

# Godstone Parish Council

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

## Clerk to the Parish Council

S Endersby

## Admin Assistant

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## MINUTES

of the Finance Committee of Godstone Parish Council held on **Friday 25 November 2022** at **9.30am**.

**Members:** Cllrs D Stone, C White, C Farr, S Farr and B Davis

**In Attendance:** S Endersby (Clerk)

### 1. Apologies for absence - None

### 2. Declaration of Interest

2.1 All members present are parishioners and dispensations were granted to each member of the committee on the grounds that the transaction of business will be impeded given the number of Councillors who would otherwise be prohibited from participating in item 11.

### 3. Minutes of previous meetings held on 19 July 2022 and 20 December 2021

4.1 It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2021 had been circulated to the committee on 7 Feb 2022, but accidentally missed from the agenda of the July meeting for them to be approved and signed.

**RESOLVED** – The minutes of the meetings held on 20 December 2021 were approved as accurate records of the meetings and it was agreed that they be signed by the committee chairman.

4.2 Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022

**RESOLVED** – The minutes of the meetings held on 19 July 2022 were approved as accurate records of the meetings and it was agreed that they be signed by the committee chairman.

### 4. Parish Council Procedures Audit

4.1 Insurance Cover - The committee noted that the appropriate Insurance cover had been agreed by full council to meet the necessary deadline and a three-year deal had been approved commencing October 2022.

4.2 Financial Risk Assessment, including Deposit Protection Limits – Annual 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 <a href="#">Deposit and savings protection   FCA</a>	L	Consider opening a deposit account linked to current account.	Annually	<b>Previous ACTION</b> Investigate a Deposit Account with parish current bank.  Cttee noted that this action was acknowledged as still outstanding and still relevant to be investigated.

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**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that the appropriate review of the financial risk assessment had been undertaken.

**ACTION FC11/22 – 1a** Investigation of HMRC payroll discrepancy to be investigated by Clerk and Cllr S Farr.

**ACTION FC11/22 – 1b** Investigate a deposit account.

4.3 Financial Regulations - To review regulations and agree any changes – The finance regulations were approved in January 2022 and there were no updates reported.

4.4 Asset Register – Update on Review

**ACTION FC11/22 – 2** Update the asset register following the playground work with details of cost.

- 4.5 Business Continuity Plan – Plan prepared a number of years ago, no proposed action of changes for the immediate future.
- 4.6 Review of Current Direct Debits/Standing Orders – The committee noted the regular current direct debits and standing orders and there were no changes proposed or concerned raised. It was noted that dependent on the Bounty either being purchased or rent changing the standing order would need to be reviewed.  
Current Direct Debits noted: British Gas, BT, NEST.  
Current Standing Orders noted: Bounty Rent to Scouts.

#### 4 AGAR - Financial Year 2021-2022

- 4.1 **External Auditor** – The committee noted the report and conclusion of the External auditor as detailed in the AGAR, already notified to full council and published on the Parish website.

#### 5 Interim Internal Audit – Financial Year 2022-2023 – Note receipt and consider recommendations of Interim Internal Audit 2022-2023 and agree any changes in view of audit comments.

- 5.1 The committee noted receipt of the internal auditor's interim report.
- 5.2 Recommendations of report to be reviewed as audit had only taken place on 22 November 2022 and report circulated on Wednesday 23 November.
- 5.3 It was confirmed that the Audit had not raised any major issues or concerns that needed to be brought to the attention of the committee.

**ACTION FC11/22 – 3** Time to be taken to review audit report and recommendations.

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

- 6.1 Review of General Reserves – The committee's attention was brought to the internal auditors statement in relation to the level of general reserves being higher than the recommended amount.
- 6.2 Review the latest receipts and payments report; agree any virement – The committee noted that the most up to date bank reconciliation with receipts and payments account balances had been circulated in advance of the meeting.
- 6.3 Review Designated Funds and Restricted Funds and to note current balances - The committee noted that an up-to-date balance of reserves had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that:

£7,598.07 of CIL funds (in relation to the Car Park project returned by UKPN due to the project stopping), be allocated to the Playground project restricted fund.

£7,598.07 of funds designated to the Playground project by returned to general funds.

- 6.4 Consider estimated carry forward for general funds at 31 March 2023 – Considering the finance papers the committee considered that by the end of the financial year an expected carry forward figure of £36k after the allocation of the precept reserve of £34k was accounted for, £70k in total.

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

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that Grant applications be decided on an ad hoc basis.

