

Betley, Balterley and Wrinehill Parish Council

22nd February 2024

Commenced: 7.30 pm

Terminated: 9.30 pm

Present: Councillor Bettley-Smith (Chair)
Councillors Berrisford, Daly, Drakakis-Smith, Ecclestone, Hales, Head,
Karling, Owen and Watkin

Borough Councillor, Gary White
Mrs M Clough –Parish Clerk

There were 7 Members of the Public in attendance.

305/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bullock, Speed and County Councillor Northcott

306/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Head declared his interest in Minute No 316/24 (ii), as he knew the applicant, personally. Councillor Bettley-Smith declared his interest in Minute No 322/24 (ii), as he was the recipient of a reimbursement.

307/24 STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE

There was no representative of Staffordshire Police in attendance at the meeting.

308/24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 25th January 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor Drakakis-Smith recorded her objections to Minutes 285, 288, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294 and 298. She added that she had written three pages of notes that she wished to discuss matters recorded in the Minutes. The Clerk advised that there should be no discussion in respect of the draft Minutes, except that which related to the Chair's motion to agree their accuracy. In relation to Minute 304/24, Councillor Drakakis-Smith made a statement and added that she revoked her apology, made to the Clerk at the January meeting.

Despite advice from the Chair and the Clerk, Councillor Drakakis-Smith raised matters in relation to the content of the Minutes. Members agreed that spending up to 45 minutes on the Minutes, was wilfully disrupting and delaying the progress of transacting business at each meeting. The Chair reminded Members that advice on this issue had been sought from the Monitoring Officer and was being followed.

309/24 UPDATE ON THE INVESTIGATION BY THE MONITORING OFFICER OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST A MEMBER

In response to an enquiry received from a Member of the Public, the Chair provided an update received from the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

310/24 PUBLIC FORUM

The following matter was raised by a Member of the Public relating to matters on this Agenda:-

Mr Steven Ball wished to place on record his concerns relating to the conduct of a Parish Councillor and asked that she tendered her resignation. He had witnessed what he believed to be



her unacceptable behaviour at meetings of the Parish Council and had also received written correspondence from the same Parish Councillor on matters which he considered were outside the remit of her responsibility. Following a lengthy statement, the Chair stated that he considered that Mr Ball had received a fair opportunity to publicly report his concerns and he closed the discussion.

Councillor Drakakis-Smith questioned a Member of the Public on the legal status, accounts and relationship with other organisations of the Betley Bonfire Committee. The Member of Public answered the Councillor's questions. The Chair then directed the meeting to the business on the Agenda, which was to afford the opportunity for the public to raise matters.

311/24 REPORTS

The following reports were considered:-

(i) The Chair

- **The Parish Meeting and Annual Meeting of the Parish Council**

The Parish Meeting would be held on Thursday, 23rd May 2024

The Annual Meeting of the Parish Council would be held on Thursday, 30th May 2024

- **Flooding issues on Checkley Lane**

The Chair reported that the site had been examined that morning by a relevant officer from Staffordshire County Council, together with Paul Northcott and Councillor David Williams the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

Councillor Drakakis-Smith challenged the Parish Council on a number of matters not on this Agenda, and despite the Chair's requests to redirect the Councillor's discussion to the Item under consideration, the Councillor refused. Councillor Head proposed that to restore order to the meeting, the Chair should apply the Parish Council's Standing Order 18. The Chair therefore, expressed the opinion that Councillor Drakakis-Smith had broken the provisions of 18(b) of the Standing Orders, and Councillor Head's proposal, was seconded by Councillor Berrisford. The Chair requested that the Members voted on this matter.

RESOLVED

That due to breaking the provisions of 18(b) of the Standing Orders, ie

"No member shall at a meeting persistently disregard the ruling of the Chairman, wilfully obstruct business, behave irregularly, offensively, improperly or in such a manner as to bring the Council into disrepute"

Councillor Drakakis-Smith beno longer heard in this meeting but may remain in the meeting room.

(For the purposes of the Minutes, there were 6 in favour; 1 against; 3 abstentions. The Chair wished to record his abstention for reasons of remaining impartial).

