

Minutes of Meeting on 15th July 2025
Elmstead Parish Council – Finance Committee
Community Centre, School Road, Elmstead Market, CO7 7ET

Present: Councillors Martine Ward (Chairman), Amanda Brennan, James Chable, Adam Gladwin and Michael Hare.

Mrs Baxter (clerk)

25/017 Apologies of Absence

None.

25/018 Declaration of Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests

None.

25/019 To appoint a vice-chair of the committee.

It was resolved to appoint Cllr Brennan.

Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Cllr Ward, all in favour.

25/020 To agree the Minutes of the meeting of 3rd June 2025.

It was resolved to accept the minutes from 3rd June 2025 as true and accurate.

Proposed: Cllr Chable, Seconded: Cllr Brennan, all in favour.

25/021 2025/26 First Quarter

To review the first quarter income and expenditure against the set budget. To review reserves.

The committee reviewed the summary in detail. Income: It was asked why cost code 69 is so low. The interest from the s106 bank deposits for the new community centre is on a separate line and is not budgeted for. There was a question about the playing field hire, it's higher than budgeted because the payment for the previous year was received in the current year. It was asked if we are still expecting the community centre share of waste removal, the clerk is still to invoice for that.

Staff costs: It was asked why we have spent more than the budget. This is because there are 4 months of staff costs in the expenses because March wasn't paid until April.

Insurance: it's slightly over budget but we should get a small refund because we were offered a 3-year long-term arrangement after we had paid which saves on the annual cost.

Training: There has been only one training course so there is still some budget left.

It was discussed that although we can use the Charity Field open space s106 contribution towards Charity Field maintenance TDC has told us it can't be used to pay wages. It was resolved to change the "Playing field grass cutting" reserve to "Charity Field maintenance".

Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Cllr Ward, all in favour.

Subscriptions: We did increase by inflation, but the EALC increase was more than that.

General Maintenance: Subtracting the new trailer which was purchased out of an earmarked capital reserve this cost centre seems low. This is because the largest expense is the mower service which will not be done until nearer the end of the year.

Recreational/Open Space: We are still to look at getting the flagpole serviced as it's been difficult to use.

Rent and Hire: Actual expenses look a lot higher than they should be because the community centre charges the PC for half of the income received from Reed Hall Sentinels, for the use of the toilets. So we do have the income to offset that cost.

Highways: We were looking at improving some of the signage. Speed signs for Bromley Road were ordered, but we were not invoiced. We don't know if Highways did them, some were updated further up the road.

Streetlighting: The maintenance is a little higher than 25% because some replacements were required. NPower has stopped their monthly invoices. They've done this in the past and you

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then get the missing months' invoices in one go. This has happened to other Parish Councils, they may be changing their systems.

Publicity: This budget code can be used to pay for the New Community Centre survey.

Neighbourhood Plan: We will need to start saving into a reserve for a Neighbourhood Plan review. It is planned to start saving for it in the 2026/27 budget.

New Community Centre: This doesn't have a budget because it is being paid for out of earmarked reserves. The solicitor's fees for the transfer of the land have been included as "NCC other" but we are expecting those to be refunded. If any part isn't refunded it was suggested that they are paid out of the legal fees reserve. We'll change that now as we don't know how long it will take for those to be refunded.

Events: The budget for Remembrance Sunday was discussed. We pay for the wreaths and reimburse volunteers for the food at the tea held in the hall afterwards. The hub money is paid for by a grant. We have just finished the last one and will start spending from the next one.

Earmarked reserves: It's not an actual expense, it's an internal transfer from the general reserve to a specific reserve that we add to the budget.

The trailer cost £625, which is exactly what was in the reserve at the end of the first quarter. We can continue saving for the next one but won't need to save so much per year as we'll have a longer period to build up the reserve.

Environs: We have a budget for village greens which can be used for the plants for a planter on North Green.

Allotments: TDC has agreed for the open spaces s106 amount of £4506 to be paid for fencing, gates, locks and keys, standpipe and troughs and landscaping for the plots and walkways. There is a little extra in the budget for other costs.

The clerk had sent a summary to say that after deductions for earmarked reserves 31% of the budget has been spent. She gave the reasons for that, the main one being that there are 4 months' worth of staff costs instead of 3.

25/022 2025/26 Grants

To consider and decide any late applications made by Parish organisations (for grants within the budget set by council). To consider and agree any recommendations to make to full council for approval if the grants are in excess of the budget.

The committee considered an application from the Cricket Club. It was commented that they do a lot for the village and have been very helpful with village events.

There is £800 left in the grants budget and the other potential request is from the Air Ambulance. Cllr Hare expressed concern about staying within the overall budget.

It was resolved to give Elmstead Cricket Club a grant of £300 towards the refurbishment of the internal bench seating.

Proposed: Cllr Brennan, Seconded: Cllr Gladwin, all in favour.

25/023 Charity Field

To review quotes for the works required to Charity Field on the area covered with stones and gravel.

Only one quote has been received because this is the only contractor we can find for the long thin strip of land, which is too narrow to use a tractor. When we've asked for suggestions of other contractors we've been recommended Wrights, who recommended this same contractor as they could not do the work themselves. He will be working off a quad bike. The quote includes strimming the area by hand.

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It was asked where the money would come from. The committee reviewed the available s106 open spaces funds. The only one that can be used now is the £4,096.21 that the dog bin is also being paid out of.

It was resolved to appoint Turf in Essex Ltd at a cost of £830 plus VAT. This is to be paid out of the s106 open spaces contribution if possible. The clerk is to make the request to TDC.

Proposed: Cllr Brennan, Seconded: Cllr Gladwin, all in favour.

It was asked if we need to allocate money for the additional handyman (contractor) costs. We can use the £700 that is in the budget for handyman cover. If we have him until October that might be about £1,500. Our internal auditor suggested we take some out of the staff sickness reserve if we have additional handyman needs, and then start building the reserve back up again. Alternatively we could use the Playing Field Grass Cutting reserve of £1,000 towards the contractor as we have not had to use that in the past.

It was resolved to change the reserve for that purpose. Proposed: Cllr Gladwin, Seconded: Cllr Ward, all in favour. This gives a total of £1,700 for contractor expenses this year.

25/024 Date for next meeting.

The next meeting will be to review the second quarter 25/26 expenditure, so will be after the end of September 2025.

A provisional date of 21st October was decided, the clerk is to check that the hall is free.

25/025 Matters raised by Councillors for the next agenda or for information only.

None.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm. Minuted by Mrs. A Baxter

Contact: elmsteadparish@gmail.com

Signature

Date