

Godstone Parish Council

(incorporating the Villages of Godstone, South Godstone and Blindley Heath)

Clerk to the Parish Council

S Endersby

Admin Assistant

24 November 2023

The Bounty
Godstone Green
Godstone, Surrey
RH9 8DY

Telephone/Fax: 01883 744209

AGENDA

Members of the Finance Committee are summoned to a meeting of the Finance Committee of Godstone Parish Council on **Wednesday 29 November 2023 at 9.30am** at the **Bounty, Godstone Green**.

S Endersby - Clerk to Godstone Parish Council

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Declaration of Interest**
3. **Minutes of previous meetings held on 20 November 2023**
4. **Parish Council Procedures Audit**
 - 4.1 Insurance Cover
 - 4.2 Financial Risk Assessment, including Deposit Protection Limits – Annual Review
 - 4.3 Financial Regulations - To review regulations and agree any changes
 - 4.4 Asset Register
 - 4.5 Business Continuity Plan
 - 4.6 Review of Current Direct Debits/Standing Orders
- 4 **AGAR - Financial Year 2022-2023**
 - 4.1 **External Auditor** - Note report and conclusion
- 5 **Interim Internal Audit – Financial Year 2023-2024** – Note receipt of report and consider recommendations of Interim Internal Audit 2023-2024 and agree any changes in view of audit comments.
- 6 **Financial Position – General Review (year to date 2022-2023)**
 - 6.1 Review of General Reserves
 - 6.2 Review the latest Income and Expenditure report; agree any virement.
 - 6.3 Review Designated Funds and Restricted Funds and current balances
 - 6.4 Consider estimated carry forward for general funds at 31 March 2024
- 7 **Grants** - Continuous Grants and other Grants to date; Terms and Conditions and Awarding Policy
- 8 **Review of fees and charges for 2023/24**
 - 8.1 Burial Grounds, Allotments, Wayleaves/Easements and Garden Plot Licenses
 - 8.2 Use of Godstone Green and Blindley Heath
- 9 **Annual review of staff salaries, Pensions and Councillor Allowances (Confidential)**
 - 9.1 Salaries and Pensions
 - 9.2 Chairman's Allowance - Review and set allowance for 2023/2024
- 10 **Budget for the year 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025**
 - 10.1 Prepare and agree budget for the financial year 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024
 - 10.2 Consider the preparation of a 3-year budget Plan
- 11 **Agree Precept for the year 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025** - to recommend to the Parish Council at the Parish Council meeting on 5 December 2022 for approval.
- 12 **Date of next meeting** - Confirm the date of the next meeting

Part 2 – To consider passing a resolution that pursuant to Section 1 part 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any business on the grounds that it is likely if the public were to remain, there would be a disclosure of exempt information.

NOTES

for the meeting of the Finance Committee of
Godstone Parish Council on **Wednesday 29 November 2023** at **9.30am** at the **Bounty, Godstone Green.**

1. Apologies for absence

No business may be transacted at a meeting unless there is a quorum of three members. (Terms of Reference Item 5)

Please advise the Clerk in advance of the meeting if you are unable to attend

2. Declaration of Interest

Councillors to verbally state if they have a 'Pecuniary Interest' or 'Other Interest' in any items detailed on the agenda and sign the blue book registering attendance and noting Pecuniary or Other Interests if applicable. (Standing Order Item 3 u.)

Dispensations to granted to each member of the committee on the grounds that the transaction of business will be impeded given the number of Councillor's who would otherwise be prohibited from participating in item 11.

3. Minutes of previous meetings held on 20 November 2023

Council to Vote - Councillors present at the meeting to confirm they are an accurate record of the meeting.