(ii) The Vice Chair

The Vice-Chair did not have any matters to report.

(iii) The Clerk

- **Memorial Garden Maintenance**

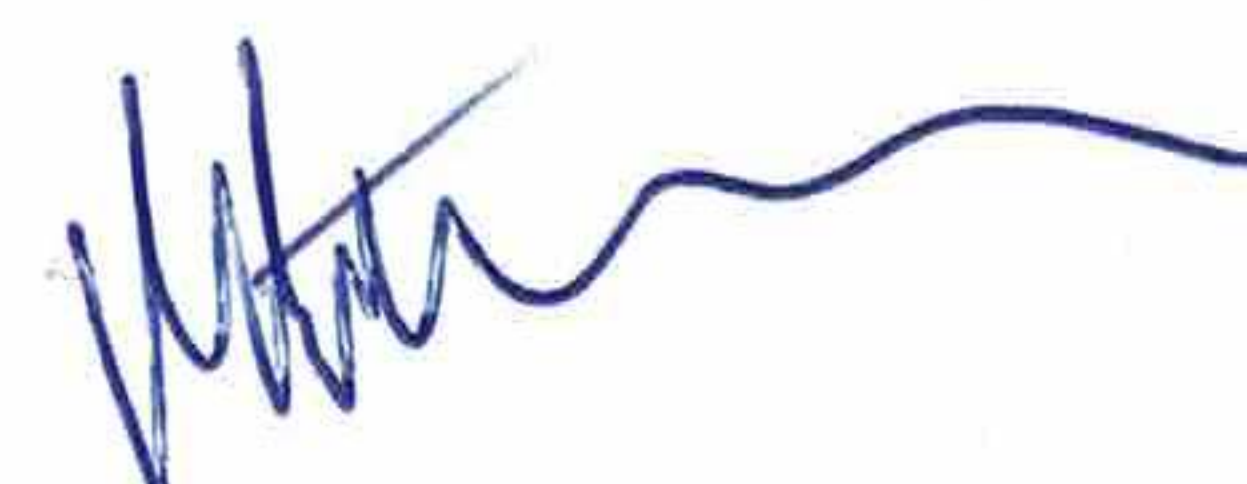
Further to Minute 290/24 (ii) of the last meeting, the Clerk reported that she had corresponded with the contractor regarding rolling over the existing competitive contract to 2024-2025, and this was agreed.

- **Tractors**

The Clerk reported that she had received correspondence relating to speeding tractors.

RESOLVED

That an item relating to Tractor Matters be discussed at the next meeting.



(iv) County Councillor and Borough Councillors

Councillor White reported on the following matters:-

- A Special Council meeting had been called to debate Walley's Quarry, due to a substantial increase in number of complaints over the last few months. The Council had unanimously voted to request the Environment Agency to close the Quarry as soon as possible;
- The Special Council meeting was followed by the ordinary Council meeting which then discussed the budget. Following a scrutiny of all details, the 2024-2025 Budget was approved together with a 1.99% increase in the Council Tax. For an average Band D property, this would result in a £4.27 increase per property, for the year. There had been no cuts to services.
- The Chief Executive Mr Martin Hamilton had tendered his resignation and would leave at the end of March. He had been an excellent Chief Executive.
- An enquiry had been received from a resident seeking funding for solar panels, via the ECO4 scheme. This scheme would be publicised in the next Parish Newsletter.
- Councillor White had been continually liaising with Councillor Bettley-Smith and the County Councillor regarding the flooding concerns on Checkley Lane and he had arranged initial street cleansing in the area. He intended to maintain the profile of this matter until it was resolved.
- Councillor White had been investigating, via the Head of Planning, possible planning breaches by Malt Kiln Farm but there had been no breaches from a legal perspective.
- Councillor White would be publicly opposing the proposal to prevent the burning of kiln dried wood on an open fire in the countryside, by introducing a Smoke Control Zone to the Parish and he had been working with the Environmental Health Officer on this matter.
- Councillor White had enquired why Betley was not involved in the scheme to introduce Ultrafast Broadband. This had been a government initiative funded via the Town Deal and this funding, unfortunately did not extend to the rural conurbation. Councillor White added that this matter would be discussed further;
- An investigation was taking place following reports made by residents that private land was being used for the illegal tipping of waste. Further details on this matter were confidential at this stage.

