



# Ashington Parish Council

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## **MINUTES of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 21st April 2026, at 8:00pm Ashington Community Centre, Foster Lane, Ashington**

### **Present:**

**Councillors:** Graeme MacPherson (Chair), John Morris, Malcolm Woolley

### **In attendance:**

**Clerk and RFO:** Lee English

**Members of the Public:** 1

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Members of the public were reminded that they limit their participation to the Public Adjournment section of the meeting, and that any matters raised should be with regards to an item on the agenda (Standing Orders allow for 5 minutes maximum per person). Questions relating to any other items that are not on the agenda should be referred to the Chair or the Clerk as appropriate and outside of the meeting.

F/01/26	<b><u>Apologies for absence</u></b> Tony Moss
F/02/26	<b><u>Declaration of Interests and notification of change of interest</u></b> None
F/03/26	<b><u>Public Adjournment</u></b> No questions raised
F/04/26	<b><u>Draft accounts and annual report</u></b> The year end accounts had been prepared by the Clerk / RFO and circulated to the committee prior to the meeting. The <a href="#">receipts and payments detail</a> , <a href="#">year end accounts</a> and <a href="#">Earmarked Reserves</a> reports were presented.  The following was discussed and noted. <b><u>Year-end budget review</u></b> The following areas of variance for receipts or payments, less or greater than 15% of budget figure (and more than £50) for individual budget headings were noted –  <b>Receipts</b> <b>1. Parish Yard</b> - £1,600 compared to £520 due to renewal of car parking lease.

### Payments

2. **Chairman's Allowance** - £25 expenditure against £100 budget.
3. **Software/IT** – £886 expenditure against £1,000 budget.
4. **Parish Yard** - £298 against £360 due to change of electricity energy supplier.
5. **Neighbourhood Wardens** – £69,743 against £77,974 budget - costs are invoiced 12 months in arrears, therefore the expenditure relates to 2024-25 costs. (2025-26 actual £75,287, against £77,974 budget – 3% under budget)
6. **Green initiatives** - £179 against £500 budget.
7. **Play areas and skatepark** - £392 against £1,000 budget – skatepark refurbished with funds from an EMR, which negated usual annual service/minor repairs costs.
8. **Earmarked Reserves (EMR)** – it should be noted that where there is a budgeted amount, that is an amount that is transferred from general reserves to the EMR for that year. Any spend against EMR budget codes is transferred from those EMRs back into the general reserves figure.

For the purposes of the Annual Return, the [Explanation of Variances](#) for year-on-year comparison showed -

9. **Precept or Rates and Levies** – a 25% increase (£27,033) due to increased expenditure across various budget codes and end of a sponsorship agreement. Further breakdown noted on Explanation of Variances spreadsheet.
10. **Total Other Receipts** – a 189.99% increase (£33,442) mainly due to a CIL receipt of £32,692.
11. **Staff Costs** – a 19.77% increase (£5,031) mainly due to provision of a budget for up to 4hrs per week overtime.
12. **Total Borrowings** – a 26.90% decrease (£5,332) due to the decrease in outstanding repayment figure for the Public Works Loan.

### Summary of receipts over payments for year ended 31st March 2026

Total receipts	£186,211
<u>Total payments</u>	<u>£159,556</u>
Net receipts over payments	£26,655
Total after transfer from EMRs (£25,778)	£52,432
Total after CIL transfer to EMR (£32,692)	£19,741

### Receipts

Receipts for the year were £36,125 (24.1%) higher than projected.

Other than expected minor variations, this can primarily be accounted for by –

- £32,692 CIL monies received
- £800 donation received towards a bench
- £1,080 Parish Yard additional rental above that budgeted
- £1,929 vat reclaimed

### Payments

Payments for the year were £11,885 (8%) higher than projected.

Expenditure includes payments that are allocated to existing EMRs – funds which have been set aside as planned in previous years. When year end allocations were made for those payments (£25,778), to be “transferred” from the EMRs back to general reserves, the payments against budget were £13,893 lower than projected.

- Other than expected minor variations, this can primarily be accounted for by –
- £2,515 underspend on staff salaries
  - £8,231 lower expenditure on Warden’s invoice (invoice paid in arrears and therefore relates to previous financial year)
  - £1,291 total underspend on Landscaping and Open Spaces budget codes

**Earmarked Reserves (EMRs)**

These were reviewed and considered to be appropriate levels.