4. Parish Council Procedures Audit

a. Insurance Cover

2024 is the last year of the three year deal

b. Financial Risk Assessment, including Deposit Protection Limits – Annual Review

As per 2023 review

Subject	Risk Identified	H/M/L	Control	Review	Reviewed December 2022
Petty Cash	Loss through theft / dishonesty	L	N/a – no longer have petty cash	N/a	Reviewed, no change.
Expenses	Loss through fraudulent claims	L	Covered in Financial Regulations. Each Expense claim reviewed by two councillors at each meeting and agreed by the full Parish council.	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe.
Income - Cheques Received	Loss through theft / dishonesty / misplacement	L	Cheques paid into bank at the very least weekly. See Office Procedures	Annually	Reviewed, noted that Clerk now uses mobile banking and post office to pay cheques in. Keep same review timeframe.
Income - Cash	Loss through theft / dishonesty	L	All Cash is paid into the bank at the very least monthly. See office Procedure	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe.
Financial Records / Standing Orders	Yes - adequate	L	Financial Regulations in place	Review when necessary	Committee noted the regulations were last approved Jan 2022 and not aware of any changes currently required.
Bank and banking	Errors by Bank	L	See Financial Regulations. Monthly Bank reconciliations undertaken; available at Council meetings	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe.
Reporting and Auditing	Compliance	L	Council should regularly audit internally to comply with Fidelity Guarantee	Bi-Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe.
Salaries	Incorrect Payments	L	Monthly meeting; calculated in accordance with HMR7C regulations. Annual Returns submitted within timescale. Councillor's review; Internal Audit Review	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe. Cttee noted discrepancy that has arisen with HMRC has noted by the interim

					audit Nov 2022. Clerk confirmed that is to be investigated with Cllr S Farr support.
Original Documentation	Loss by theft/fire	L	Stored in 30minute Fireproof Cabinet for storage of minutes, contracts and other original papers	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe.
Computer Files	Loss	L	Computer backed up by at least weekly. One (monthly) back up stored off site and one stored in 30minute Fireproof Cabinet.	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe. Action to confirm the location of the Cloud as noted as completed Dec 2021 and circulated by email, information also detailed below.
Insurance Cover	As per policy	L	Reviewed by Full Parish Council.	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe.
Precept	Reduced payment of the expected amount	L	Monitored by Parish council if contributing factors arise.	Annually	Reviewed, no change. Keep same review timeframe. Cttee noted the late payment by TDC for the last two payments. Cllr C Farr had already raised the issue with TDC as a concern.
Deposit Protection Limits	Amount of funds held in accounts and protected by Deposit and savings protection FCA	L	Consider opening a deposit account linked to current account.	Annually	Previous ACTION Investigate a Deposit Account with parish current bank. Cttee noted that this action was acknowledged as still outstanding and still relevant to be investigated.

ACTION FC11/22 – 1a Investigation of HMRC payroll discrepancy to be investigated by Clerk and Cllr S Farr.
UPDATE - This is underway.

ACTION FC11/22 – 1b Investigate a deposit account.
UPDATE - This remains outstanding.

- c. Financial Regulations - To review regulations and agree any changes

Financial regulations are based on the NALC model. These were reviewed and readopted in the full council in May 2023.

Action Delegated to Committee - Standing Order 18 (Financial Controls and Procurement), as updated in the NALC Model Standing Order be considered for inclusion in the councils Standing Orders. Committee to report its recommendation back to full council for consideration.

- d. Asset Register

Provided separately.

- e. Business Continuity Plan

Out of date

- f. Review of Current Direct Debits/Standing Orders

Regular current direct debits and standing orders.

Current Direct Debits noted: British Gas, BT, NEST.

Current Standing Orders noted: Bounty Rent to Scouts – on purchase completing the standing order will need to be cancelled.

5. AGAR - Financial Year 2022-2023

5.1 External Auditor - Note report and conclusion

https://www.godstone-pc.gov.uk/images/SU0040_S3.pdf

5.2 Interim Internal Audit – Financial Year 2023-2024 – Note receipt of report and consider recommendations of Interim Internal Audit 2023-2024 and agree any changes in view of audit comments.

Report (previously circulated to Full council) recirculated for meeting.