RESOLVED

1. That the matters relating to Ultrafast Broadband be considered at the next meeting.
2. Members noted that the next meeting of the Parish Council, scheduled to be held on 28th March was being postponed, and rescheduled to the 11th April 2024. The Parish Council meeting scheduled for the 25th April 2024 was cancelled.

(v) Representatives on Outside Bodies

Councillor Head reported that work to make safe the horse chestnut tree located at the Village Hall, had been completed.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

312/24 REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2024

This item was considered earlier in the meeting (rather than towards the end of the meeting as detailed on the Agenda) for the benefit of the Members of the Public in attendance.

Councillor Owen introduced a report regarding Remembrance Sunday arrangements for 2024. Following the withdrawal of funding to support these arrangements, due to the personal actions of a Member of the Parish Council, Members considered options for raising money to purchase two statues each, for Wrinehill, Balterley and East Lawns. Councillors Daly and Head pledged donations for this cause. The Chair added that it was regrettable that the plans had been derailed by a Member of the Parish Council, but he was hopeful that a solution could be found.

RESOLVED

That local individuals and businesses be approached to consider sponsoring/purchasing items.

313/24 BROADBAND FACILITIES IN THE PARISH

RESOLVED

That further consideration be given to this matter at the meeting of the Parish Council to be held on 11th April 2024.

314/24 SMOKE CONTROL AREA REVOCATION AND BOROUGH WIDE SMOKE CONTROL AREA CONSULTATION

All Members of the Parish Council with the exception of Councillors Owen and Watkin expressed a personal interest in this item as they owned either a stove or open fire.

The Chair reported on a consultation by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council regarding a proposal to extend smoke control to all areas of the Borough.

Members considered that the national legislation provided adequate protection for a rural Parish, such as Betley, where the density of houses was significantly below that of built-up areas of the town.

The Members noted in particular, that national legislation provided protection by:-

- (i) The ban on coal sales from 1 May 2023;
- (ii) That wood for burning may only be sold (and burnt) at 20% moisture content and below;
- (iii) The reduction in the smoke allowed to be discharged from a chimney from 9g/hour to 5g/hour.

The Members further noted that 'home produced' wood, such as wood burnt in farmhouses and cottages was invariably seasoned for several years and the moisture content was well below 20%.

The Parish Council considered the proposal to be unnecessary and overly bureaucratic and would be difficult to enforce in a rural area such as Betley. Additionally, significant nuisance issues, if any, could be dealt with under other environmental legislation.

Members were unanimous in their opposition to the blanket extension of Smoke Control Areas to all rural areas and to the Parish of Betley (styled Betley, Balterley & Wrinnehill) and agreed that the Clerk, following consultation with the Chair, drafts a suitable response to the Borough Council.

RESOLVED

That the Parish Council objects to the extension of smoke control to rural areas because it believes that the burning of wood that is properly seasoned does not pose a significant hazard and that national legislation already provides adequate smoke control and public health protection.

315/24 NOTICE BOARD AT THE HAND AND TRUMPET

RESOLVED

That Councillor Karling to speak to a manufacturer and report back to the next meeting regarding associated costs.

316/24 PLANNING MATTERS

The Parish Council considered the following planning matters:-

- **New Planning Application/s**

- (i) **Application Ref No: 24/00027/FUL Site of Former Wrinnehill Garage Main Road Betley Crewe Cheshire CW3 9BZ.** Proposal - Variation of condition 1 of planning permission 19/00875/FUL to substitute the approved site layout Drg No. 696-SL-01 with Drg. 2320.00.002 to amend the site layout due to existing site constraints.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Hales reviews this application the following day, and if there is a matter of concern, report the concerns to the Chair, Deputy Chair and Clerk, who



will address the matter under the provisions of Standing Order 26 – Urgent Business.

