



**MINUTES OF THE
FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

Date: Tuesday 11 March 2025

Time: 7.00pm

Location: Chigwell Council Parish Offices, Hainault Road, Chigwell, IG7 6QZ

Members present:

CLlr Celina Jefcoate
CLlr Tosin Amuludun

CLlr Faiza Rizvi

Members of the Public and Councillors were asked to **NOTE** that in accordance with Standing Orders 3 (i) and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, photographing, recording, broadcasting, transmitting or otherwise reporting the proceeding of a meeting may take place.

Councillors were asked to **NOTE** that in the exercise of their functions, they must take note of the following: equal opportunities; crime and disorder; human rights; health and safety and biodiversity

FG161/24 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were **RECEIVED** and **AGREED** from Cllrs: Costa and Braha

FG162/24 - ANY OTHER ABSENCE

None

FG163/24 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared she knew the owner of Haypex. She considered it would not influence her decision and she would remain in the meeting

FG164/24 - MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held 11 February 2025 were **APPROVED**

FG165/24 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

FG166/24 - FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND BANK RECONCILIATIONS

The proposed payments for March were reviewed and **APPROVED**

The card payments for February were reviewed and **APPROVED**

The bank reconciliation to 28 February was reviewed and **APPROVED**

The delegated approval of the report detailing salary, superannuation and tax payments for February 2025 were **NOTED**

FG167/24 - FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

The RFO reported as follows:

The data held for hirers of VH is being destroyed in line with GDPR and VH policies

The cemetery has retested a credit account for the removal of hazardous waste. It was **AGREED** that the normal procurement process would need to be followed .i.e. costing, plus PO rather than credit account.

Action:

OL to advise SW to provide costing for PO

The insurance expires 30 March and renewal figures are in from Zurich

Action:

OL to seek alternative quote for comparison if possible. Matter of ongoing employer liability insurance to be weighted in decision. Put to FC for decision before 30 March

A grant application had been received for 25/26

Action:

To be reviewed by F&G after 1 April 2025. OL to provide details of previous grant spend (April 2025)

Cornerstone have requested to enlarge the footprint of land leased on Station Green.

Action:

SW to mark out enlarged footprint and provide images. OL to confirm revised lease costs and VAT position. OL to locate original lease from EFDC for F&G to confirm details of any overage agreements (April F&G)

Cornerstone provided additional payment as a result of historic rent review

Action:

OL to sign on behalf of CPC and provide 50% to EFDC

FG168/24 - H&S PROVIDER

On 18 Feb Full Council was advised that the F&G Committee recommended considering and agreeing on Option 2 for the H&S provider (3-year agreement for an annual fee of £2,000). The Chair of F&G clarified to Full Council that while Option 2 was considered potentially the optimum solution, further clarification was needed in regard to the services provided by the provider and those provided by the H&S officer to ensure all the Parish requirements were addressed and duplication was avoided.

It was **AGREED** by Full Council to delegate the decision to Finance and Governance and that the H&S officer would liaise as required (FG200/24)

Action after Full Council: OL/TS to ask provider for personalised work plan detailing annual services provided to CPC. TS to review and draft CPC work and compliance plan to go alongside

provider's services, including annual schedule of documentation and compliance checks for F&G (March).

To receive work/compliance plans as above (Appendix 6)

To review the above and **AGREE** an appropriate course of action in regard to appointing an H&S advisor

The Committee reviewed the personalised work plan detailing annual services provided to CPC which broke down services as follows:

Worknest provide competent person status
Dedicated local H&S support via named individual
Risk Management Software - SafetyNest
24/7 Emergency Advice Line
An onsite visit schedule of 2,1,2,1,2
Annual H&S Policy and Handbook Review

It was **AGREED** to recommend that the Council engage Worknest as H&S provider subject to the RFO being satisfied there are no undue limitations on the provision of the named consultant. The annual cost of £2,000 was **AGREED**

The work and compliance plan to go alongside provider's services, including annual schedule of documentation and compliance checks was deferred to April.

Action: The RFO to be satisfied there are no undue limitations of the provision of the named consultant, to submit to FC for decision and to issue PO for above services at a cost of £2,000 plus VAT per annum if agreed.

Action:

TS to review Worknest service provision and draft CPC work and compliance plan to go alongside provider's services, including schedule of documentation and compliance checks across a 12 month period for F&G (F&G April).

