

**Minutes of the meeting of the Benson Parish Council Finance Committee held on
Tuesday 11th March 2025 at 6pm**

Present: Cllr Jordan (RJ)
Cllr Pattison (BP)
Cllr Baylis (PB)

Apologies: Cllr Murray (PM)

Proper Officer: Anna Field (RFO)

1. **Apologies and note of absence** – Apologies received from PM
2. **Declarations of Interest** – none were declared.
3. **Public Session** – there were no members of the public present
4. **Minutes of the last meeting** – The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday 11th February 2025 were agreed as a true record of the meeting by the members who attended
5. **Updates on Previous Actions**

Investments – RFO has made progress separating out the reserves for better visibility of available funds. RFO to circulate reports RFO

Millbrook Mead – RFO to chase Cllr Stevenson to go to Knights to sign the stat dec. RFO

Youth Hall – the trustees are not expected to meet until May/ June so we won't get a response to our offer quickly

6. **Audits**

The external audit for 2023/24 was received and the contents noted – no actions

The final internal audit for 2023/24 was received and the contents noted. All action points are being, or have been, addressed.

The interim audit for 2024/25 was received and the contents noted. The following action points are in hand

- i) update all bank signatories - this will be done after the year end
- ii) review the fidelity guarantee – this is being considered at renewal of the insurance in September as Zurich wanted to see a summary of the balances over a period of 12 months
- iii) old debts should be written off – see below

Full Council are asked to formally receive the 3 audit reports and note the above action points CLK

7. **EV Chargers**

RFO reported that the cost of installing just one EV charger was £9500 just to prepare the connection to the building and there would be costs on top

of that to do the internal wiring. There does not seem to be any community or financial benefit to this project and resources might be better focussed on investigating solar panels at the Parish Hall.

CLK to approach R Passey to obtain a second quote for the trenching and ducting CLK

Recommendation to Full Council not to proceed with this project due to the lack of community or financial benefit CLK

8. Bloomfield Bequest

Freddie Van Mierlo MP managed to get a clear response from NatWest as to what information they were still waiting for. That information has already been sent once but RFO and BP resupplied all the requested identification, minutes and background information duly certified by a solicitor on 25th February. RFO chased a response on 11th March and BP also spoke to them to answer some further (the same) questions about the background to this case. They verbally confirmed they had all the information they required and would now process the transfer of funds. If nothing received by 21st March, RFO to chase again and copy in Freddie Van Mierlo RFO

9. Debt Recovery

RFO presented a spreadsheet of all the debt that existed when Sage was closed on 31st December 2024. Since that date our accounts are held in Scribe and the debt monitoring is much easier. It was agreed that debt totalling £681 should still be treated as recoverable and should be carried forward into Scribe to be pursued. The other £1305.48 is largely organisations who have gone out of business or are such old debts (pre 2020) that administering them and chasing them now would be too time consuming. The majority seem to be ex allotment holders and accounts with so many invoices, credits, cancelled events etc that unravelling the debt would be almost impossible. A schedule of these is attached.

Recommendation to Full Council to write off debt amounting to £1305.48 CLK

10. Utility Contracts

RFO asked for opinions on negotiating new energy contracts now as opposed to waiting until the current contract expiry in 2026. RFO

RFO to find out if any new rates would be applied now or would be fixed now but not applied until contract renewal in 2026

11. Hall Hire Deposits – defer

12. Scout Hut Ownership - defer

13. Vote to exclude the general public from the remainder of this meeting pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 because of the sensitive nature of the business to be transacted under the agenda

Unanimous

i) Staffing Matters

BENSON PARISH COUNCIL

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None reported

14. Any Other Business and Items for the Next Agenda –

Date of next meeting 13th May 2025