WASHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Finance Committee Meeting

MINUTES of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday 17th November 2025 at Washington Village Hall (Doré Room)

PRESENT: Cllr B. Hanvey, Cllr A. Dillaway, Cllr T. Keech (Presiding Chairman) and Cllr Lisher

ALSO: Clerk to the Council. There were no members of the public.

ABSENT: None.

The meeting was opened by the Chairman at 7:15pm.

F/25/11/1 Election of Chairman

The Committee **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Keech as Chairman for the remainder of the Council's 2025/26 municipal year.

F/25/11/2 Apologies

None. All present.

F/25/11/3 Declarations of Interest

None declared as defined under the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's Code of Conduct.

F/25/11/4 Minutes of the last meeting

The Committee **RESOLVED to APPROVE** the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting on 6th January 2025.

F/25/11/5 2025/26 Budget and CIL Review

The Committee reviewed reports of the Council's current and forecast year end budget position, which showed a 3.7% increase in spending, based on known costs and current trends.

It was noted that an anticipated £2,000 overspend was largely due to the last quarter employer contributions being paid in the current financial year. This

would correct itself in the new financial year because the new payroll service had switched to monthly payments. Other significant variances were due to improvements to meet the new AGAR data protection requirements and best practice for IT security. The Chairman advised that the overspend would likely be offset by higher than anticipated income from bank interest.

Reports of the current CIL reserves totalling £72,445.80 were also received together with a list of the Village Hall's remaining improvements projects totalling £32,680 which could potentially benefit from CIL funds.

Members noted the anticipated £11,000 spending on the Council's MUGA lighting from the remaining balances. The Chairman proposed that the Council seeks indicative costs for its other projects including replacement toddler swings in the Play Area, new pathways and improvements to the car park.

The Chairman reported on the Council's current cash position and proposed further that this is reviewed again in January, and to consider a funds transfer to cover payments from March.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to note the reports and to agree both the Chairman's proposals. Clerk instructed to seek the indicative costs for further review at the next appropriate meeting,

F/25/11/6 Draft 2026/27 Budget and Precept

The Chairman presented draft budget proposals for the Council's estimated operating costs of £ 66,860 for 2026/27. This would be reduced by anticipated income and reserves to £57,718.78, requiring a precept of £43.68 for Band D properties, an increase of 3.66% on 2025/26.

The Chairman reported on the calculations and that these needed to be confirmed.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget, raising a number of points including the following:

- The overall 2026/27 spending requirements shown on the current draft proposal including reserves were nearer 10%. This was largely due to an additional £4,000 for new costs such as safety inspections, IT licence fees and the Neighbourhood Plan review.

- The Council could not safely operate "on a shoestring" by continuing to use its reserves to keep the precept low and meet budget deficits. The additional expenditure for next year is outside the Council's control and necessary for it to operate safely.

- The Council had generous CIL funds but these had to be separate from the Council's operating costs and other reserves requirements.

- It was important to start increasing the precept over the years to meet all the Council's spending requirements and build necessary reserves. This includes a level of contingency which would help protect the Council from unforeseen costs, including those which may arise from Local Government Reorganisation.

- The 2026/26 contingency in general reserves was shown at around 9 months operating costs, within the minimum recommended limit for small councils like Washington.

- At a Council training session earlier this year, the Council was advised that its precept is around half the national average and that there was room for an increase to meet its budget requirements.

- The Chairman suggested the Council should consider a precept increase of 5%-10%, the latter being no more than a further £4 for Band D properties, additional to the suggested precept. The Committee felt that the Council should strive to increase the precept to under 10%

Following a review, the Committee **RESOLVED** the following:

- *To further review the proposed 2026/27 budget at the next Finance Committee Meeting, based on a precept increase of less than 10%. Chairman to work with the Clerk to action. Final draft to be recommended for approval by the Council on Monday 5th January 2026.*

- *To introduce a policy to increase the precept gradually over the forthcoming years in order to fully cover the Council's total spending requirement and build reserves.*

- *To include an item in the next issue of the Sussex Local about the Council's 2026/27 draft budget preparations and precept recommendation. Cllr Lisher to action.*

F/25/11/7 Next Finance Committee Meeting.
Monday 5th January 2026 at 7:00pm

There being no further business the meeting was closed at: 7:40pm