**General reserves figure**

At 31st March 2026 -

Current year fund (receipts over payments)	£26,655
<u>General reserves</u>	<u>£50,477</u>
Total year end general reserves figure	£77,132

Annual expenditure for 2026-27 is budgeted at £164,166, therefore general reserves of £77,132 held at year end is 47% (approx. 5.5 months) of projected annual expenditure. The recommendation is that general reserves should be maintained at between 3 and 12 months of net revenue expenditure.

It was acknowledged that there was an invoice for the 2025-26 Wardens costs (invoiced in arrears) for £75,287 to be paid in April, but that the first payment for the precept of £74,341.50 was due in at the end of April to replenish the general reserves held.

It was noted that due to the parish council not owning any rental assets currently (other than the Parish Yard), that any significant or unexpected expenditure would most likely come from an existing earmarked reserve.

**Current banking arrangements and investments**

The current balances held were discussed and reviewed, giving consideration to income due and expenditure projected in the upcoming months, and to ensure a balanced portfolio of instant access, short-term and longer-term investments.

The following to be proposed to Full Council at the 14th May meeting.

1. **Lloyds Current Account** – to move £35,000 into a Redwood 95 Day Notice account (currently 3.85%).
2. **Redwood 1Yr FTD** – to move the capital and interest (£30,000 + £1,275) into a new Redwood 1 Yr Bond (currently 3.90%) when the current bond matures on 21/05/2026.
3. **Investment rates** – agreement to be sought also, that should the rate change between approval and applying for the account, that an investment for the same amount, for a comparable account, be opened instead, subject to approval by the Finance Committee.
4. **Delegation** – it was proposed that the Financial Regulations and Finance Committee Terms of Reference be amended to enable the committee to have delegated authority to invest / transfer funds within the scope of the council’s Investment Strategy and Reserves Management Policy. Clerk to review documents and present drafts to council for approval.

**F/06/26** **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds**

To review latest HDC CIL report, CIL spending deadlines report, current funds held and propose any expenditure in line with guidelines.

It was noted that the HDC CIL reports reflect the CIL situation up to the financial year end 30th April 2025, therefore the current CIL funds held table is the predicted situation to the end of 30th April 2026.

**1. CIL receipts for DC/24/1081 (DC/22/0372) Chanctonbury Nurseries**

It was noted that the final CIL receipt for £32,691.77 will be received in April 2026. It was proposed that the amount be transferred to an EMR.

**2. CIL expenditure – spending deadline October 2026**

Of the remaining £4,388.15, £1,200 is allocated to labour costs for previously agreed fencing works at the Nature Trail dry balancing pond. It was proposed that the remaining £3,368.15 be used for the improvement of assets on the London Road, to include the refurbishment of 7 benches and the metal bins.

It was noted that there was previous agreement that the funds could be used for funding the Youth Worker and therefore a further review of the CIL funds would be undertaken at the next Finance Committee meeting.

Proposals to be presented to Full Council at the 14th May meeting.

Amount	Spend deadline	Allocated	Where held
£0	26/10/2025	£2179.31 -£500 Parish Yard fence -£1679.31 Skatepark refurb	Parish Council EMR
£0	26/04/2026	£263.88 -£263.88 Skatepark refurb	Parish Council EMR
£4,388.15 remaining	25/10/2026	£13,430.81 -£8256.81 Skatepark refurb -£785.85 Pond fence materials (Note £1,020 committed for fence labour costs)	Parish Council EMR
£32,691.78	17/04/2030	Funds to contribute towards delivery of policies in the ANP.	Parish Council EMR
<b>£37,079.93</b>	<b>TOTAL FUNDS CURRENTLY HELD</b>		
£32,691.77	16/04/2031	Funds to contribute towards delivery of policies in the ANP.	Due Apr 2026 – transfer to EMR
<b>£69,771.70</b>	<b>TOTAL PREDICTED FUNDS AT 30/04/2026</b>		

**F/07/26** **Section 106 funds**

To review latest HDC unspent s106 funds report and propose any expenditure in line with guidelines.

**1. Unspent s106 funds**

It was noted that £900 previously highlighted for a “transport infrastructure scheme which will improve access between the land and local amenities etc” had been reallocated to the WSCC A24 Horsham to Worthing scheme since the last report in January 2026.

