



ASTON CLINTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Finance and Staffing Committee** meeting
held at 3.30pm on **4th October 2023** at the
Parish Council Office, Aston Clinton Park, HP22 5HL

PRESENT: Cllr C Read (Chair), Cllr M Mason, Cllr D McCall, Cllr L Ronson & Cllr P Wyatt

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Payne (Clerk/RFO)

FS23.12 Questions and Comments from the Public. No members of the public were present.

FS23.13 To Receive Apologies for Non-Attendance. None received.

FS23.14 To Receive Declarations of Interest or Requests for Dispensation. None declared.

FS23.15 To Approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 1st June 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2023 were approved as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

FS23.16 To Receive an Update on the Opening of a Nationwide Building Society Account

The bank statement dated 1st October 2023 showing a balance of £85,000 was noted and signed.

FS23.17 To Review Council's Investment Strategy

The Investment Strategy was reviewed. **It was resolved that the Investment Strategy did not require updating.**

FS23.18 To Appoint an Internal Auditor for 2023/2024

The Clerk reported that Council's current internal auditors had written to inform Council that they were no longer able to provide internal audit services.

Quotes had been sought from five other internal auditors and were considered. All internal auditors had quoted for just one audit at year end as they did not consider there was a need for an interim audit. **It was resolved to appoint Joanna Simonds as the Council's internal auditor for 2024/2025 at a cost of £200.** **ACTION: Clerk**

FS23.19 To Note the Practitioners' Guide 2023 Change Regarding Email Management

It was noted that the JPAG's Practitioners' Guide 2023 would have a change within paragraph 1.26 which relates to email management. It would now include a statement that every authority have an email account that belongs to the council which ideally should be a .gov.uk or a .org.uk address. In order for Council to answer yes to this assertion in the 2023/2024 Annual Governance Statement, Council will need to ensure that its email addresses comply with this requirement.

Currently only employee emails are linked to the Council's .org.uk address. Councillors have gmail.com email addresses.

It was noted that NALC and SLCC are encouraging Councils to move to a .gov.uk domain name and email addresses with the SLCC offering a webinar on the benefits of using a .gov.uk secure email system. It was agreed that members of the committee and the Clerk attend the webinar. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was resolved to recommend to Council that the Council's website domain name and emails move over to a .gov.uk address. **ACTION: Clerk**

FS23.20 To Consider Funding Options for Additional Security Fencing at the All-Weather Pitch
The Committee considered options for funding the cost of installing additional security fencing at the all-weather pitch. **It was resolved to recommend to Council that £14,000 be added to the 2024/2025 budget for the installation of additional security fencing at the all-weather pitch.** ACTION: Clerk

FS23.21 To Consider Quotes for the Provision of Office Broadband & Phone Services
Quotes for the provision of broadband and phone services for the Council office were considered. **It was resolved to accept the quote from British Telecom for the provision of 2 cloud voice licences and handsets, unlimited calls and superfast broadband at a cost of £93.95 per month.** ACTION: Clerk

FS23.22 To Consider for Adoption the Updated Equality & Diversity Policy
It was resolved to adopt the updated Equality & Diversity Policy.

FS23.23 Resolved that under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they include the likely disclosure of exempt information, stated to be confidential.

FS23.24 To Review the Need for Staff Overtime

Cllr Ronson raised concern regarding the need for the Clerk to work over her contracted hours, and especially at weekends, and requested that the Committee consider contracting extra help or spreading the load to existing staff members to alleviate the burden on the Clerk.

The Clerk informed the Committee that since joining the Council in September 2021 priority had been given to reviewing all Council’s policies and procedures as well as updating Council’s accounting systems and creating a burial database and map. This work was critical and overdue but was almost complete with just the burial database and some employment & communication policies left.

As the Clerk had experience in creating burial ground databases and digital map, the task which required methodical cross checking and data capture, could be carried out by the Clerk easier and quicker than by a less experienced member of staff or contractor.

The Clerk thanked the Committee for their concern and agreed that once all outstanding policy and database work had been completed all ongoing regular tasks of the role could be managed within the contracted hours.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

Signed.....Date