#### 8 Review of fees and charges for 2023/24

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

##### 8.1.1 Burial Ground Fees

**TABLE OF FEES - 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022**

	Parishioner		7-year Parishioner		Non-Parishioner	
	2022-23	2023-24 3% increase	2022-23	2023-24 3% increase	2022-23	2023-24 5% increase
			£		£	
Purchase of grave space in advance of need	368	£379	735	£757	Not Permitted	Not Permitted
Purchase of grave space	368	£379	735	£757	3092	£3,247

Interment in a purchased grave	252	£260	488	£503	1932	£2,029
Addition of ashes to a burial	184	£190	368	£379	772	£811
Extension to EROB 5 Years	55	£57	110	£113	464	£487
Extension to EROB 10 Years	44	£45	88	£91	371	£390
<b>MEMORIALS</b>						
Right to erect or place a headstone with inscription	247	£254	488	£503	966	£1,014
Additional Inscription	95	£98	189	£195	399	£419
	85	£88	85	£88	85	£89

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that Parishioner and 7-year parishioner fees should increase by 3% and non-parishioner fees should increase by 5%.

**8.1.2 Allotments** – The committee noted the rental charge for allotments for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 is £8.91 per 25 sqm (with the minimum charge £25).

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that the rental charge for allotments for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 be £9.35 per 25 sqm (with the minimum charge £27). A 5% increase on the current per 25 sqm charge of £8.91.

**8.1.3 Wayleaves/Easements and Garden Plot Licenses** – The committee noted that the FY2022-23 Wayleave annual rents increased by 5% on the previous year (FY21-22) rent and the FY2022-23 Garden plot licenses annual rents increased by 5% on the previous year (FY21-22) rent.

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that the Wayleave and Garden plot rent for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 increase by 5% on the current charge applicable to each wayleave and licence.

8.2 Use of Godstone Green and Blindley Heath – The committee noted that for FY2022-23 the charge for the use of Godstone Green or Blindley Heath for an operational day is £220.50 and for a non-operational day is £110.25.

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that for FY2023-24 the charge for the use of Godstone Green or Blindley Heath for the annual visiting fair be charged an operational day at £220.50 and a non-operational day at £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.

**ACTION FC11/22 – 4** – Clerk to send out any applicable notifications/letters in relation to the increases agreed.

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

Committee noted the Clerks request to consider the Admin position hourly rate noting the length the vacancy has remained unfilled.

9.1 Salaries and Pensions – Part Two

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed 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 item 9.1 only on the grounds that it is likely if the public were to remain, there would be a disclosure of exempt information.

(Clerk left the meeting for item 9.1 and returned for item 9.2)

9.2 Chairman's Allowance - Review and set allowance for 2023/2024 – Nothing allocated.

## 10 Budget for the year 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

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

- 10.1.1 The committee noted that the Clerk had circulated an initial draft with work sheet tabs to see the breakdown of what was included.
- 10.1.2 The committee noted that the initial draft budget did not currently make any provision for: Neighbourhood plan increase in spend to complete plan; Bench maintenance; Wayleave project; Car park maintenance for either village with car parks; bus stop maintenance; tree survey (need to confirm which FY it will be paid in); any Coronation celebration; Annual cut of track foliage; Knotweed program (Enterdent); management of weeds at burial ground; cutting of verge/hedges at Enterdent; tree removal at burial ground; additional funds for Path on green; vegetation next to the Bounty and between school and green; concern about the condition of the war memorial; Hilly Field fence and Replacement / New Christmas lights.
- 10.1.3 It was also noted that no provision in relation to the Hilly Fields Car Park (Ashill development) was included (although no cost expected, matter was noted for confirmation).
- 10.1.4 Allocation of future funds for burial ground discussed in 2021 needs to be reconfirmed as this was taken out in the March 2022 review.
- 10.1.5 The draft budget did not include any earmarked figures from the previous financial year, noting the auditor's report.
- 10.1.6 It was noted that at the last budget meeting in 2021 the finance committee had stated that if projects were not started then any funds allocated to them would have to be reagreed at the next budget setting.
- 10.1.7 The most up to date bank reconciliation up to 1 November 2022 had been circulated on 15 November 2022.

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that the draft budget that had been circulated showed the basic costs to be covered, but it was noted that there were a number of variables (matters difficult to predict) and projects where costs implications need to be considered further (i.e. the difficulty of the Bounty purchase/rental situation) or confirmed (the Accounts system project, Neighbourhood Plan, Grass cutting contract extension etc). The following was agreed:

**ACTION FC11/22 – 5** - The Clerk and Councillor S Farr to carry out a further joint review of the budget, ensure the budget included an accurate amount following the confirmation of decision for item 9 Salaries and Pensions and matters noted above to present a updated draft for the committee to consider further.

To provide some guidance for the purpose of this exercise the committee considered that a preliminary figure of up to a 9% increase on the current precept (FY2022-2023 precept £67,634) could be used for the draft (potential precept of £73,721.06.).

The committee meet again to consider its final position and what precept should be recommended to the full Parish council.

10.2 Consider the preparation of a 3-year budget Plan – Not discussed.

**11 Agree Precept for the year 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024** - to recommend to the Parish Council at the Parish Council meeting on 5 December 2022 for approval.

**RESOLVED** – The committee unanimously agreed that the discussion on this item be postponed to the next Finance Committee meeting.

**12 Date of next meeting** – The date of the next meeting was agreed as Friday 16 December 2022 at 10am at the Bounty.

----- Meeting ended -----

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Signed  
Committee Chairman

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Dated