

PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL



Prescot Town Hall, 1 Warrington Road, Prescot, Merseyside. L34 5QX

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Dated this 15th Day of June 2023

To the Members of Finance, Policy and Human Resources Committee

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED TO ATTEND
An Ordinary Meeting of
Finance, Policy and Human Resources Committee
to be held on Thursday 22nd June 2023

at

Prescot Town Hall

commencing at 6.00 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Spencer', written in a cursive style.

Alex Spencer
TOWN CLERK

A G E N D A

1.	<p>ELECTION OF CHAIR OF COMMITTEE</p> <p>To receive nominations for and AGREE the position of Chair of Finance, Policy and Human Resources Committee for 2023/24.</p>	Verbal
2.	<p>ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF COMMITTEE</p> <p>To receive nominations for and AGREE the position of Vice-Chair of Finance, Policy and Human Resources Committee for 2023/24.</p>	Verbal
3.	<p>TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES</p> <p>To receive apologies of absence from committee members.</p>	Verbal
4.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p><i>In accordance with Standing Order 4.G.ii, members are invited to indicate any interests they may have in relation to items on the agenda for the meeting.</i></p>	Verbal
5.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING</p> <p>To APPROVE AND SIGN the minutes of Finance, Policy and HR Committee Meeting held on Thursday 19th January 2023 as a true and accurate record of the business transacted.</p>	Pages 4 to 9
6.	<p>MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT</p> <p>Members are asked to CONSIDER the report and APPROVE the position to date.</p>	Pages 10 to 11
7.	<p>ORDERS AND PAYMENTS AUTHORISATION</p> <p>Members are asked to CONSIDER and APPROVE the enclosed list of payments.</p>	Pages 12 to 13
8.	<p>FACILITIES BOOKINGS</p> <p>Members are asked to NOTE the Master Booking Sheet to date.</p>	Verbal
9.	<p>ANNUAL RETURN 2022/23</p> <p>Members are asked to CONSIDER the report and APPROVE the recommendations therein.</p>	Pages 14 to 16

10.	<p>REVIEW OF COMMUNITY GRANT GUIDANCE NOTES AND GRANT CRITERIA 2023</p> <p>Members are asked to <u>CONSIDER</u> the report and <u>APPROVE</u> the recommendations therein.</p>	<p>Pages 17 to 26</p>
11.	<p>PROPOSED GRITTING AND SNOW CLEARANCE POLICY 2023 (POST INSURANCE ADVICE)</p> <p>Members are asked to <u>CONSIDER</u> the report and <u>APPROVE</u> the recommendations therein.</p>	<p>Pages 27 to 34</p>
12	<p>RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>By virtue of Standing Order 3D, that members of the press and public be excluded for the remainder of the meeting given the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons.</p>	
13	<p>TOWN CLERK – UPDATE ON CILCA QUALIFICATION</p> <p>Members are asked to <u>CONSIDER</u> the report and <u>APPROVE</u> the recommendations therein.</p>	<p>Pages 35 to 37</p>



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING

22nd JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:

Minutes of Previous Committee Meetings

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT:

