

Finham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at 7:00pm, 20th June 2024 Finham Primary School

Present:

Councillor Paul Davies (Chairman)	Councillor Ann Bush
Councillor Anthony Dalton (Vice Chairman)	Councillor Kate Taylor
Councillor Angela Fryer	Councillor James Morshed

Coventry City Councillors: Councillor John Blundell

Residents: 11

Attendance: Jane Chatterton, Clerk & RFO

Recording at meetings

The Chairman updated that a Parishioner (present) had emailed the Clerk earlier today to say he would be filming the meeting. The Clerk had contacted the School Bookings Team but was informed that this would not be possible for tonight's meeting as permission was required. The Bookings Team needed the request in advance to enable the request to be considered, risk assessed etc.

The Clerk had also contacted WALC for legal advice and was told that the meeting should be opened, the situation explained, if the Parishioner insisted on filming, then the meeting would be adjourned as it was important to comply with the booking conditions.

The Clerk had advised the parishioner by email prior to the meeting.

The Parishioner turned off the video recording and the meeting proceeded.

457. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from CCC Ward Councillors, Councillor Sawdon and Councillor Heaven. (Richard Baker had resigned from the Parish Council).

ACTION: Clerk to update the website and notify CCC.

458. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest.

459. Chairman's Update

Welcome to the June meeting of the Finham Parish Council in our new venue which has been done for cost reasons. The Primary School review of charges has meant we needed to move but having said that, this room is more than good enough for our meetings and is able to contain any larger numbers we are likely to see in the future.

You may have seen at the top of the Agenda, "Attendance by Rob Little, Highways Technical Services Manager Coventry City Council – verge stones"

Unfortunately, Rob Little has advised now that he cannot attend without clarifying the reason but states the FPC should see a response to the petition presented to Coventry City Council in the very near future. Hopefully, it will answer all of our queries clearly and fairly.

Initialled

Later in the meeting, under Item 9 there will be a statement made about a formal complaint/objection made by a resident whereby he complains about relatively small amounts of money being spent on items of which he disapproves.

The costs to the residents of Finham to comply with the audit process due to the complaint to the External Auditor, something the FPC has to do by law, are currently running at over £700 and likely to rise very much higher as the External Auditor's invoice is yet to be received.

Suffice to say that all expenditures committed by the FPC are discussed and approved at a council meeting, public or confidential. Details of which have all been disclosed to the External Auditor.

This whole exercise has been highly time consuming for both myself and our RFO, Jane Chatterton which we hope will now bring an end to the matter.

Items of expenditure are also set and agreed during the annual budget and precept setting process.

It should be noted that by law all parish councils are required to appoint an Internal Auditor who reviews all income and expenditure and has sight of all invoices, receipts, contracts, deeds (where appropriate) and bank statements. The Internal Auditor completed FPC's 2022-23 Audit check in April 2023. No issues found.

Internal Auditor's report states:

As requested I have completed an examination of the financial statements and cashbook. In doing so I have verified the bank reconciliation and agreed the cashbook entries to the bank statements. I have also agreed expenditure to supporting documentation and to approval by the Councillors in the Minutes. I have reviewed VAT on the invoices to cash book entries. The financial statements and cashbook are in very good order. The Clerk retains accurate records and files supporting documentation in a methodical order. The financial statements are accurate and are supported by underlying financial records and documentation.

Information was then submitted by the Parish Council to the Government Appointed External Auditor for completion. The complaint was raised during the period of Public Rights.

460. Minutes of previous meetings

460.1 Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes from the Annual Parish Meetings held on 16th May 2024 were received and discussed.

RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2024 be approved.

460.2 Annual Parish Council Meeting

The minutes from the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 16th May 2024 were received and discussed.

RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 21st March 2024 be approved.

460.3 Parish Council Meeting

The minutes from the Parish Council Meeting held on 16th May 2024 were received and discussed.

RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16th May 2024 be approved.

461. Matters Arising

VAS signage – the Clerk is liaising with David Keaney at CCC in relation to sites.

Land update – report for July’s meeting.

462. Planning

Nothing to report.

463. Correspondence

Nothing further to report.

464. Finance

464.1 to approve payments

2024-25

DATE	REF	PAYEE	DETAIL	AMOUNT
24.04.24	E10	SLCC	Qualification Fee PART	£43.20*
24.04.24	E11	NEST	Clerk Pension	DPA
30.04.24	E12	Louise Best	Internal Audit Fee	£130.00
10.05.24	E13	J Chatterton	Clerk Salary May	DPA
10.05.24	E14	HMRC	Tax & NI Clerk May	DPA
10.05.24	E15	Topsource	Payroll invoice 000753	£20.72*
10.05.24	E16	J Chatterton	Expenses May	£62.60
10.05.24	E17	J Chatterton	Meeting room hire	£25.00
20.05.24	E18	NEST	Clerk pension	DPA

*inc VAT

INCOME 2024 25

26.04.24	R	CCC	Precept	£21,320.00
	R	CCC	Grant	£2,768.00
20.05.24	R	HMRC	VAT Reclaim (2022-23)	£413.88

RESOLVED THAT the payments be approved and the income noted.

