

A meeting of the Finance Working Party was held in the Village Hall, Station Road, Countesthorpe, on Wednesday 13th August 2025

Present: Cllrs S Turner, M Gillespie, P Mount, K Pearce, W Read and M Smith

Parish Council Manager: Miss J Leech

Assistant Parish Council Manager: Miss E Frost

1. Apologies for absence, if any
There were no apologies for absence.
2. To receive disclosures of interest
There were no disclosures of interest.
3. To verify accounts for payment
It was recommended to approve the accounts for payment for the Parish Council and the Village Hall.
4. Review budget and expenditure 2025/2026
The budget as at 31st July was received and all was in order.

It was noted that the memorial inspections would be taking place from 18th August.

Recommended for approval

For the battery on the Ford Transit Van to be replaced at a cost of £180.

To schedule Fire Marshal Training for all staff, in December, with Extinguish Fire Solutions, at a cost of £775.

For the Parish Council Manager, Assistant Manager, Assistant and Library Supervisor to undertake Data Protection Training, as recommended following a recent review of the Practitioners Guide, at a cost of £15 per person, and for this to be included on the training schedule for renewal every two years.

For Vision ICT to undertake an audit of the Parish Council's website to ensure that it is compliant with WCAG 2.2AA, as per the requirement of Assertion 10 of the AGAR, at a cost of £145.

To proceed with the recommendation of the Estates Working Party, to purchase the required materials, at a cost of £260, to tidy up the area surrounding the second bench on The Spinney.

5. Conclusion of Audit for the year ended 31st March 2025
The External Auditor's report for the year ended 31st March 2025 was received. There were no matters arising as part of the External Auditor's limited assurance opinion.

There was advice to ensure that the Parish Council's Code of Conduct is reviewed on an annual basis and this would be received at the next meeting of the Strategic Planning and Policy Committee.
6. To verify bank reconciliations against bank statements and payments – To note that Cllr K McGovern has verified the bank reconciliations against bank statements and payments for all accounts for the first quarter
It was noted that Cllr K McGovern had verified the bank reconciliations against bank statements and payments for all accounts for the first quarter.
7. PCI DSS renewal – Card machine
Recommended for approval
To renew the PCI DSS with Lloyds Bank by mid-September following review and confirmation that there had been no changes to the Information Security Policy. The Policy and supporting documents would be circulated to all staff with access to the Card Machine for annual reminder.

8. NJC pay offer 2025/2026

It was noted that the pay negotiation for the current financial year had been agreed and that the backpay, as well as applicable pay increase, would be issued in the next payroll. Additional information would be forward to the Chair of the Finance Working Party to check budgets etc.

It was noted that the employers have commenced negotiations with the unions with regard to reviewing the structure of the NJC pay scales as a result of the bottom scales being deleted to meet the Minimum Wage. It was expected to take two years to carry out the review.

9. Practitioners Guide – Year end 2025/2026 changes

Arising from the publication of the Practitioners Guide in 2025, the items that would be expected to provide evidence in a new 'Assertion 10' of the Year End Annual Return, were noted.

Generally, the Parish Council meets the requirements of the new assertion, however, it was noted where there may be potential further requirements in the future.

Action needed for the current year would be to update the training schedule to include Data Protection training every two years for relevant staff, Councillors and volunteers; and for the website to be reviewed to check it is up to date with compliance of WCAG 2.2AA for accessibility. The relevant policies, including the IT Policy would be received at the next Strategic Planning Meeting for review.

10. Projects list, costings and priorities from the Estates Working Party

The projects list, prioritised and put forward by the Estates Working Party for consideration was discussed. The current prioritising was considered helpful, however, to further inform priority so that works could be scheduled to monitor against the current budget situation it was:-

Recommended for approval

To request that the Estates Working Party reprioritise the projects list in numerical order, taking into account health and safety, timescales and internal staffing demands, where appropriate.

To refer back to the Estates Working Party, the recommendation to proceed with resurfacing works on the pathway at The Spinney, for consideration in the review of the priority list.

For the item of play equipment on Dale Acre, recommended for removal by the Estates Working Party, at a cost of £2000, to be monitored for the time being whilst discussions regarding its future continue. A quotation would be obtained for a small slide and surfacing to assist with considering potential costs.

11. Replacement of John Deere

There was discussion regarding the options for replacing the John Deere mower which would be continued at the next meeting of the Finance Working Party once the reprioritisation of the projects list had been completed and a fuller forecast of finances could be seen.

12. Disposal of assets

Recommended for approval

To adapt the Disposal Policy of a neighbouring Parish Council for use by Countesthorpe Parish Council following its review. This would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Finance Working Party before being recommended for approval and adoption by the Parish Council.

13. Food waste collection

Recommended for approval

Further to the implementation of new legislation regarding the disposal of food waste for businesses, to sign up to Blaby District Council's food waste collection service, providing a

small caddy to be sited in the village hall kitchen and collected weekly by Blaby District Council at a cost of £2.50 per week, equating to £130 per year.

14. Reinstatement/revaluation cost assessment

It was noted that the revaluation reports for the brick garage and cemetery chapel were still outstanding and being chased as a priority.

15. Hanging baskets – sponsorship

Consideration was given to requesting sponsorship of the hanging baskets by local businesses with detailed costings of the existing contract to be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion.

Recommended for approval

To include an article in the December issue of The Herald asking residents their views regarding sponsorship of hanging baskets by local businesses.

16. Grant aid

a. Countesthorpe Cricket Club

Recommended for approval

To award a grant of £250 to Countesthorpe Cricket Club to contribute to their women's, girls and disabled teams indoor coaching costs.

17. S106 payment

The latest balance of s106 monies was received as an aide-memoire when considering the projects list at the next meeting.

18. To receive any correspondence

There was no correspondence.

19. Matters arising for information purposes

There was nothing to raise.

20. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10th September 2025.