FG169/24 - FIRE DOOR MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Members were asked to consider the proposal to engage a contractor for Fire Door Inspections (ref. QUO-39330-F4H9S1): Main Office, Victory Hall and Community Hub under a 2-year agreement for an annual fee of £1,260.00

The Committee reviewed the details of the proposed fire door inspection and maintenance plan. The intent to purchase closers was **NOTED**. The requirement for CPC to regularly inspect fire doors as part of checks was **NOTED**.

It was **AGREED** the potential for duplication under the existing fire risk assessments was high and the proposed inspection and maintenance plan for fire doors did not offer best value for monetary spend.

It was **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council not to engage Chubb to carry out fire door inspections

Action:

Recommendation to FC that CPC do not engage Chubb to carry out fire door inspections on next agenda.

H&S officer to report on status of all regular fire checks to F&G and Proper Officer

FG170/24 - CEMETERY FORECAST REVENUE

FG151/24 - The Registrar was tasked to issue notices of renewal for cremated remains 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 plus GoR renewals for 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 as a matter of urgency and update Scribe for these periods. The Registrar to report details of response to notices of renewal (no. of renewals/ revenue received) and proposed process to manage non renewal and non responses and any appropriate timescale in writing ahead of F&G (March). The Registrar to then issue notice of renewal for previous periods and is tasked with updating Scribe and all relevant records accordingly. The Registrar to advise when Exclusive Rights of Burial (graves) did/ will fall due and is tasked with updating Scribe and all relevant records accordingly.

To receive a written report from the Registrar updating progress of the above. (Appendix 8) To receive an updated forecast revenue for 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 based on current trends and capacity plus renewals

To review and **AGREE** an appropriate course of action

The Committee considered the Registrar's recommendations at Appendix 8 and **AGREED** to the advice therein that renewals could be issued and suggested process

Action:

The Registrar to:

Issue current notices of renewals

Formally set out the operational process to follow for non-renewals as per the recommendations submitted

Provide written report to include an estimate of total amount of renewals outstanding to date, no of renewal notices issued, response rate, timescales for issuing renewals for previous periods and updating Scribe in full (F&G April)

Provide written report advising when Exclusive Rights of Burial (graves) did/will fall due and provide timescale for updating Scribe with all relevant digital records accordingly (F&G April)

Provide updated forecast cemetery revenue for 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27 based on current trends, current charges and capacity plus renewals (F&G April)

FG171/24 - INTERNAL AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

To **NOTE** the recommendations and progress against them and **AGREE** an appropriate course of action

The auditor's comments in the 2024/25 Internal audit included:

I note that the non-confidential supporting papers are included with some agendas, although this has been inconsistent, and I remind council it is required to post any non-confidential supporting documentation with the agendas as outlined by the Information Commissioner's Office

The 23/24 audit noted minutes were not always consecutively numbered or signed on each page as required by law. It has also been noted that each committee's set of consecutive minutes should be differentiated i.e. by using a prefix and that motions, decisions and actions are clearly set out

Action:

All Chairs to ensure the next meeting dates are agreed as an agenda item, minuted and diarised by staff

Excluding planning, ten days before a meeting the admin to draft summary of items brought forward and any other items and circulate to relevant committee for comment/additional items

In the absence of a Clerk, the RFO is to assess all summons, agenda and minutes prior to circulation to ensure compliance with auditor's requirements

Draft minutes to be circulated to all Councillors and staff with actions highlighted to enable prompt production of supporting papers

Progress on actions required as a result of a committee or Council resolution to be reviewed on a weekly basis at the staff meeting

FG172/24 - VICTORY HALL

Deferred

FG173/24 - POLICY REVIEW

The policy review was considered and it was **AGREED** the Risk Register would be considered in April

FG174/24 - SALE OF BUSES

Deferred

FG175/24 - MATTERS TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD OR FOR DISCUSSION WITH NO DECISION

Progress reports and updates from the Registrar as minute FG170/24

Victory Hall kitchen - update from Cllr Braha

Sale of buses - update from Cllr Costa

Risk Register

Grant application

Expanded footprint of leased land on Station Green

H&S workplan as per minute FG168/24

FG176/24 - DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 8 April at 7.00pm

FG177/24 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The Committee **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED** the following motion proposed by the Chair:

“That the public and the press be excluded from the meeting, the Council believing that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be discussed.”

The meeting was closed to the public and press

FG178/24 - RISK AND MITIGATION WITHIN HR

The recruitment risk report was considered and the high risk **NOTED**. It was **AGREED** the risk report would be updated and presented to all Councillors and provided to HR consultant.