465. Audit 2022-23

At the end of each financial year the Parish Council is required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to complete an Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The accounts are inspected in full by an Internal Auditor and then an External Auditor completes their part.

During the Notice of Public Rights period, parishioners are permitted to inspect the accounts. It must be noted that every item of expenditure is listed on the meeting agendas and is recorded in the minutes. Therefore, there is never an item of expenditure or income that is unknown, and the information is always in the public domain.

Initialled

In June 2023 a parishioner exercised his right to inspect the accounts. The inspection was completed with the Clerk, Chairman and 2 Councillors present at the Clerk's request. This was also on the recommendation following advice from Coventry City Council and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Several emails raising questions proceeded, resulting in them reporting the Parish Council to the External Auditor. Dissatisfied with their initial findings the individual then raised a formal Objection with the External Auditor.

The parishioner raised the Objection as they believed there was something unlawful or believed there are matters of wider concern in the accounts.

The objection points were as follows:

a. Validity/legality of certain expenditure to be within the council's spending rules;

This being:

1. A training course costing £30.00
2. A land registry search identifying land to install a play area for Finham children costing £7.00
3. The Kings Hill film produced free of charge by a Year 11 Finham Park Student the studio and editing time charge being £250.00. This also acted as a grant donation for the school
4. Total expenditure £287.00.

The External Auditor states:-

The expenditure reviewed appears to be within regulation or spending powers for such a council. Additionally, it is our opinion that no further action is required in respect of this objection point.

b. Apparent lack of separation of the donated funds received from Finham Residents Association (FRA) from the general reserves of the council;

Under the Local Government Act 1972 s139 the Parish Council has the Power to Accept Gifts. The separation is shown on the Bank Reconciliation and Quarterly reports.

To the above Objections the External Auditor states in their findings:-

We have decided that there is sufficient merit in these objections to consider them further.

The External Auditor states:-

The council should ensure it has an agreed procedure recorded for spending money from this fund/these funds.

It is our opinion that, subject to ensuring a procedure for spending monies from this fund is recorded, no further action is required in respect of this objection point.

The Parish Council is not acting unlawfully and is spending within the council's spending rules.

External Auditor's Conclusions and Recommendations

We require this report to be brought to a Full Council meeting for discussion and Resolution, which should be recorded within the meeting minutes.

Parishioner's Right of appeal

The parishioner has the right, under section 28(3) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, to appeal their decision not to apply to a court for a declaration. Should they wish to do so, they must issue their appeal with the High Court within the period of 21 days beginning with the date after they receive this document.

Financial Implications of the above

This has obviously had financial implications for the Parish Council, the vast amount of work involved between the Clerk & RFO and the parishioner initially and then the External Auditor providing evidence and proof that we are acting lawfully. The cost to date is:-

£727.50 which is the equivalent of the Annual Precept of 53 properties.

The invoice is yet to be received from the External Auditor, but indications are that this will be in excess of £1,000. We are looking at a total bill of circa £2,000 including VAT. Almost 10% of the Annual Precept.

To comply with transparency the full cost, once known, will be published at the next available meeting (agenda and minutes).

As indicated by the External Auditor the full report, (which contains the name of the complainant) has been shared with the Parish Council. The identity will not be divulged.

This parishioner has also exercised their Right to inspect the 2023-24 Accounts, which they are entitled to do, it is hoped we are not about to embark on further unnecessary expenditure.

It is noted that the FPC budget includes normal Audit expense of £400.00 however therefore an increase in budget and uplift of precept for next year may be required to meet the higher cost.

The Clerk is currently obtaining legal advice on how best to proceed.

RESOLVED THAT:

- (i) The External Auditor's report be received and noted.
- (ii) Clerk to add an item to the Parish Council's Reserves Policy in relation to the gifted funds.
- (iii) Reserves Policy to be approved at July's meeting.

466. Defibrillator

It was reported that finding someone to speak to about the possible location of a second defibrillator in Finham on Brentwood Avenue shop frontages was proving difficult.

If the landlord fails to contact the Chairman in the next couple of weeks he will look to locate the defibrillator at a different location along the shop frontage. There are two other possibilities that can be pursued.

467. Petition – grass verges

Councillor Blundell reported that CCC were standing firm on their decision to remove stones from highways. They had confirmed they were rolling this out throughout the City.

468. Brentwood Avenue/Hadleigh Road traffic calming

Work continued between residents of Brentwood Avenue and Hadleigh Road and Officers at CCC. The resident lead was keeping the Parish Council fully updated.

469. Task groups & Working Parties**• Highways – Councillor Morshead**

No progress since the last meeting.

Posts outside the BP garage – it was reported that there were currently 4 posts down.

ACTION: Councillor Morshead to request an update from CCC.

