

**POULTON with FEARNHEAD PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Finance Committee minutes of 26<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (18.00pm)**

**Present:** Cllrs Warnock-Smith (Chair)/Friend/Bonsall/Emery/Mansley

J Perry (Parish Clerk -PC)

**Apologies:** J. Butler,

**Fin101/25-26: Welcome:**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Fin102/25-26: Minutes of last meeting:**

1. The minutes of the last meeting were agreed and proposed by Cllr Bonsall & seconded Cllr Friend.

**Fin103/25-26: Terms of Reference:**

1. The Clerk presented the new Terms of Reference for the newly named Finance and Staffing Committee. Members accepted the changes and all agreed to adopt the new Terms of Reference.

**Fin104/25-26: Annual Return Update:**

1. The PC reported back on the progression of the AGAR. It was noted that we expect a response from the external auditor within the next two weeks. Cllr Warnock-Smith and the PC stated that they expect a negative response to the audit, as it was submitted late and there were irregularities in the figures given. Furthermore, the internal audit was not conducted correctly. This is also on the back of the fact that the 23/24 audit was not submitted. The PC stated that the AGAR is a fundamental/legal reporting process that must be adhered to. With this in mind, the PC has contacted an auditing company, XXX Business Services, who have extensive local government experience, to undertake the internal audit for 25/26. The PC reminded members that the 25/26 audit will still be somewhat challenging for the Parish Council, as many of the policies and procedures were not in place for much of the year. Cllr Warnock-Smith confirmed that there were no issues from a financial perspective just the processes that were adopted in the past. Cllr Warnock-Smith stated that XXX Business Services would undertake a full forensic review and that the future policies and procedures that follow this review will ensure legal compliance. Members voted in favour of engaging XXX Business Services.
2. Cllr Warnock-Smith stated that we are in a much better position, in terms of compliance and policies, than a number of months ago but there is still much work left to do.

**Fin105/25-26: Precept:**

1. The PC reported that the Precept request was sent and we have had acknowledgement of receipt.

**Fin106/25-26: Balance Update:**

1. The Clerk handed out the latest spreadsheets. The balance is looking healthy (£82,163.62) although there are some potential cost expenditures coming, such as staffing costs and potential HMRC costs. However, the current projections estimate reserves of approximately £54,000 at year end. The PC will monitor. **ACTION: PC**

**Fin107/25-26: HMRC and Payroll:**

1. The PC reported that now we have access to the HMRC portal and that the January payroll was successfully submitted to HMRC. Whilst this is a significant step in our travel towards full compliance, we still have some way to go. The PC stated that we have engaged a payroll specialist, for a one-off review of our systems and portal information, to ensure compliance. The payroll specialist will also look back on the previous two years to advise on action required to satisfy HMRC.
2. As stated in previous meetings it is possible that a fine will be given to the Parish Council for their non-compliance in the previous couple of years.

**Fin108/25-26: Charge Cards:**

1. The PC reported that the new charge cards had finally arrived from the bank and that these were now distributed to the members for the Foodbank.
2. Cllr Emery has handed over the Foodbank receipts for this financial year. These will need to be audited and recorded against the bank records.  
**Action: PC**

**Fin109/25-26: Staffing and Annual Leave:**

1. The PC presented a briefing paper on a new staff annual leave policy. It seems that there is some confusion on the annual leave period. It was agreed that the Parish Council's annual leave period align with the financial year (April to March)
2. It was also agreed that the Parish Council adopt the same policy regarding carried forward annual leave. It was agreed to adopt the annual leave policy in future staff documents.

**Fin110/25-26: Ryland Sharks Pitch Hire:**

1. The PC presented a Briefing Paper on the Hire of Bennetts Recreation Ground Sports Pitches and the proposed hire fee for Rylands Sharks.
2. It was noted that Ryland Sharks approached the Parish Council last year requesting that the fees be increased, as the charges in previous years had been somewhat erratic and low in value.

3. The Briefing Paper outlined the current fees imposed by WBC at Victoria Park to be used as a comparison.
4. It was accepted that last year's fee of £xxxx.00 was lower than WBC fees but it was recognised that Ryland Sharks are active participants within the community.
5. It was proposed that the Parish Council increases the fee by 10%. This was voted and agreed by members.
6. The PC also presented a draft copy of a new contract agreement and booking form for the hire of the facilities at Bennetts Recreation Ground. This document covers the Parish Council and forms a legally binding agreement with Rylands Sharks. The agreement also ensures that any public liability is evidenced. It was agreed that the Parish Council adopt this contract agreement and booking form.

**Fin111/25-26: Bennetts Recreation Ground:**

1. The Parish Clerk briefed the members on the progress of the new build facility. A final plan had been agreed and a new cost provided by the supplier. As anticipated, this has increased because of recent RPI changes.
2. The projected budget costs are currently in line with the budget that was set pre-Christmas.
  - a. Pre-Fabrication: £34,500
  - b. Planning and drawings: £3,000
  - c. WBC – Plannings and building control: £3,000
  - d. Enabling works: £10,000
3. It was agreed that Palladio be engaged to complete the final drawing and submit for planning approval.

**Fin112/25-26: Expenditure Requests:**

1. There were no requests

**Fin113/25-26: Any Other Business:**

1. There were no other matters arising.

**Date of next Meeting: Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April: 19.00hrs**