposed by Cllr O’Brien and seconded by Cllr Caton, it was unanimously

**RESOLVED** Accept the advice from the legal expert and seek mitigation measures.

**321 WINDMILL – TO RECEIVE ANY AVAILABLE UPDATES**

Cllr O’Brien advised that the annual Santa event had raised just under £400. There had been complaints that the event wasn’t well publicised. This is something the Parish Council could help with this year.

**322 STAFF MATTERS – TO RECEIVE ANY AVAILABLE UPDATES**

Nothing to update

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**323 YOUTH MATTERS – TO RECEIVE ANY AVAILABLE UPDATES**

Nothing to update, have a meeting coming up soon with the new provider of the Youth Service.

Meeting closed at 8.23pm

**NO ACTION POINTS**