- (ii) **Application Ref Nos: 24/00033/LBC and 24/00032/FUL Betley Court Main Road Betley Crewe Cheshire.** Proposal - The works related solely to the reinstatement of the Ground Floor Yewside apartment and alterations to the already approved layout to the Fletcher House apartment. There was already planning permission and listed building consent for works to the Fletcher House apartment but the proposed layout of the apartment had now been slightly revised. Councillors Daly and Head had made a site visit and reported on their findings.

RESOLVED

That the proposals be unanimously supported.

- (iii) **Application Reference 23/00960/AGR- Land South And Adjacent To Checkley Lane Wrinehill Crewe Cheshire.** Proposal - Rebuild of falling down shed.

Councillors Bettley-Smith and Berrisford reported that they had examined this application, which represented a like for like or similar for like replacement.

RESOLVED

That the proposals be unanimously supported as the application represents a like for like or similar for like replacement.

At this juncture, Councillor Head left the meeting.

- **Ongoing Planning Applications (including appeals/enforcement issues and other planning matters)**

- (iv) **Application Number 17/00186/207C2 – Land at Doddlespool, Betley.** Members noted the decision of the Planning Committee as follows:-
Resolved: (i) That the information be received
(ii) That a report be brought back to Committee in two months' time

- (v) **Application Ref No: 23/00751/COU Proposal:** Change of use from an agricultural grassland to a dog exercise pen. Location: Land At Fields Farm Church Lane Betley. The Parish Council had submitted its comments relating to this application and Members noted that this application was still under consideration.

- (vi) **Application Ref No: 23/00888/LBC Proposal:** Rear porch extension. Location: Old Post Office Main Road Betley. The Parish Council had submitted its comments relating to this application and Members noted that this application had been approved.

In Councillor Head's absence, the meeting adjourned consideration of the final planning matter on the Agenda until his return, and instead considered the following three Items.

317/24 SCOUTS/CUBS ACTIVITIES

RESOLVED

That consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Parish Council on 11th April 2024.

318/24 REPORT ON RURAL TRANSPORT

RESOLVED

That consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Parish Council on 11th April 2024.



319/24 REPORT OF ROADS IN WRINEHILL**RESOLVED**

That consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Parish Council on 11th April 2024.

At this juncture, Councillor Head returned to the meeting and the Parish Council returned to consider the final planning matter, in which Councillor Head had had significant involvement.

320/24 PLANNING MATTERS**Ongoing Planning**

- **Application Number: 17/00968/FUL - Site of former Wrinehill Garage, Main Road, Betley**-The Clerk reported that she had received confirmation that the Section 106 monies had been deposited with the Borough Council.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Head reports on this matter to the next matter of the Parish Council on 11th April 2024.

321/24 FOOTPATHS WORKING PARTY

Members considered a report from Councillor Berrisford in which she highlighted progress to date. A draft sign was circulated for Route 1, Common Lane (Councillor Ecclestone and Hales declared their personal interests in this matter). Councillor Berrisford added that a QR code would be added to the sign, which could be scanned by walkers so that they could obtain further information on the area/route. This information would be provided via a link to a page on the Parish Council website.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

322/24 BUDGET AND FINANCE 2023-2024

The Clerk reported on the following matters:-

(i) Applications for financial assistance

Members noted that there were no applications for financial assistance.

(ii) Approval of the payment of invoices, including necessary reimbursements

Councillor Bettley-Smith did not participate in this item due to his interest as a recipient of a reimbursement.

Councillor Head did not participate in this item due to his interest as Chair of the Village Hall Committee.

Members approved the payments detailed in the table below. (The Clerk reported that the cheque numbers had changed from the report submitted, due to spoilt cheques and receipt of an additional invoice).

1460	M Clough	Reimbursement Postage Stamps	£15.00
1461	PQR Shires	Backpay Adjustments	£19.80
1462	R Bettley-Smith	Reimbursement for Christmas Stags	£343.98
1463		Cheque Cancelled	
1464	HMRC	PAYE (February)	£111.20
1465	Staffordshire Pension	Pension Contribution (February)	£161.18
1466	BBW Parish Council	Transfer opening balance to Unity Trust Bank	£500.00
1467	M Clough	Microsoft 365 Reimbursement	£59.99
1468		Cheque Cancelled	
1469	R Bettley-Smith	Reimbursement for Megaphone	£71.00
1470	M Clough	February Salary	£420.09
1471	Betley Village Hall	Room Hire January, February and March 2024	£112.50

RESOLVED

That the payments detailed above, be approved.

