

CHOLSEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting duly convened and held on Wednesday 7th May 2025 at 10am at The Pavilion, Station Road, Cholsey.

Members present: Cllr. D. Bamford (Chair), Cllr. P. Jenkins, Cllr. M. Smith.

Officers present: C. Bird (Clerk), S. Smith (Assistant Clerk/RFO).

Start time: 10.00am

End time: 11.30am

F25. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr. J. Collins

F26. To receive Declarations of Personal and Pecuniary Interest for any agenda items

Cllr D. Bamford declared a personal interest in Agenda item 8 (future funding of the CIC Happy Hub) due to their involvement in the CIC.

F27. To hear questions or comments from members of the public concerning topics on the agenda (limited to 10 mins)

There were none.

F28. To approve and sign the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 13th November 2024 (Appendix A)

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2024 and they were signed by Cllr D. Bamford.

F29. To note 2024/2025 year-end accounts (Appendix B), including CIL spending and current balance.

The 2024/2025 year-end accounts were reviewed and will be submitted to full Council for approval at the 21st May Annual Council Meeting. The year-end balance is +£31,867 compared with the budgeted +£2171. The surplus will be moved into appropriate reserves.

Key income above budget included increased burial fees income, bank account interest and community allotment grant.

Key expenditure above and below budget was noted.

Spending below budget in 2024/25 included: professional fees (consultancy and solicitors costs), burial ground waste removal (mound removal), burial ground maintenance, allotment hedge maintenance (coppicing), skatepark and outdoor gym maintenance, bridge maintenance, tree and hedge maintenance, defibrillators (we were able to acquire match funding), neighbourhood plan expenses and Pavilion maintenance. Some of these expenses are still anticipated for 2025/26 (e.g. solicitor costs) and the unspent budget will therefore be moved to appropriate earmarked reserves. Other budgeted cost lines were intended to build dedicated earmarked reserves for future maintenance needs, e.g. for the skatepark, outdoor gym, bridges, Pavilion building.

Notable spending above budget included: burial ground water due to a leak, burial ground pest control, office equipment and furniture due to office refurbishment, staff wages due to error on NI and pension calculator provided by the payroll company, account and allotment software cost increase due to changing over to a Cloud-based system.

Approximately £326k remains in available CIL funds. In 2024/2025, CIL funds totalling approximately £57.5k have been spent on:

Table tennis table outdoor matting.

Football goal for CCDT.

Parish Council office flooring.

Water troughs and taps for allotments sites.

Part payment towards the new swings, Skatepark bunds and wall football goal projects (the

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remaining will be spent in 2025/26 on this project).
One side of the Pavilion car park renovation project. It was noted that the cost of other side will be accounted for in 2025/26.

F30. To note bank account balances (Appendix C) and agree any movements to general and ear-marked reserves.

It was noted that the current account as of 31st March 2025 shows a reconciled balance of £22,382.45. It was noted that the difference between this figure and the surplus at the year-end is because we are still expecting a VAT return of approximately £12k.

It was noted that the Reserves Account (made up of General and Earmarked reserves, excluding CIL) as of 31st March 2025 shows a reconciled balance of £94,393.18. It was discussed that it is considered appropriate for a Parish Council to hold approximately 3-12 months of its revenue in reserves, so this amount is deemed acceptable.

It was noted that the total CIL balance is spread between three Unity Trust accounts, some for immediate access and the rest to make best use of interest rates.

Based on the 2024/25 surplus of ~£31.8k, the following movements to General and Earmarked Reserves were agreed:

General Reserves: approx. £8.6k

Earmarked Reserves:

Professional fees: £2948

Burial Ground waste removal: £425

Burial Ground maintenance: £1237

Allotment hedge maintenance: £305

Skatepark maintenance: £1000

Outdoor gym maintenance: £500

Bridge maintenance: £250

Tree and hedge maintenance: £8830

Defibrillators: £2279

Neighbourhood plan: £450

Pavilion maintenance: £5000

TOTAL = £23,224

F31. To review effectiveness of the Council's Internal Control Policy and procedures ahead of the 2024/2025 AGAR submission.

It was discussed that Council should feel confident in ticking Box 2 on the Annual Governance Statement for the External Auditor which states "We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness".

The Finance Committee read and reviewed the Council's Internal Controls Policy which details what procedures are in place to prevent fraud and corruption. The RFO shall make the following amendments:

Point 4.1 – All payments are reported to the relevant level of authority for approval.

Point 4.5 – Mileage is reimbursed in accordance with MAP Government guidelines.

F32. To confirm appropriate action has been taken on matters raised in reports from the most recent Internal and External audits.

It was agreed that appropriate action has been taken and completed by the Clerk and RFO on all matters.

F33. To note and approve extra General Waste collections of two bins in the Recreation Ground between 1st May and 30th September 2025.

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It was noted and **resolved** to increase the number of collections at a cost of £4.00 per bin per week. This will result in an overspend of the Open Spaces waste removal budget line by approximately £176.

F34. To discuss future funding of the CIC Happy Hub

Cllr. D. Bamford explained the funding position of the CIC Happy Hub.

F35. To agree items to be reported to meeting of Full Council on 21st May 2025

The Committee will report to Full Council on the 21st May on year-end accounts, CIL expenditure and current balance, general reserves/earmarked reserve movements, changes to the Internal Controls Policy, completion of internal and external audit report matters and the funding position of the CIC Happy Hub.

F36. To agree next meeting date.

TBC. July 2025.