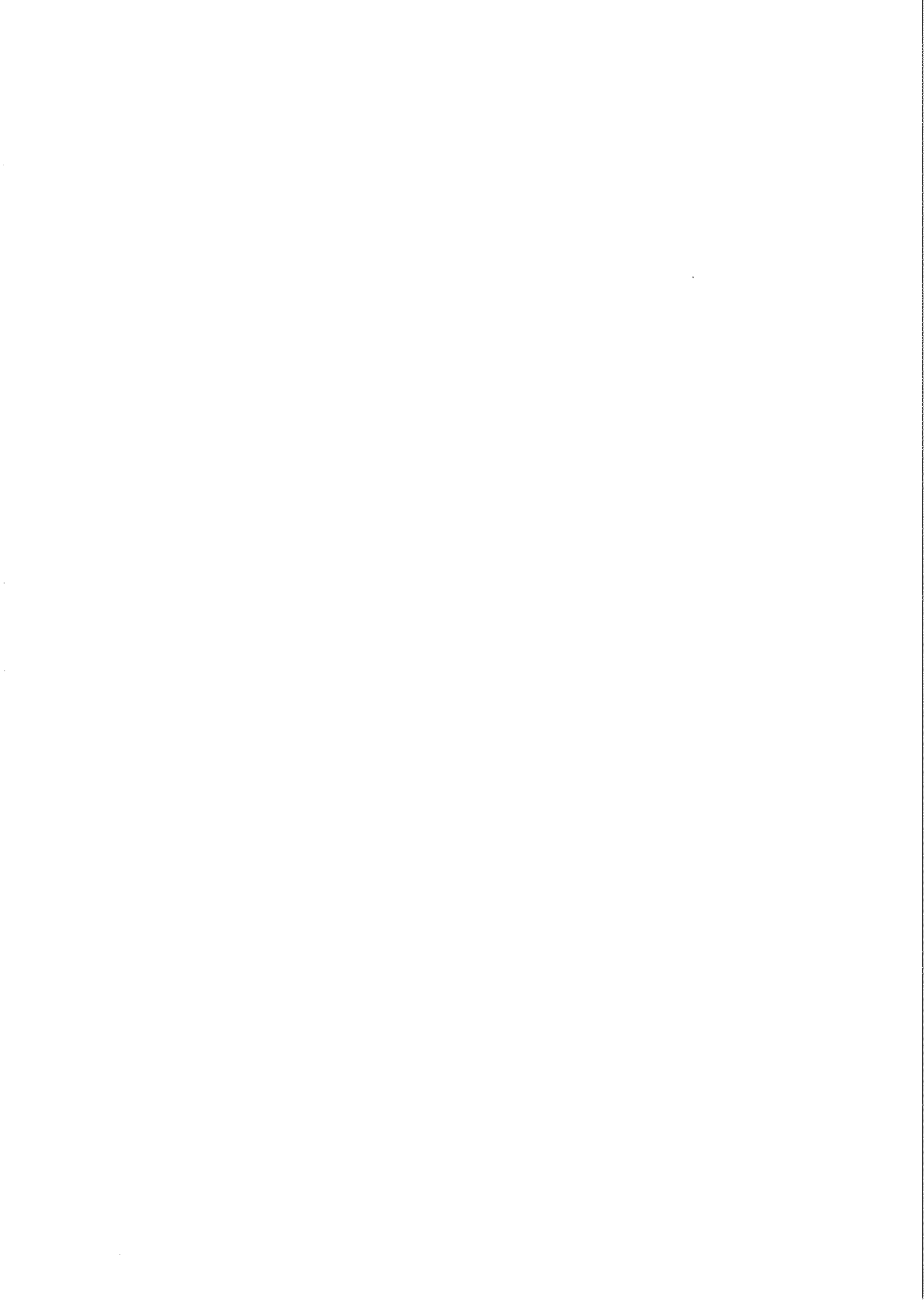
As members are aware they are required to agree the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate record of the business transacted at that meeting.

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To **AGREE** the minutes of the previous committee meetings as true and accurate.

REPORTS PREPARED BY:

Alex Spencer - Town Clerk



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

A meeting of the **FINANCE POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE** for the **TOWN OF PRESCOT** was held on **THURSDAY 19th JANUARY 2023** in the **PRESCOT TOWN HALL**, commencing at **6:00P.M.**

ELECTED MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillors J. Burke, M. Burke, C. Krelle, T. Large, T. Murray, I. Smith, T. Smith,
G. Wickens

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

A. Spencer (Town Clerk)
L. Sephton (Deputy Town Clerk)

18. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr L. Rigby.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

20. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COMMITTEE MEETING

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** that:-

1. The minutes of the Finance, Policy and Human Resources Committee held on 21st July 2022 be agreed as a true and accurate record of the business transacted and signed by the Chair.
2. The minutes of the Finance, Policy and Human Resources Committee held on 21st December 2022 be noted and signed by the Chair.

21. MONTHLY BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT

The Town Clerk presented monthly budget monitoring up to the end of December 2022.

The Town Clerk highlighted the following areas of expenditure for Members consideration:-

- a. The high level of expenditure against Miscellaneous Expenditure under Cost Centre Two related to play equipment upgrades at Brown's Field, and was Veolia Grant Funds transferred to Knowsley Council following completion of works.
- b. There was an outstanding debt of £1,520.10 relating to income from the bar.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** the budget monitoring statement up to December 2022.
2. **APPROVE** that for future meetings of this committee, that the Town Clerk provides a narrative explaining budget/expenditure against each cost centre based on the budget monitoring summary.