(iii) BUDGET EXPENDITURE TO 13th FEBRUARY 2024

Members approved the following Budget Head expenditure to 13th February 2024, noting that the total Budget Income at that date was £31,373.44:-

Budget Head	Total	BUDGET ALLOCATED 2023-2024	DIFFERENCE
Salary	£7,746.41	£6,500.00	+19.18%
Admin - Insurance	£783.67	£725.00	+8.09%
Admin - Audit Fees	£40.00	£320.00	-87.50%
Admin - Venue Hire	£412.50	£520.00	-20.67%
Admin - Subscriptions	£0.00	£330.00	-100.00%
Admin - Website	£122.28	£100.00	+22.28%
Admin - Other	£1,062.09	£500.00	+112.42%
Highways	£8,070.00	£8,900.00	-9.32%
Footpaths	£3,619.20	£4,000.00	-9.53%
Grants	£1,212.50	£1,150.00	+5.43%
Miscellaneous	£263.00	£250.00	+5.20%
Sandy Croft	£2,174.72	£1,100.00	+97.70%
Memorial Garden	£6,432.13	£4,170.00	+54.25%
Neighbourhood Plan	£0.00	£300.00	-100.00%
Contingency	£176.75	£1,200.00	-85.27%
UNITY TRUST BANK	£500.00	£500.00	0.00%
	£32,615.25	£30,565.00	+6.71%

The Clerk reported on the variances to the expenditure to date, which had been incurred mainly due to unexpected expenditure such as additional salaries paid during the transition period of the two Clerks; pension payments; purchase of a laptop and software; replacement lighting. (The figures detailed in the Budget Allocated for Highways and Footpaths included the grants received).

The Clerk asked Members to be mindful of the financial expenditure for 2024-2025 and the Chair reminded the Members that the Parish Council deliberately didn't increase the 2023-2024 Precept, as the intention was to use the reserves, to fund this year's deficit.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted, and that the Clerk emails Members with an anticipated expenditure to the end of this financial year.

(iv) BANK STATEMENT AT 2ND FEBRUARY 2024

The Chair signed the bank statement to confirm its reconciliation against the balance of £26,088.23 at the statement date, 2nd February 2024.

Councillor Bettley-Smith asked whether any Members wished to examine the documents being circulated for signing and Councillor Head indicated that he wished to examine the bank statement, which he did.

RESOLVED

That the Bank Reconciliation at the 2nd February 2024 be received.

(v) INTERNAL AUDITOR 2023-2024

The Clerk asked Members to approve the engagement of Davenport Accountants as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2023-2024 Financial Year.

RESOLVED

That the engagement of Davenport Accountants as the Parish Council's Internal Auditor for the 2023-2024 Financial Year be approved, subject to the receipt of additional information such as a trade reference, being circulated to Members.

(vi) FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

In accordance with Best Practice, the Clerk sought approval for the establishment of a Finance and Audit Committee. She circulated the draft Terms of Reference and asked Members to agree its Membership.

RESOLVED

1. That the establishment of a Finance and Audit Committee be approved;
2. That the Membership of the Finance and Audit Committee be approved, as follows: Councillors Berrisford, Bettley-Smith, Daly, Karling and Watkin.
3. That the Terms of Reference of the Finance and Audit Committee, as appended to these Minutes, be approved.

