The Minutes of the Finance Committee (FinCom)
held on Tuesday 9th December 2025

1) **In attendance**: Cllr J Pratt (JP), Cllr G Smith (GS), Cllr A Allday (AA) and Mr C Trotman (CT), RFO. Apologies: Mrs V Oliveri (VO), Parish Clerk
2) **Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on 11th November 2025** – had been approved by those present as a true and accurate record at the 19th November Parish Council (PC) meeting.
3) **Matters arising**: None
4) **Tree Surgery bids and contracting**: Four firms had been sent invitations to bid by GS on behalf of Cllr Rod Blackman (RB), based on the scope of work determined by the JAG survey which had mapped and geo-referenced individual trees. RB will prepare a tabular comparison of bids, preferably before the January 2026 PC meeting. Evaluation will need to take account of the Whitebeam removed from corner of Elm Grove/Breakspeare House.
5) **Meteor water level gauge website failure**: CT explained that although the public website was inactive, data were still accessible through the PC customer access code. As delegated Cllr responsible, RB would be requested to follow up with Meteor, especially to determine whether billing and payments were up to date.
6) **Village Green/recreation Ground car park**

    a. **Confirmation of relevance of bids:** Following instructions received under PC Minute 25/188 7. of 19/11/2025, AA reported he had completed his 'due diligence' investigations of the provider of the lowest quotation received and shared his findings. It was agreed that it was unrealistic to continue considering the quotation and that the remaining three bids remained eligible.

    b. **Technical compliance of bids:** AA had prepared a table itemizing comparison of the four quotes for compatibility with the Specifications. Of the three remaining eligible bids, all had minor inconsistencies. It was noted that in one or more cases the following matters needed to be addressed:
        i. How are they planning to deal with drainage so that excess water drains towards Church Road
        ii. Do they envisage a need for any form of drainage in front of the gable end of the sports pavilion
        iii. No mention of markings for the disabled bays, would that be an extra cost
        iv. Can they confirm depths for all layers which match our requirement

    c. **Selection of preferred offer:** It was noted that two bids were significantly lower than the other bid. Mindful of the need to complete the project by the Cotswolds National Landscape) (CNL; donor) deadline 31/03/2026, it was agreed that both providers should be asked to clarify their bid as to the foregoing questions b. i. to iv. and to the following:
        i. If selected how quickly can they start the job and how long would the job take
        ii. If we wanted the material being removed to be deposited at local approved site, would that reduce the cost at all (as opposed to disposal at a landfill site or equivalent)

    d. **Needs and plans for negotiation:** It was agreed that negotiation with a preferred provider would be a PC decision at the 21/01/2026 meeting and depend on the outcome of investigations to be undertaken by AA as to b. and c. above and possible informal technical advice that GS might be able to obtain. There could be a need for FinCom and/or the PC to meet on this matter earlier.

    e. **Engagement with National Lottery and other possible donors:** It was considered prudent to estimate the overall project cost as some £40,000 excluding VAT. CNL's offer was £10,000. Milton Sports Association (MSA) had offered £10,000 or up to one third of the project cost, whichever the lesser. There was no new information on whether Milton Welfare Trust (MWT) could contemplate matching a conditional offer of funding 3.5% of project cost (excl. VAT) from Milton Allotments and Recreation Charity (MARC) – *see FinCom AOB 21/08/2025*. It was also concluded that preparation of a bid to the National Lottery had been seriously delayed due to

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unforeseen PC personnel circumstances and further work on this would be impractical for meeting the project completion deadline set by CNL. In order to determine whether the PC could contribute to the project without (A) depleting reserves and (B) requiring increase in the 2026 - 27 householders' Precept, CT explained that he expected to complete draft accounts for the first three quarters of the PC Financial Year ending 31/12/2025 in early January 2026. It was concluded to be imprudent to forecast a PC contribution to the project at present and therefore agreed that JP should assist Cllr Peter Rawlins (PR) to prepare and submit a letter of request for £20,000 to one or more benefactors explaining the pressure to complete the project within the deadline set by CNL. JP would first circulate a draft. The letter needs to be sent as soon as possible.

7) **AOB:**

a. TOE grant for fencing in Sarah's Meadow: GS reported that invoices for work undertaken and paid for by the PC will be sent to Trust for Oxfordshire Environment (TOE) for reimbursement. TOE had agreed in principle that, since project implementation had a total cost some £400 below the amount of the grant, the amount saved could be spent by the PC on signage that includes recognition of TOE's contribution. GS is seeking quotations from signage providers and anticipates more than £400 will be required to complete satisfactory design, mounting and installation. He will share his findings with the PC.

b. Employees: *see separate confidential Minute.*

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