22. ORDERS AND PAYMENT AUTHORISATION

The Town Clerk presented orders and payments up to the 31st December 2022.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** the payment list as presented by the Town Clerk

23. FACILITIES BOOKINGS

The Town Clerk provided members with a list of bookings and current income up to 31st December 2022.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** the bookings list as presented by the Town Clerk

24. TOWN CLERK PERFORMANCE REVIEW & CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning the establishment of an Appraisal Committee to complete a performance review of the Town Clerk, in addition to opportunities for continuous professional development.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** that Prescot Town Council becomes a member of the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC) with immediate effect and that the annual subscription to SLCC is paid in full - membership running from January 2023 to January 2024.
2. **APPROVE** that Prescot Town Council will continue to be a subscribing member to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) for the remainder of the 2022/23 financial year, but to cease membership from April 2023.
3. **APPROVE** the establishment of an Appraisal Committee comprised of Councillors J. Burke, M. Burke, P. Cook, C Krelle and T. Murray to complete a performance review of the Town Clerk at the earliest opportunity. Cllr I. Smith is to act as reserve member.

4. **REQUEST** that the Town Clerk provides details of his remaining annual leave to arrange a date on which to complete his performance review.

25. **TOWN CLERK REQUEST TO ATTEND THE SOCIETY FOR LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS PRACTITIONERS' CONFERENCE IN FEBRUARY 2023**

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning his request to attendance the Society for Local Council Clerks Practitioners Conference in February 2023.

It was **RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** that requests by the Town Clerk to attend conferences would be reviewed upon him successfully completing the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)
2. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk completes CiLCA through the SLCC at the earliest opportunity and that progress is reported back to Members.

26. **PROPOSED GRITTING AND SNOW CLEARANCE POLICY 2023**

Members considered the Proposed Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy 2023.

Members discussed at length whether it was better for Council to be active in trying to clear snow and ice, or whether clearing should not be undertaken in case such works makes conditions worse.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **DEFER** the adoption of Proposed Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy 2023 until the next meeting of Finance, Policy & HR Committee pending the receipt of further advice from insurers/legal.
2. **APPROVE** the purchase of disabled bay signs to be mounted on railings facing disabled bays within the car park of Prescott Town Hall.

27. **RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. By virtue of Standing Order 3D, exclude members of the press and public for the remainder of the meeting given the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons.

28. APPOINTMENT TO PROVIDE LEGAL SERVICES

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk, who, following committee resolution in July 2022, had obtained costs from several legal firms to provide legal services to Council.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk writes to Caroline Holmes of Knowsley Council regarding the leases for Brown's Field and Eaton Street Park between Prescot Town Council and Knowsley Council, concerning the removal of the 3 month break-off clause therein.
2. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk contacts Howard Nulty of St Helens Law to discuss the provision of legal services and establishing mediation sessions at Prescot Town Hall.

29. BAR CONCESSION REVIEW – JANUARY 2023

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning a review of the Bar Concession to date.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk writes to Mr R Whalley to demand payment of the £1,520.10 currently owed to council.
2. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk explores options for debt recovery.
3. **APPROVE** that a bar tendering exercise commences at the earliest opportunity with a view to it being completed before the start of the 2023/24 financial year.
4. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk clarifies with Mr R Whalley that he will honour two bookings for the remainder of the 2022/23 financial year, and that if this is not the case, arrangements are put in place to provide the cover required.
5. **APPROVE** that thanks be extended to Mr R Whalley for work he has done to date for providing a bar since 2014.

30. BAR CONCESSION TENDER 2023

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning the commencement of a Bar Concession Tender in January 2023, with a view to awarding the concession by 20th March 2023.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** a bar concessionaire model (which is currently operation), and that this model is reflected in all tender documentation with a 3 year contract to be reviewed after 2 years. It was also **RESOLVED** that a percentage of the gross profit of the concessionaire would be taken.
2. **APPROVE** timescales, formulas and weightings as stated within tender Request for Quotation Document.
3. **APPROVE** the suggested tender publication methods as stated within the report.

31. STAFF VACANCY – PART-TIME CLEANER / CARETAKER

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk and referred to previous job descriptions, person specifications and salaries for the position of Part-Time Caretaker / Cleaner.

It was **UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED** to:-

1. **APPROVE** the establishment of 1 x Part Time Post at 10 Hours, and 1 x Casual Post
2. **APPROVE** that the Town Clerk be delegated to produce Job Descriptions, Person Specifications and Salaries for each post.

The meeting closed at 8.58 p.m.

Dated: 22nd June 2023

**Signed:.....
(Chair of Finance Policy and Human
Resources Committee)**



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING

22nd JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:

Budget Monitoring Statement – Up to May 2023

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT:

Each year the Town Council levy a Precept on the residents on the Town. This precept is then expended by the Town Council for the benefit of residents over the course of the year.