It was **AGREED** the matter of a special motion to reverse the decision made at full council on 4th Feb was appropriate and should be made

Action

The employment risk report to be updated with the above points and put before Full Council.

Haypex to be provided with a copy

Additional risk report to be issued and circulated as above

F&G motion to be included on Full Council agenda

FG179/24 - HR BRIEFING

As previously resolved F&G met with Haypex to raise concerns regarding risk and mitigation in HR . An email containing initial opinions from Haypex has been circulated. It was **AGREED** that a summary of concerns of F&G would be provided to Haypex as requested along with clarification of some points made by Haypex

Action:

F&G concerns to be summarised and provided to Haypex for consideration as part of any review/ advisory

FG180/24 - GOVERNANCE MATTER

The separate investigations into allegations of harassment and bullying are ongoing.

Action:

Findings to be circulated to F&G when received

FG181/24 - FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE INCIDENT LOG

Councillors considered reported incidents

It was **AGREED** all incident reports, risk reports and mitigation should be presented to Council for their information and to establish if any further mitigation was required

Action:

Summary/action list of mitigation to be provided by office to relevant staff/committees/Council/ third parties to be implemented as appropriate

To come to Full Council for information/any additional mitigation

FG182/24 - COMPLAINTS/FOI/SAR RECEIVED

The RFO advised that a complaint had been received by an MOP regarding a perceived delay in documentation being provided. It was **AGREED** to seek further information from all relevant parties

Action:

Further information to be sought. HR consultant to be informed

C18. CFG178/24 - RISK AND MITIGATION WITHIN HR

To consider and review the risk in the light of recent resolutions to employ a part time Clerk and a further Open Spaces Operative and **AGREE** an appropriate course of action

The recruitment risk report was considered and the high risk **NOTED**. It was **NOTED** that Finance Regulation 7.3 has not been complied with and additional potential risks were highlighted. It was **AGREED** the risk report would be amended as above and presented to all Councillors and provided to HR consultant.

It was noted the matter of the Open Spaces operative had been raised as an incident. It was **AGREED** a risk report was required

It was **AGREED** the matter of a special motion to reverse the decision made at full council on 4th Feb, Item to appoint the Registrar as Interim Clerk was appropriate and should be made in light of governance concerns special motion

Action

The employment risk report to be updated with the above points and put before Full Council.

Haypex to be provided with a copy

Risk report to be issued reflecting F&G concerns regarding risks of Open Spaces operative employment and circulated as above

F&G motion to be included on Full Council agenda

C19. CFG179/24 - HR BRIEFING

As previously resolved F&G met with Haypex to brief with concerns regarding risk and mitigation in HR . An email containing initial opinion from Haypex has been circulated. It was **AGREED** that a summary of concerns of F&G would be provided to Haypex as requested along with clarification of some points made by Haypex. The concerns included H&S compliance, revenue collection and a recent complaint (see CFG182/24)

Action:

F&G concerns to be summarised and provided to Haypex for consideration as part of any review/ advisory

C20. CFG180/24 - GOVERNANCE MATTER

The investigations into allegations of harassment and bullying by a Councillor and an ex-employee are ongoing.

Action:

CLlr Costa to circulate findings to F&G when received

C21. CFG181/24 - FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE INCIDENT LOG

Councillors considered the following reported incidents

H&S matter - non completion of fire alarm and lights checks - Incident report raised

Interference with recruitment - Incident report raised

Potential unlawful spend - recruitment of an Open Spaces operative - Incident report raised
Alleged attempted bribery of a Councillor by a MOP - Incident report raised

It was **AGREED** all incident reports, risk reports and mitigation should be presented to Council for their information and to establish if any further mitigation was required

Action:

Summary/action list of mitigation to be provided to relevant staff/committees/Council/third parties to be implemented as appropriate
To come to Full Council for information/any additional mitigation

C22. CFG182/24 - COMPLAINTS/FOI/SAR RECEIVED

The RFO advised that a complaint had been received by an MOP regarding a cremation plot purchased in early January with the Deed of Right and receipt not received by March 11 2025, a perceived delay in documentation being provided. The summary of the issues around the complaint and the response to this was considered and the committee considered it was not clear why the delay had occurred. The additional matter of the existing ashes in plot and the delayed receipt was raised. It was **AGREED** to seek further information from all relevant parties and that Haypex should be provided with summary

Action:

Further information to be sought from complainant and staff members to clarify. HR consultant to be informed