£1,231 remains in the “Open Space, Sport and Recreation” allocation. It was discussed that this could be used to purchase an additional bench on the Nature Trail, to compliment the Snowdrop Bench installed in 2025.

**2. Release of Transport/Highways s106 funds**

HDC have confirmed that funds totalling £3,800, previously allocated by WSCC to a “Ashington VAS” scheme, have been reallocated towards a Speed Indicator Device (SID). Funds can be released against the purchase cost of the device and the first years running costs. Clerk will submit relevant documentation.

**3. Reallocation of unspent s106 funds**

Enquiries were made with regards to unspent “Sustainable Transport” funds of £60,699.74 that were previously allocated by WSCC to a Route Safety Scheme that didn’t progress. It was requested whether the funds could be reallocated to a Highways scheme in the village. WSCC have now confirmed they have allocated the funds to the A24 Worthing to Horsham Feasibility Scheme. It is noted that a further £900 has also been allocated to this scheme. Any substantial Highways works in the village would require a Community Highways Scheme application.

Amount	Spend deadline	Allocated	Type of use
£14,969.49	n/a	Parish Yard	Community Facilities
£1,231.00	n/a	No	Open Space, Sport and Recreation
<del>£900.00</del>	<del>n/a</del>	<del>No</del>	<del>Sustainable Transport</del>
<b>TOTAL - £16,200.49</b>			

F/08/26

**Income**

To review existing income streams and identify if any additional funds available.

**1. Parish Yard lease arrangement**

It was proposed to carry on with the lease at this time.

**2. Parish Yard rental**

It was proposed to increase the monthly rental by £5 to £140.

**3. Potential income streams**

Ongoing to identify potential income streams.

Proposals to be presented to Full Council at the 14th May meeting.

F/09/26

**Financial procedures and policies**

**1. Model Financial Regulations**

It was identified that it would be appropriate for the Open Spaces and Environment Committee to have delegated authority to make purchases for expenditure under the Landscaping and Open Spaces budget codes. Clerk will review the committee’s Terms of Reference and the Financial Regulations, and present to council for amendment and approval.

**2. Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP) [Practitioners’ Guide](#) for 2026/27 has been released.**

**3. CIL and S106 – procedure for allocation of funds**

The process for both were discussed and will be kept under review.

F/10/26	<p><b><u>Ashington in Bloom</u></b>  To discuss the following –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>To create an Ashington in Bloom Earmarked Reserve (EMR)</b></li> <li>2. <b>To transfer in monies from other EMRs as appropriate</b>  It was proposed to transfer £1,000 from the Community Funding EMR.</li> <li>3. <b>Sponsorship for the initiative</b>  £25 was proposed as a suggested donation (or multiples thereof).</li> <li>4. <b>Agreement to hold sponsorship funds</b>  Proposed any sponsorship received to be held in the dedicated EMR.</li> <li>5. <b>Approved spending process for those funds</b>  Expenditure to be approved by 3 members of the OS&amp;E Committee.</li> </ol> <p>Proposals to be presented to Full Council at the 14th May meeting.</p>
F/11/26	<p><b><u>Grants and Donations</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>To consider adopting a Grants and Donations Policy</b>  Clerk will draft the policy.  It was proposed that the existing “Grants” EMR be closed and added to the “Community Funding” EMR.</li> <li>2. <b>To consider a request from Ashington Musical Theatre Society (AMTS) for funding support</b>  Once the afore mentioned policy is in place, AMTS will be given the appropriate details to submit a request for funding.</li> </ol> <p>Proposals to be presented to Full Council at the 14th May meeting.</p>
<p><b><u>CONFIDENTIAL SESSION</u></b> - the Chairman proposed, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and in accordance with Standing Orders 3d, to exclude the press and public on the grounds that the confidential matters to be discussed under item <b>F/12/26</b> below would be prejudicial in the public interest.</p> <p>Seconded by Cllr Morris and <b>APPROVED</b> by all.</p> <p>Confidential session started at 9:35pm</p>	
F/12/26	<p><b><u>Parish Council Office</u></b>  To consider the offer of a lease for a room in the Ashington Community Centre for the purposes of a parish council office.</p> <p>The committee discussed the matter with regards to the financial aspect of the offer and the impact on the current and future years budgets. The findings will be passed to Full Council for consideration and a decision to be made.</p>

Meeting closed at 9:45pm

Signed: ..... Date: .....