PORLOCK PARISH COUNCIL

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Minutes of the Finance & HR Committee Meeting of Porlock Parish Council held at 6.00pm at the Old School Centre on Wednesday the 16 September 2026

Councillors Present: S Colson (Chair), D McCanlis and D Heath

Also present: No members of the public were present. The Clerk, J Jones, was also present.

Min Ref: **Action:**

Agenda

FH-2026-023 **1) Receive apologies for absence** (LGA 1972 s85 (1))

Apologies were received from Cllrs Vernon and Adlington.

FH-2026-024 **2) Resolve any declarations of interest and disclosable pecuniary interest dispensations**

No declarations of interest were received from members.

FH-2026-025 **3) Resolve items to be dealt with after the public, including press, have been excluded.**

No items were proposed.

FH-2026-026 **4) Resolve the minutes of the Finance & HR Committee meeting held on the 30 June 2026**

RESOLVED to adopt the draft minutes of the Finance & HR Committee meeting held on 30 June 2026. The minutes were signed by Cllr. S Colson

FH-2026-027 **5) Receive and note any Committee updates from the action log report**

FH-2026-017 - Job Role Evaluations - Include an appeals timeline. Update - Initial role reviews are underway with post holders and the Clerk. The next stage will be to review the draft role profiles with Cllr Vernon before presenting the final drafts to the Finance & HR Committee for recommendation.

FH-2025-027-16 - Pensions - Undertake a review of the Council's pension arrangements and produce a report outlining potential options and associated costs. Update - See item 7b.

FH-2025-022-12 - Banking - Undertake a review of the Council's banking arrangements and produce a report outlining potential options and associated costs with suitably rated banks. Update - See item 13.

FH-2025-019-9c - Asset register - review and obtain quotes for repainting and décor renewal at the OSC. Update – Ongoing.

FH-2025-019-9d - Asset Register - Create a budget proposal for office furniture replacements. Update – Ongoing.

FH-2025-019-9e - Asset register - review budget requirements for urgent repairs (Doverhay Toilets, Cemetery structures, Hawkcombe Shed). Update – Ongoing.

EA-2025-053 - Water refill units – Obtain keyholder contact information for the locations and provide it to the administration team. Update – Transferred to the Environment & Amenities Committee.

FH-2026-028 **6) Public participation**

There were no members of the public present.

FH-2026-029 **7) Review the working draft of the 2027-28 budget line by line and the committee's recommendations to Council on:**

The current working draft was prepared by the Clerk and the Finance & HR Chair following a thorough review of known operational and statutory requirements. It remains subject to key decisions by the Committee before being submitted to Council for its first review. The proposed increase for 2027-28 is approximately £30k, half of which relates to increased staffing costs arising from normal salary inflation, additional hours to meet operational needs and pensions. The remaining half comprises inflationary costs; increases in grounds maintenance and inspections; members' training and operational costs, assuming full membership following the May elections; and legal fees associated with Council's role in reviewing the Dovery Manor Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

The current budget does not reflect pressures on Earmarked Reserves or potential top-ups to meet future requirements. Nor does it reflect Somerset Council's potential withdrawal from non-statutory duties given its ongoing financial crisis, or potential changes to Council's membership and priorities from May 2027.

In addition, members' requests for known expenditure have been incorporated into the Earmarked Reserves forecast, subject to approval, to show the projected position if all requests were approved. The forecast excludes the currently projected income of £14k per year from sources such as car parks and donations, given its variability.

The Committee reviewed the current working draft and agreed the following amendments:

a) increases in proposed employee hours for 2027/28 and 2028/29

The proposed increases in staffing costs reflect hours currently worked without pay and known current and future resourcing requirements.

Increase the forecast staffing hours in the 2027-28 budget as follows:

i. Assets Officer: an additional 4 hours per week (16 hours per week in total).
ii. Memorial Officer: an additional 2 hours per week (14 hours per week in total).
iii. Library Officer: an additional 4.77 hours per week (14 hours per week in total).
iv. Caretaker: an additional 1.7 hours per week.

Additions to the forecast from 2028 onwards:

v. Library Assistant: an additional role of 17.5 hours per week.
vi. A resource pool of 3 hours.

b) employee pension provision

Option 2: Scalable 1:1 Matching Scheme to improve Council's investment in its employees and support retention, commencing with Tier 1 in 2027-28 and progressing annually to Tier 3 by 2029-30.

c) addition of data e-SIMs for council employees

No change to the current forecast of £300 per year. Provision for the current year is funded from the Emergency Plan Earmarked Reserves.

d) legal services increase to cover the potential transfer of Dovery Manor to a new CIO

An additional £3,000 is to be included in the 2027-28 budget. It was noted that the forecast provision for future years reduces to £2,000 in 2028 and £1,000 in 2029.

e) gardens and green spaces maintenance

No change to the proposed increases. The Committee discussed the challenges Council currently faces in finding a contractor to carry out the work and noted that directly employed staff may be required in future. The Environment & Amenities Committee will review this at its next meeting.

f) Doverhay & Old School Centre public toilets change of recommended minimum donation

Increase the recommended minimum donation to 50p. It was noted that this is not a budget line item but offers an opportunity to increase income.

g) Village Hall Parking change of recommended minimum donation

Increase the recommended minimum donation to £2. It was noted that this is not a budget line item but offers an opportunity to increase income.

h) Other identified items

Provision for noticeboards at the top of the OSC steps and at West End should be added to Earmarked Reserves. No other items were proposed, notwithstanding the unknown impact of Somerset Council's decision.

