

# Marlborough Town Council



## Finance and Policy Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held Monday, 28 October 2024 in the Council Chamber, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

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<b>PRESENT</b>	Councillor Caroline Thomas	Chair
	Councillor Andrew Ross	
	Councillor Mervyn Hall	
	Councillor James Sheppard	
	Councillor Kelvyn Shantry	
	Councillor Caroline Sadler	
	Clare Williams	Deputy Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer
	Councillor Abi Beaumont	Observing

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### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions.

### **245/24 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillors Fogg** and **Davies**.

### **246/24 DECLARATIONS**

**Councillors Ross, Hall** and **Sheppard** – agenda item 8 – Heritage Funds – non-pecuniary - as Trustees of The Merchant's House.

### **247/24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Council had received a letter of thanks from the Greatwood Charity for a grant of £1,000 awarded in July towards the purchase of new IT tablets for learners with SEND (special educational needs or disabilities) and SEMH (social, emotional mental health) difficulties.

### **248/24 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held 8 July 2024 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair

### **249/24 ACTION LOG**

Members noted the updated action log.

## 250/24 QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT

Members noted the finance report for Quarter 2 (month 5) 2024-25 with no issues raised and the Chair signed the Bank Reconciliation Statement and the Balance Sheet (31 August 2024). Comments included:

- An Ear Marked Reserve (EMR) had been created for a receipt of £100,000.86 under S106<sup>1</sup> of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This was in respect of developer funds received for the Redrow development at Marleberg Grange and was ear marked as a contribution to the creation of a 3G pitch at St Johns.
- Further S106 receipts were expected at some point in relation to plans to redevelop York Place. Initial discussions had proposed this be used to upgrade play equipment at Wye House Gardens, but Marlborough's Wiltshire Councillors had highlighted that this play area had recently been upgraded by the Town Council. Any Committees considering future proposals for capital projects should bear this in mind as a potential funding source.

## 251/24 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)<sup>2</sup> FUNDS

Members noted the CIL funds position on 2 October 2024 and considered a request for funding from the Planning Committee.

It was noted that the £9,000 committed for matting at Marlborough Common was to protect areas that received high traffic as a result of parking for sports matches or other events and was not for the creation of an informal car park as outlined in the Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan. Members requested that the Amenities & Open Spaces (A&OS) Committee be asked to provide an update on plans to progress the latter.

**ACTION:** to ask the A&OS Committee for an update on proposals for parking at Marlborough Common

Members considered a request from the Planning Committee to release £6,000 from CIL funds as the Town Council's contribution towards the creation of a traffic island at A4 Manton. This was an exceptional element related to a five-point substantial scheme to improve safety at this stretch of road and would match £6,000 being funded by Wiltshire Council via the Local Highway and Footway Improvements Group budget.

**RESOLVED:** to authorise the use of £6,000 CIL funds to cover the exceptional spend for the substantive project at A4 Manton, specifically the creation of a traffic island

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/106>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>

## 252/24 HERITAGE FUNDS

*Councillors Ross, Hall and Sheppard did not vote on the following item*

Members agreed that the Merchant's House Trust provided a valuable cultural contribution to the town's heritage as curators of an archive of historical documents and artefacts and

**RESOLVED:** that £1,000 from the Heritage Budget 2024-25 be transferred to The Merchant's House Trust to be used for the curatorship of the town archive

## 253/24 COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

Members considered proposed Committee priorities for 2025-26:

1. Ensuring a resource plan that supports and underpins the work and priorities of the whole Council including budget lines to be covered by future precept and allocation of surplus funds to relevant EMRs
2. Support the development of policies to manage The Common (recognising that Full Council and the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee will have a role in this also)
3. To maintain oversight of the Council's policies, reviewing them as required
4. To support the advancement of cultural developments and events
5. To support the upgrade of the Council's website
6. To do a cost-benefit analysis of the Council's property and land assets

Discussion points included:

- It was agreed to add a new priority to create a short narrative for each EMR for clarification
- It was noted that there is clear guidance around the management of Common Land and Members agreed that the Town Council does, and will in future, deal with matters relating to Marlborough Common as they arise. Therefore it was agreed that a specific policy was not required. Priority 2 was therefore removed
- A new priority to preserve the town's heritage was agreed, starting with assets owned by the Town Council, and it was proposed that this should be an agenda item for the first meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee in 2025-26
- Whether priority 6 was admissible in this Committee when the same proposal had been put forward but not carried at the Property Committee Meeting held 22 October 2024 (*Min. No. 237/24*). Members questioned whether this was possible under the Council's Standing Orders<sup>3</sup> (para. 8(a) states that a resolution shall not be reversed within six months unless by certain exceptions)

**RESOLVED:** (i) to clarify when proposed priority 6 could be considered, and add to a future Finance and Policy Committee agenda when it is admissible

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<sup>3</sup> [Standing Orders Revised June 2022](#)

**RESOLVED:** (ii) that the F&P priorities to be put forward to Full Council are:

1. Ensuring a resource plan that supports and underpins the work and priorities of the whole Council including budget lines to be covered by future precept and allocation of surplus funds to relevant EMRs
2. To maintain oversight of the Council's policies, reviewing them as required
3. To support the advancement of cultural developments and events
4. To support the upgrade of the Council's website
5. To create a narrative to clarify each Ear Marked Reserve
6. To preserve the town's heritage, starting with assets owned by the Town Council

**254/24**

### **BUDGET 2025-26**

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and considered the Committee and Council budget requirements for 2025-26. The **Chair** outlined her preferred approach, noting that there was another meeting in November to make final decisions and recommendations to take forward to Full Council for consideration. Discussion points included:

- Expected running costs and the costs of maintaining existing services
- Additional budget considerations for staff contingency, election costs, website rebuild and flood and emergency support
- The public sector pay award had recently been confirmed at approximately 3.3%
- The Committee's own draft budget submission could not yet be agreed. Queries were raised against several line items and the website rebuild costs. It was agreed to rework this and circulate an updated budget in advance of the next Committee meeting
- Whether to set guidance for Committees on a percentage range to aim for when putting forward proposed budgets
- Whether the UK Budget to be communicated on 30 October would have any impact on current expectations
- That the tax base for 2025-26 was not yet known

**RESOLVED:** (i) That all requests for new budget in 2025-26 must be formally considered by the relevant Committee and agreed to be submitted for the F&P November meeting and for this to be ratified by Full Council as a principle to be adopted for 2025-26 and future financial years

**RESOLVED:** (ii) to aim to keep the Council's 2025-26 increase in precept below 5%, and to inform Committees so they are mindful of the constraints in relation to new budgetary requests

**ACTION:** **Cllr Thomas** to contact the Chair of A&OS to communicate the approach for 2025-26 budget proposals

**ACTION:** **Cllr Thomas** and the **Town Clerk** to review the F&P budget figures aiming to keep the total below £875K for consideration at the next meeting

**255/24 AGAR CONCLUSION OF AUDIT**

Members noted the External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2023-24 concluding the audit under the 2023-24 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

**256/24 CCLA FUND**

Members noted the Town Clerk’s report and the fact sheet providing an overview of the Public Sector Deposit Fund (Churches, Charities and Local Authorities (CCLA)).

Members noted that all other Councils which had been contacted had confirmed that they also used CCLA for investment funds. They asked for clarification about what the annual % yield was (shown on the fact sheet as 5.30% over 5 years), and whether there were alternatives for the safe management of the Council’s investments.

ACTION: Town Clerk to follow up queries relating to CCLA fund or other investment opportunities

*Councillor Beaumont left the meeting*

**257/24 POLICIES**

Members considered a draft Lone Working Policy. They provided suggestions (e.g. a WhatsApp group) and asked for simplification and clarification of both the document and risk assessment. As such it was not possible to approve the document for recommendation to Full Council, and Members asked for an updated document to be represented at a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.51 pm

Signed: .....  
Chair

Date: .....