

# Great Waltham Parish Council

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Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Great Waltham Parish Council held in the Pavilion, South Street, Great Waltham on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023 at 7.30pm.

1. Elect a Chair .

Cllr Gilbert was proposed and elected.

2. Chair's Welcome:

Chair: Gilbert.

Cllrs: Stephenson, Martin, Bradley.

The Chair noted this was the first F&GP meeting since January (the April meeting was not quorate), so some agenda items have been carried forward.

3. Apologies for Absence.

Cllrs: Micklem and Jackson.

4. Declarations of interests (existence and nature) with regard to items on the agenda and requests for dispensation.

There were no declarations.

5. Public Participation session - items do not need to on the agenda.

One member of the public attended to discuss the proposed National Grid electricity pylons scheme from Norwich to Tilbury and commented that:

- The pylons will be 50metres high.
- There are concerns both in relation to health issues associated with living close to pylons and the perceived loss in the value of houses due to visual blight.
- In conjunction with the publicity campaign opposing the scheme (leaflets, articles, banners etc.), that use of land in South Street can be offered for a banner to be installed.

The Chair confirmed that:

- The Parish Council will continue to object to the current proposals (as included in the second informal consultation by National Grid) and will submit a response accordingly.
- The Northwest and Southwest of Chelmsford Parishes Group of which Great Waltham is a member are working on a collective response.
- The delivery to parish households of leaflets opposing the proposals has been organised.
- The Council will add an agenda item to its next meeting (on 22<sup>nd</sup> August) to discuss funding the supply of banners.

6. To review open items on the Action Tracker circulated prior to the meeting (Cllr Gilbert).

All open items were reviewed and confirmed complete, and closed accordingly.

7. Review of the Budget Performance 2022-2023 (deferred from the previous meeting's agenda) (Clerk).

£26,294 carried forward –

- £21,291 moved to Capital works as per budget.
- £5,000 moved to general reserve as per budget.

- £3 balance carried forward to general reserve.

FY 2022 to 2023

	Budget	Spent	Balance
<b>Staff Costs</b>	£26,200	£31,622	<b>-£5,422</b>
<b>Administration</b>	£9,349	£9,031	£318
<b>Open Spaces</b>	£42,711	£12,036	£30,675
<b>Allotments</b>	£1,400	£1,286	£114
<b>Grants</b>	£2,000	£1,391	£609

£26,294 Bal

The information was viewed on the new whiteboard/ projector screen. Each budget heading was reviewed and discussed to understand the reasons for differences between the original budget provisions and actual payments. This awareness of the dynamics involved will assist future budget setting.

**Resolution:** **The figures were noted, and lessons learnt will be rolled into the budget for 2024-2025.**

Review of Budget Performance 2023 - 2024 (Clerk).

FY 2023 to 2024

	Budget	Spent	Balance
<b>Staff Costs</b>	£32,930	£10,262	£22,668
<b>Administration</b>	£8,341	£4,565	£3,776
<b>Open Spaces</b>	£36,450	£3,715	£32,735
<b>Allotments</b>	£1,350	£36	£1,314
<b>Grants</b>	£2,200	£0	£2,200

£62,694 Bal

The spreadsheet was reviewed but needs to be updated. The budget headings do not contain all the information. However, the overall spend is correct and accurate but the allocations need to be reviewed.

**Resolution:** **The Clerk to review and update the spreadsheet and re issue to the Committee.**

- Discuss additional items for the 2024-2025 financial year (deferred from the previous meeting's agenda) (All).

<b>Committed Spend</b>				£70,185	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Date FY	Location	Details	Value £	£21,000.00	£20,201.00	£31,700.00	
2022-2023	HS	Howe Street Multi Play	£7,575	£13,426			
2022-2023	FE	2 Picnic Tables (+Installation)	£750	£12,676			
2022-2023	FE	2 Benches (plus Installation)	£750	£11,926			
2022-2023	GW	Gw Pavilion External Works	£3,000	£8,926			
2022-2023	FE	Verti Quake FE	£880	£8,046			
				<b>£471</b>			
2023-2024	HS	Howe Street Multi Play	£7,575				
2023-2024	FE	2 Picnic Tables (+Installation)	£750		£19,451		
2023-2024	FE	2 Benches (plus Installation)	£750		£18,701		
2023-2024	HS	Howe Street bench (Recycled Material)	£756		£17,945		
2023-2024		Defib + Cabinet	£3,000		£14,945		
2023-2024		Defib + Cabinet	£3,000		£11,945		
2023-2024	FE	Fence at FE	£1,870		£10,075		
2023-2024	GW	Container	£2,500		<b>£7,575</b>		
2024-2025	GW	GW Tower	£19,194				£20,081
2024-2025	FE	Fe Muga/Goal end	£14,836				<b>£5,245</b>
	GW	Defib + Cabinet	£3,000				