The Chair discussed general reserves with members, referring to Council's current policy of maintaining a sum approximately equal to its annual expenditure and no less than 50% of that figure. The reserve currently stands at £79,000, just above the current minimum requirement of £77,369, and is forecast to remain at that level at year end. On finalising the budget, Council will need to review its year-end reserve balance and resolve how to fund any shortfall to ensure that it continues to meet the minimum threshold.

The above adjustments are to be made to the current working draft of the 2027-28 budget and five-year forecasts for review by the Finance & HR Committee before it makes its recommendations to Council. **JJ**

FH-2026-030 **8) Identify and discuss current service obligations under Somerset Council and identify potential budget and forecast requirements**

The Clerk reported that, despite several requests, Somerset Council's devolution team had been unable to provide a list of services provided. The Committee discussed potential impacts on the operational budget arising from library services, street cleaning, the No. 10 bus service, signage, parking and open spaces.

The following provision was proposed for inclusion in the budget and forecasts:
£8k in 2027-28 to cover current services, followed by an additional £8k in each of 2028-2029 and 2029-2030 to build a fund for future devolved services.

FH-2026-031 **9) Review the working draft of the 5-year forecast 2028/29 – 2032/33 and the committee's recommendation to Council**

The Committee agreed the following amendments to the current forecasts:

i. Staffing: include the additional hours proposed in items 7a(i)–(vi).
ii. Pensions: reduce the forecast matching ratio from 2:1 to 1:1, with phased implementation over three years as proposed in item 7b.
iii. Grounds maintenance: no change to the current proposal.
iv. Dovery Manor: no change to the current proposal.
v. Devolved services: include the additional provision proposed in item 8.
vi. Apply a 5% inflationary increase across all other items.

The lifespan and performance of the Old School Centre's solar panels are to be reported to the Environment & Amenities Committee. **TA**

FH-2026-032 **10) Resolve maintaining general reserves at a minimum 50% of total expenditure and the committee's recommendation to Council**

RESOLVED.

FH-2026-033 **11) Resolve the independence and appointment of Parish and Town Audit Services as Council's internal auditor for year ending 2026/27 and quote of £320.00** (101/4041)

RESOLVED to recommend to Council that it confirm the independence of Parish and Town Audit Services and approve its appointment as internal auditor. It was noted that this resolution was in accordance with paragraph 4.11 of the Practitioners' Guide, which identifies an annual review of the internal auditor's independence as best practice.

FH-2026-034 **12) Resolve the following spend under the committee's delegate authority :**

a) **JFC Computers - Porlock Emergency Response domain - £30.00 per year** (101/4032 EMR 340)
b) **JFC Computers - Three additional HP Monitors** (101/4033 EMR 321)

RESOLVED.

FH-2026-035 **13) Resolve the Council's draft Banking Architecture, Policy and Financial Procedures and the committee's recommendation to council**

RESOLVED as amended.

FH-2026-036 **14) Resolve the Council's draft Training and Development Policy and the committee's recommendation to Council**

RESOLVED as amended.

Meeting extension 10 mins
RESOLVED.

FH-2026-037 **15) Receive the Clerk's Personal Development Plan**

RECEIVED.

FH-2026-038 **16) Resolve the RFO's attendance to the SLCC regional Finance Seminar in Salt Ash 26th November 2026 and subsequent expenses claim (Mileage & Sustenance)** (100/4050)

RESOLVED.

 Initials: _____ Date:_____

FH-2026-039 **17) Resolve for reasons of business continuity to recommend to Council access to the following accounts for the Assets and Memorials Officers**

- **a) Unity Bank - Current and Savings – Administration and payment requisitions only**
- **b) NatWest - Business Reserve – Administration only**
- **c) Lloyds Bank - Corporate Card – Administration only**

RESOLVED.

FH-2026-040 **18) Outstanding Items** (For awareness only)

- **a) Role Reviews & Evaluations**
- **b) Salary v hourly contracts for all staff**
- **c) Review 5 years**
- **d) Revised Appraisal Form (Revised)**
- **e) Grievance and Disciplinary Policy 2023**
- **f) Risk Strategy Policy & Register**
- **g) Publication Scheme**
- **a) Bank Account Reviews**
- **b) Future funding of Porlock Youth Club 2028/29 onwards**
- **h) FH-2025-019-9c Asset register - review and obtain quotes for repainting and décor renewal at the OSC.**
- **i) FH-2025-019-9d Asset Register - create budget proposal for office furniture replacements.**
- **j) FH-2025-019-9e Asset register - review budget requirements for urgent repairs**

Outstanding items were noted.

FH-2026-041 **19) Any other business** (For information only)

No other items were raised.

FH-2026-042 **20) Date of the next scheduled meeting of the Finance & HR committee**

6 January 2027, 6pm at the Old School Centre, Porlock

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

Initials: _____ Date:_____