

**Minutes of the meeting of the Risk and Audit Committee of the Wonersh Parish Council held on Thursday 7 March 2024 at 10.30am, at the Wonersh Sports Pavilion.**

**Present:** Cllrs Rob Merriman, Anthony Shutes and Kevin Sloan (Chair).

**In attendance:** Lisa Davison and Jeannette Stevenson.

*[Apologies were received from Cllrs Chris Howard, Ben Knight, George Sobek]*

**R23/24 036 To elect a Chair to the Risk and Audit Committee.**

The Committee resolved to elect Cllr Kevin Sloan as the Chair of the Risk and Audit (proposed by Cllr Shutes.)

**R23/24 037 Wonersh Parish Code of Conduct – Declarations of disclosable interests and, if requested, consideration and approval of dispensations under the Code.**

There were no declarations of disclosable interests.

**R23/24 038 Open meeting for members of the public to raise matters about the Council's risk management and audit issues.**

There were no members of the public present.

**R23/24 039 To receive progress reports about matters previously considered and approved by the Committee or the Council.**

The Clerk noted the recent correspondence regarding the leases, in particular the mowing of the verge the edge of the wooded area which impacts upon access to the adjacent footpath. The Committee recommended maintaining the Parish Council position that this should remain the responsibility of Waverley Borough Council under the SLAs. They request that possible flailing costs be explored should the Parish Council opt to take this on. This will be considered further by Council.

**Action: Clerk to discuss the Parish Council position further with WBC Officers.**

**Clerk to explore potential additional costs.**

**R23/24 040 To receive proposed values for the 2024/25 allocated reserves and to make recommendations for Council in relation to the budget.**

The Committee thanked the Assistant to the Clerk for all the budget-related works including the proposed allocated reserves. It was noted that allocated reserves had been reduced by £58,000 considerate of the Council decision to cover the £58,000 shortfall in donations / loan drawdown when purchasing Barnett Hill Fields. It is the intention to replace these withdrawals once the £58,000 had either been taken from the income received through the sale of Gerald's Wood, or alternatively, drawdown through the PWLB loan.

In summary the draft year end reserves based on what is in the accounts at the start of March, as proposed by the Assistant to the Clerk is included in the table below.

<b>Reserves as per Balance Sheet</b>	<b>3/31/2024</b>
Pension	0
Council Elections	3,300
Wonersh Burial Ground	19,971
Commons Grass Cutting/Maintenance	12,000
Wonersh Common Drainage	10,000
Garden Close Community Room	5,084

Playground Projects	0
CIL Projects	11,761
Gerald's Wood	2,300
Parish Waste Bins	2,000
Long Term Capital Projects	3,985
Allotments	1,877
Shamley Green Environmental Advisory Group	591
Wonersh Environmental Advisory Group	996
Wonersh Woodland Group	500
Ditches	3,000
<b>Allocated Reserves Total</b>	<b>77,365</b>
VAT Debtor	2,826
Allotment deposits	2,377
Other unallocated Reserves	37,928
<b>Total unallocated Reserves</b>	<b>35,359</b>
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>112,724</b>
Surplus YTD	<b>16,591</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>129,315</b>

It was noted that the surplus at year end will be added to the Long-Term Capital Projects and be dependent upon Council spend at the 2023/24 financial year end. The Clerk noted that some of this might benefit being moved to unallocated (general revenue) reserves to meet 3.3 of the Council's [Finance and Investment Policy](#). This is to:

*“Maintain a General Revenue Reserve, not earmarked for specific purposes, to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies or to smooth out cashflow when undertaking works prior to the receipt of approved grants or Developers Contributions; and maintained at around 3 - 6 months of gross revenue expenditure.”*

Actions associated with the final figures and decisions related to these are:

**Action: Officers to review the spend by budget category prior to year-end submission.**

**Officers to confirm the running cost requirement for the Council and ensure that this is reflected in unallocated reserves.**

**Clerk to follow up on the request for an extension to drawdown the PWLB amounts of £58,000 for Barnett Fields and £100,000 towards the Arbuthnott Hall rejuvenation.**

**Assistant to the Clerk to provide the final figures for the April Council Meeting agenda for formal approval by Council.**

**Clerk to include on the Council Meeting agenda.**

**R23/24 041 To receive and consider the Risk Management Register and approve next steps.**

Cllr Sloan summarised working party meeting regarding the current Risk Management Register and reviewed the updates page by page. It was noted that most relevant points were already included in the meeting agenda. An exception is the follow up with Thames Water on the position of the stop cock for water serving Barnett Hill Fields.

It was also noted that the Clerk worked closely with lead Councillors in progressing agreed actions, and this was viewed as the most efficient way to monitor progress against these. Alternatively, the Clerk previously used an excel sheet to monitor progress, but this often took time away from key activities. The importance of monitoring quality of actions, as well as the completion of actions was also noted.

Whilst the current version of the Risk Management Register had been considered acceptable by the Internal Auditor and the Clerk requested that this be approved at the April Council Meeting in advance of the Internal Audit in May, the Council is keen to improve on the practices in place and agreed actions were:

- Create a Risk Policy to consider higher level risks more fully, ensuring it is SMART and consider using a risk matrix.
- Link a calendarized asset risk check to cover the more day to day / week to week / month to month / year to year actions

The Committee confirmed and welcomed Cllr Sobek's offer to lead this project and take ownership of ensuring actions are completed. The Clerk noted that the asset register would also assist in developing this and an updated version had been included in the files alongside the existing Risk Management Register.