323/24 AREA MATTERS

RESOLVED

That the following matters be noted:-

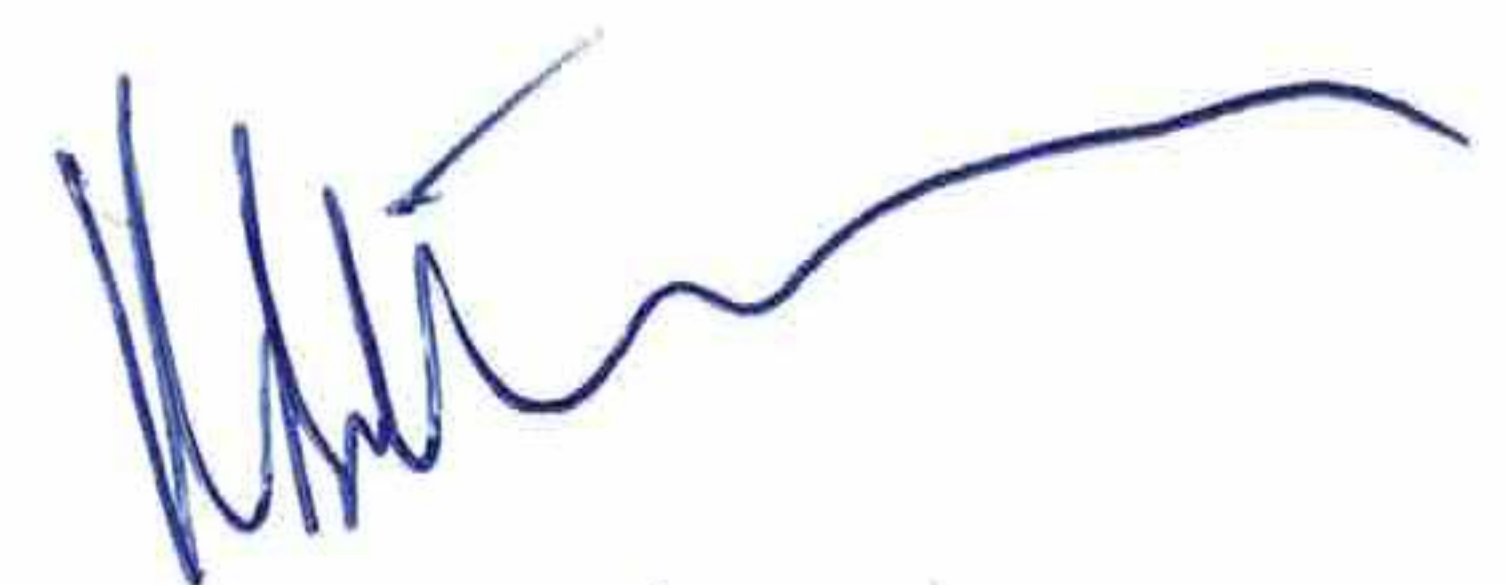
1. Councillor Karling to report concerns relating to potholes on Post Office Lane and noise, dust and smells on Waybutt Lane to the Borough Council;
2. That the thanks of this Parish Council be extended to Mr Peter Hatton for his personal commitment and efforts to improve the drainage matters on Checkley Lane at his own expense, and that this be reported in the Parish News;
3. A black Land Rover Freelander 2, had been abandoned in St Michael's church parking spaces for a number of weeks.

324/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting scheduled to be held on 28th March 2024 was being postponed and rescheduled to the 11th April 2024. The meeting scheduled to be held on 25th April 2024, was cancelled.

325/24 URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no items of Council Business that required consideration as a matter of urgency.


11/4/2024

**BETLEY, BALTERLEY AND WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Finance and Audit Committee will meet twice a year. It will hold a Budget Meeting prior to the November meeting of Council to consider and make recommendations to Council on the following year's budget and it will hold an Internal Controls Meeting in March, to prepare for the annual Parish Council Audits.

The Finance and Audit Committee may hold extra meetings to consider policy, staffing and other financial matters which may impact the Council.

Areas of Responsibility

- To consider the Council budget each year and make recommendations to Parish Council on the budget and the precept level;
- To consider and complete the AGAR which will be presented to the Parish Council meeting in April;
- To consider and review the Parish Council Risk Assessment annually;
- To consider and review the Parish Council Asset Register annually;
- To look at the budget headings and actual spend and suggest any amendments for approval by Council;
- To ensure an adequate and effective system of internal control is in place to secure the integrity of finances and information;
- To review internal and external audits;
- To ensure appropriate insurances are held by the Council;
- To ensure that appropriate records are maintained and preserved to provide probity to Council;
- The membership of the Finance and Audit Committee is 5 Councillors with 3 required to be in attendance to be quorate;
- To consider any additional internal controls required to ensure value for money for the electorate.