Godstone Parish Council Interim Internal Audit Report 2023/24

Year End 2023 – Audit points cfwd

Audit Point	Audit Findings	Council comments
Books of Account	I would recommend a receipts file is created to hold documentary evidence of the receipts.	
Governance	The council is fully aware of GDPR and accessibility regulations. It was noted the council has established common email addresses for all councillors. This is recommended because it gives a natural segregation between work and personal lives, making it clear beyond doubt in what capacity a councillor is acting. In addition to this it gives control to the council, adds a degree of professionalism and in the event of a FOI request limits access to personal computers. I recommend in the spirit of transparency and accessibility that all councillor email addresses are published on the councillor's page of the website.	
Risk Assessments	The council has a risk management policy which was most recently reviewed and approved by council in November 2022. I reviewed the policy and the risk assessment record, which details the types of risk identified, who might be harmed and how, assigns a perceived risk level, records action taken and how the risk is managed. This type of approach is suitable for a council of this size and demonstrates that the council takes its risk management responsibilities seriously. I remind council that this must be reviewed and minuted before 31 st March 2024.	
Bank & Cash	Bank reconciliations are completed on a monthly basis, independently checked and presented to council meetings for review. I reviewed the reconciliations presented for the interim audit. I was able to confirm the balances to the bank statements and found no errors. I am also able to confirm that the reconciliations are signed. I remind council to sign the face of the bank statements in accordance with regulation.	
Transparency	The council does not have income and expenditure in excess of £200,000 and as such is not required to follow the "Local Government Transparency Code 2015" which is recommended practice not a statutory requirement. In addition to this, because the council's income and expenditure exceeds £25,000, it is not a statutory requirement to follow the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code, although it is recommended best practice to do so. I recommend reviewing the way the information is published on the website of West Chiltington Parish Council as a best practice example via this link www.wcpc.org.uk/transparency	

6. Financial Position – General Review (year to date 2022-2023)

a. Review of General Reserves

Summary of Funds up to 31 October provided, reserves summary below following agreed changes made in November.

b. Review the latest Income and Expenditure report; agree any virement.

Report provided up to 31 October 2023 (Month 7)

c. Review Designated Funds (DF) and Restricted Funds (RF) and current balances

Changes agreed at last meeting actioned and reflected in information below, apart from £2,500 from BH Car Park/Barrier, see notes below.

Nominal Code	Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
320	DF - Platinum Jubilee	246		246
322	DF - Children's Playground	1079.95		1079.95
324	DF - Neighbourhood Plan	7552.33	-7552.33	0
325	DF - Professional Services	1944.32	-1944.32	0
326	DF - Path on the Green	2000	-2000	0
327	DF - Bounty Purchase	3928.42		3928.42
328	DF - Horses on the Green Matte	1500	-1500	0
329	DF - Defence of Green (Maint)	1000	-1000	0
330	DF - Blindley Heath-Donated	1500		1500
331	DF - Recruitment Fees	1000	-1000	0
333	DF - Tree Work	0	14996.65	14996.65
400	RF - Fete Committee Grant	1100	-1100	0
401	RF - Christmas Lights	0	1250	1250
402	RF - Memorial Benches	1156.39	-780.37	376.02
403	RF - Pond (GG)	267.99		267.99
405	RF - Neighbourhood Plan	3500	-3500	0
406	RF - Donation Jubilee Tree	700	-685	15
407	RF - Donation Specific Works	311		311
451	CIL - Blindley Heath - Land	840		840
453	CIL - Path on the Green	2379.28		2379.28
454	CIL - BH Barrier/CP Works	4500	-2000	2500
455	CIL - Fund 22/23	12237.12	-2458.37	9778.75
		48742.8	-9273.74	39469.06