**Action: Cllr Sobek to lead on the development of Risk Policy and Calendarized Asset risk check.**

**R23/24 042 To review and consider the schedule for policy review and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

The Committee noted the summary in the files and welcomed the annual review and adoption at the Annual Council Meeting in May each year. However, it was recognised that a more thorough review is beneficial, and the Council aspires to do this on a biennial basis. Model documents are available through the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and there are also examples from other Councils.

A lead Councillor for the overall project was considered sensible, and then lead Councillors / Committees to continue this review programme with the support of the Clerk.

The Committee welcomed the suggestions made by the Committee previously or the Clerk and would appreciate a fuller summary of the dates first adopted / last thoroughly reviewed. Regarding the items without a lead, Cllr Sobek was suggested for communication and GDPR, the Clerk for FOI and Chairs of Planning for the Planning Code of conduct.

**Action: Clerk to update with dates for adoption and review and lead Councillors upon confirmation.**

**Council to confirm the allocated responsibilities with Councillors not at the meeting.**

**View final plan and review progress at the next Risk and Audit Committee.**

**R23/24 043 To receive an update on the principle and practicalities of developing paper-free accounting records and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

The Committee welcomed the suggestions from the Assistant to the Clerk to move from printing out physical invoices and resolved to trial the following process for six months and then review in Autumn.

Recommendations in files, as follows:

- Assistant to the Clerk to save down each invoice onto OneDrive folder which the Clerk and Councillors have access to:
  - [Invoices](#)
- The main folder will have subfolders by accounting year and then month. Each invoice will be named with a unique voucher code to correspond to the summary sheet eg: 24\_25\_001\_COMPANY NAME
- Councillors will be asked to approve the bank authorisations in the same way it has always been done – an email request will be sent by the Assistant to the Clerk with a summary of the payments that need authorising. A link to the invoices will be added to the email.
- At the monthly council meeting the summary sheet showing the payments for that month will be printed out and physically signed and dated by two councillors. This will replace the need to sign off each invoice.

**Action: Councillors and Assistant to the Clerk to follow agreed processes.**

**Risk and Audit Committee to review after six months**

**R23/24 044 To receive an update on the response to the Tree Surveys and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

The Committee recommended to Council that Womersley Parish Council's tree surveyor complete a Tree Hazard Assessment on the open common to be leased with Parish Council responsibility for trees under the SLA.

The Committee welcomed the follow up with the households adjacent to the common regarding the trees and requested the Council to consider further the potential for the oaks on 'Section 9' unregistered land, to be considered for a Tree Preservation Order.

The Committee noted concerns regarding the comparability of the two recent surveys on the oak in Shamley Green but welcomed the update that the results of test confirmed that resurveys were required rather than any tree works.

**Action: Council to consider Committee recommendations on the Tree Survey of the WBC open common land.**

**Council to consider whether Tree Preservation Orders are something that should be progressed for these or other local trees and over what timescales.**

**Tree surveys to be completed to the recommended frequency.**

**R23/24 045 To receive an update on the procurement of playgrounds equipment and approve next steps, including recommendations to Council.**

The Clerk highlighted to the committee that the earlier decision in relation to the procurement of the playground equipment outside the Councils Policies applied to both Womersley and Lords Hill playground. This is minuted under R22/23 028 of the 2 February 2023 Risk and Audit Committee and 22/23 208(d) of the 9 March 2024 Council Meeting minutes. The Clerk raised the suggestion from the WBC Officer, as Waverley own this

land, to not use loose bark at Lords Hill Playground and to consider using a more traditional tender process to award such contracts.

The Clerk confirmed that the Council was still operating in a manner complied with: The Public Contracts Regulations 2015, PART 4, CHAPTER 8, Regulation 110. (5b), in that that companies were contacted directly based on the suitability of their equipment in a rural setting and the added play value they offered. The Committee welcomed the extensive efforts made by the link councillors and resident-led playgrounds working parties and recommended that the Council maintain the earlier decision to operate outside the policies but within legislation.

The Clerk noted that the contract, once awarded, still needed to be uploaded to Contracts Finder and this had been completed for Wonersh Playground now and this action would be completed more promptly for the Lords Hill Contract with Rhino Play, subject to Council confirmation.

It was noted that the Lords Hill Working Party had now raised sufficient funds to commence with Phase 1 of the installation and the Council welcomed the contributions from Surrey County Council. Cranleigh Lions and local residents.

**Action: Council to consider Risk and Audit recommendation when making decisions on the contract award for Lords Hill.**

**Clerk to upload decision to Contracts Finder.**

**R23/24 046 To receive an update on the defibrillators in the Parish and approve next steps.**

The Clerk noted the letter from MP Will Quince and the request that Parish Councils register defibrillators on [The Circuit](#) to assist with awareness but not replace the role of the emergency services in the use of these.

In exploring this further for the parish, it seems only two are registered and the one on the Council asset list and insurance was not listed. The Committee did not consider it necessary to alert other stakeholders with a defibrillator of this recommendation now but may review this in the future.

The Clerk worked with the group of residents who are responsible for the adopted phone box to ensure that both the defibrillator and box were in good working order and confirmed its regular inspection. It was suggested as the day-to-day responsibility for this was with this group that they register it with their details.

**Action: Clerk to advise residents adopting the telephone box on Lords Hill of the recommendations on the registration of defibrillators and request that the Council be kept updated.**

**P23/24 047 To consider and approve the date of the next Risk and Audit Committee meeting.**

The next meeting of the Risk and Audit Committee was scheduled for 20 June 2024, 10.30am.

**R23/24 048 To consider and approve that the official record of this meeting be presented at the meeting of the Council on 14 March 2024 for approval.**

This was confirmed.