**Resolution:** **A working group to be formed and to meet in September to consider the optimal format and presentation of information at the October meeting (where the Committee will look to recommend the 2024/25 budget).**

**Resolution:** **The projected costs of purchasing and installing a defibrillator at Broads Green to be added to the plan.**

**Resolution: The committed spend plan and its presentation format to be reviewed and updated. The three-year time frame to be maintained to help the budget process.**

9. To consider and agree the continued development of a procurement policy document (deferred from the previous meeting's agenda) .

After careful consideration of the original policy requirements (to consider introducing an approved supplier process), given the scope of existing Financial Regulations, it was agreed to pause the introduction of the policy at this time. If the Council finds that its activities come to demand a bespoke policy the work carried out to date can be quickly restarted.

10. To receive an update on implementation and use of the new finance software package.

The Clerk confirmed that he has had 3 training sessions on the software. The accounts have been entered up to mid-July on the system and the accounts have been reconciled online for April, May and June.

The Clerk will stop using the MS Excel sheets in August once the July bank reconciliation has been completed.

The system has a number of report production features which the Committee/Council may wish to utilise.

**Resolution: The Clerk and the Chair to review the suite of reports available and make recommendations for future meetings.**

11. To discuss the Council's reserving policy in light of comments in the Council's latest internal audit report.

A discussion was held around the levels of reserves that should be held. The Council has previously approved a General Reserve of £17,000 (although the methodology in arriving at this figure is unclear but seems to equate to holding reserves to cover 4 months of the operational costs applicable when it was agreed).

The Council's reserving policy now offers guidance on how a revised assessment can be made. However, the meeting noted that a broad-based technically calculated figure may not necessarily accurately reflect the likely circumstances of the Council needing to draw on its reserves (that is, reserves should always be adequate, but not overinflated because a model calculation takes account factors not relevant to GWPC).

**Resolution: The working group to look at the reserving policy methodology and create a calculation process reflecting the Council's activities.**

12. To consider the introduction of an internal financial control document (as indicated in the Council's latest internal audit report).

The internal audit report was discussed. In view of the existing safeguards in Financial Regulations and Standing Orders the requirements of the auditor are unclear.

**Resolution: The Clerk to contact the internal auditor to clarify the requirements.**

13. To discuss and agree the format for recording the Council's assets (to make clear any differences between financial reporting figures and insurance valuations).

The asset list and insurance documents to be reviewed. The JPAG document for 2023 to be used as a guide. The asset list currently records the purchase cost of items.

It was noted that some assets have not been professionally valued for some time. There are likely to be costs involved in securing revaluations.

**Resolution: The Clerk and Chair to review the various sources and recommend the route forward to the Committee, including indications of out-of-date valuations.**

**Resolution: Asset values should be reviewed, especially where there has been significant change over time, e.g. items such as the War Memorials.**

14. To receive an update on the application for a loan in relation to the proposed average speed camera system at Ford End, and to consider its impact on budgetary considerations going forwards.

The Clerk has reviewed the process of securing a Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loan, and identified that it is quite onerous and time consuming. Additional details are required on cost, consultation and the impact on the precept before the process can be started.

The meeting noted that while a PWLB loan is not the only possible source of securing funding, it is likely to be the most cost effective in terms of interest rates. However, other (potentially less onerous) sourcing options can continue to be evaluated.

**Resolution: Clerk to draft the process and issue to the Committee members.**

**Members – Cllr Jackson, Cllr Martin, Cllr Gilbert, Cllr Bradley , Cllr Micklem and Cllr Stephenson.**

Meeting closed: 21:46  
Will Adshead-Grant.  
Clerk to the Council.