From	To	Update	Action
£7,552.33 Neighbourhood Plan (DF)	£7,552.33 to DF Tree work.	Action complete.	Consider funds for 24-25, noting new grant application being made.
£1,944.32 Professional Services (DF)	£1944.32 to DF Tree work.	Action complete.	Consider bringing back an allocation of funds in the FY24-25 budget plan.
£1,500 Horses on the Green matter (DF)	£1500 to DF Tree work.	Action complete.	Consider if any allocation of funds required in the FY24-25 budget plan.
£1,000 defence of the Green (DF)	£1000 to DF Tree work.	Action complete.	Consider if any allocation of funds required in the FY24-25 budget plan.
£1,000 recruitment fees (DF)	£1000 to DF Tree work.	Action complete.	Candidate accepted role.
£2,000 Path on the Green (DF)	£2000 to DF Tree work.	Action complete.	CIL funds of £2379.28 allocated to project and £6k grant application being made to Your Fund Surrey
£2,500 from Blindley Heath Barrier/Car Park works (DF) (RF)	£2,500 to DF Tree work.	Not completed as BH Barrier Fund is a RF not a DF. Review*	Consider if any allocation of funds required in the FY24-25 budget plan for future maintenance.

* Consider if CIL funds could be used for Tree Works? Or consider allocating CIL funds to Playground and reallocating DF from Playground to trees?

- d. Consider estimated carry forward for general funds at 31 March 2024

£30k (Bounty) + £37k (estimate Precept Reserve) + £7k (dependent on Tree works (when they take place) and addressing issue raised in 6. c above) = £74k

7. Grants - Continuous Grants and other Grants to date; Terms and Conditions and Awarding Policy

No allocation for Grants in Draft Budget Version 1.

8. Review of fees and charges for 2023/24

- a. Burial Grounds, Allotments, Wayleaves/Easements and Garden Plot Licenses

Burial Ground Fees

	Parishioner		7-year Parishioner		Non-Parishioner	
	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25
GRAVES						
			£		£	
Purchase of grave space in advance of need	£379		£757		Not Permitted	
Purchase of grave space	£379		£757		£3,247	
Interment in a purchased grave	£260		£503		£2,029	
Addition of ashes to a burial	£190		£379		£811	
Extension to EROB 5 Years	£57		£113		£487	
Extension to EROB 10 Years	£45		£91		£390	
MEMORIALS						
Right to erect or place a headstone with inscription	£254		£503		£1,014	
Additional Inscription	£98		£195		£419	
Admin Fee	£88		£88		£88	

Allotment Fees

Rental charge for allotments for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 is £9.35 per 25 sqm (with the minimum charge £27).

Wayleaves/Easements and Garden Plot Licenses

The Wayleave and Garden plot rent for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 increased by 5% on the FY2022-23 charge applicable to each wayleave and license.

- b. Use of Godstone Green and Blindley Heath

FY2023-24 charge for the use of Godstone Green or Blindley Heath for the annual visiting fair charged as operational day £220.50 and non-operational day £110.25. All other applications to use Godstone Green or Blindley Heath to be considered on application with information of the proposed use being provided, the fee to then be agreed and confirmed by council on a case by case basis.

Committee to note that Human Circus Fee to be confirmed.

9. Annual review of staff salaries, Pensions and Councillor Allowances (Confidential)

- a. Salaries and Pensions

- b. Chairman's Allowance - Review and set allowance for 2023/2024

10. Budget for the year 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

- a. Prepare and agree budget for the financial year 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

First draft circulated. [Following V1 being circulated, minor changes to IT made – update to be given at meeting.]

Items not included in the V1. Draft budget - Replacement Trees, Allotments Water (*Materials up to the cost of £400 to be paid by Parish council for water at allotments approved at July meeting*), Crypt, Repair to Burial Ground path, repair to Burial ground Fence, repair to Hilly Fields Fence, professional services (Local Plan/Garden Village), bus shelters, Notice boards, defenses, bench repairs (limited included), filling in of holes on Green, Manhole cover GG, Playground Training/ increased external inspections, Rospa membership, Crypt repair work, New path to the playground (Grant application being made), Post replacements, Steel angled tops along the tops of swings.

- b. Consider the preparation of a 3-year budget Plan

11. Agree Precept for the year 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025 - to recommend to the Parish Council at the Parish Council meeting on 4 December 2023 for approval.

12 Date of next meeting - Confirm the date of the next meeting

Part 2 – To consider passing a resolution that pursuant to Section 1 part 2 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any business on the grounds that it is likely if the public were to remain, there would be a disclosure of exempt information.