• Schools – Councillor Mrs Bush

It was reported that the children continued to work hard and were very committed to learning. The school had held an event whereby the children were in charge for the day and were appointed into various roles in the School, including the Head.

The children really enjoyed the experience.

• Kings Hill – Councillor Davies

Everything has become very quiet with regards to Kings Hill. Something that makes me very nervous so when I saw the following report in the Kenilworth Nub News, 31 May 2024

Plans for 2,500 new houses in Stoneleigh appear to have stalled with new developer wanted

I became very nervous.

Plans to build 2,500 houses in Stoneleigh looked to have stalled, over two years after planning permission was granted for the development.

The scheme for Kings Hill Lane was [given outline permission in December 2021](#), despite objections from six parish and town councils as well as hundreds of local residents.

It should be noted that full planning permission has to be given before any construction work can start and it is at this point that the details of exactly what is intended is understood.

In my March report I detailed the timetable for Kings Hill:-

Stage 3 - Preferred Options – Public Consultations – November 24 to January 25

Stage 4 – Public Consultations – October to December 25

Stage 5 – Submission to the Secretary of State – July 26

Stage 6 – Examinations – August 26 to March 27

Stage 7 – Consultation on Proposed Modifications – July to August 27

Stage 8 – Adoption – December 27

This timetable has been confirmed again more recently so why is this article considered newsworthy in the Kenilworth Nub News if building work is not planned before December 27?

The KNN states:- *Lioncourt Homes has been approached for comment*

I have been in touch with Cllr Pam Redford Warwick District Council who advised she would look into it within her council.

To date I have heard nothing. I will keep you posted.

There was no reference made to Kings Hill on Tuesday's WDC Planning Committee Agenda and there is no agenda published for its next meeting on 16th July 2024.

• **Police & Crime – Councillor Mrs Fryer**

The Crime Figures for Green Lane/Finham for April 2024:

Criminal Damage	2
Other Theft	1
Shoplifting	1
Vehicle Crime	5
Violence	5
Other Crime	0
Total	14

Vehicle theft and theft from vehicles remains an issue in our area. We would urge anyone with CCTV to join the group run by Tony Swann which is able to provide him with footage where he can form a track of a crime. All individual details are secure and only known to Tony Swann. Please contact him if you wish to be part of this network.

470. Councillor's reports and items for future Agenda:

VAS signage
Land update/refresh
Library shelving units
Reserves Policy

The Chairman suspended the Standing Orders

471. Coventry City Councillors

Councillor Blundell updated:

Stones on Green Lane

Councillor Sawdon had discussed the stones with Rob Little at CCC. CCC are sticking to their guns and cannot condone rocks and stones being placed on the Highway as this is contravening the Highways Act 1980.

CCC are concerned about the liability of the stones being on the Highway as CCC could be held responsible. CCC are looking at options that they could use. This will take time to pursue and review.

ACTION: Councillor Blundell to obtain a list of other roads in Coventry where they have requested the stones be removed.

Waste bins

The annual charge of £40 for green waste removal had come into being. Residents who do look after highway verges are now unlikely to continue to do so as this would require them paying the new bin charges to dispose of the rubbish.

472. Public participation: To adjourn to allow public participation.

Audit costs

A parishioner raised his concern at the amount of money spent on the audit costs.

Improving the green space

Parishioner reported that he had been in contact with CCC and Council officials were coming to assess the footpath and drainage next week.

FLAG

2 current Trustees and 2 retired Trustees of FLAG attended the meeting to raise their issues in relation to an item discussed at the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th May 2024.

It was explained that the list of achievements read out at the APM, only listed FPC's achievements, which was the intention of the report.

The Chairman of FLAG had requested this be an agenda item, but it was confirmed that as this related to the Annual Parish Meeting then the PC meeting was not the right platform to raise.

Information had been sent to a Trustee and the Chairman (twice) providing facts behind the statement, but these were not accepted.

FPC Chairman tried to read out the chronology of FPC involvement in FLAG dating back to 2016 but this was stopped and said to be unnecessary.

Despite a full explanation the representatives of FLAG would not accept the explanation.

A retired trustee stated that FPC had turned down grant requests and another stated that under the Local Government Act 1972 s133 the Parish Council had the power to provide and equip community buildings (Community Centers).

It was noted that the FPC were aware of this, and this formed part of the discussions in 2016 including the merits of the Parish Council taking on the CCC building and running it as a Community Space and Parish Office. The option was declined.

The Parish Council had provided funds to the library, and they still remained the organisation who have received the highest level of grant funding. FLAG Chairman questioned why the shelving wasn't under their ownership. The main reason being

The grant application for the new flooring was received in March 2021 for the sum of £2,500 towards the cost of new flooring in the Library (total cost £4,500). This was discussed at a PC meeting and was rejected due to the short time left on the lease.

473. Date for the next meeting

The date for the next meeting was confirmed as **Thursday 18th July 2024** at Finham Park School in The Venue.

Meeting closed at 8:10pm

DRAFT