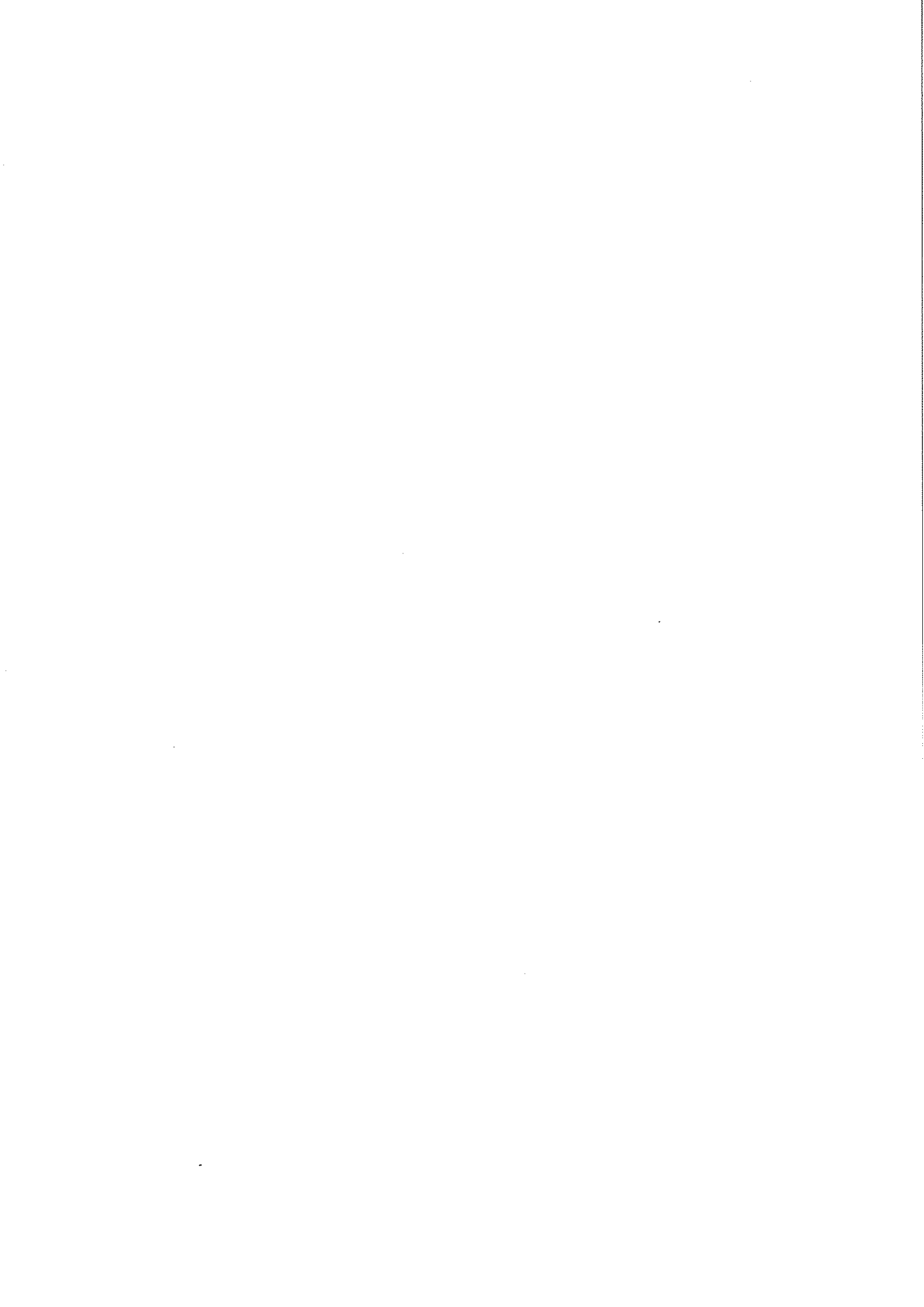
In addition to the Precept the Town Council also derive an income from the operation of the Town Hall and various events.

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide Members with details of the income received and expenditure incurred to date along with a forecast for the remainder of the financial year.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

Alex Spencer - Town Clerk



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING

22nd JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:

Orders and Payment Authorisation

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT:

In accordance with the requirements of Financial Regulations 4.1 and 4.8 the responsible financial officer is required to submit for approval a list of all receipts and payments to date.

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To provide Members with details of all payments to date not previously approved

REPORTS PREPARED BY:

Alex Spencer - Town Clerk



Prescot Town Council

Payment List Quarter 1 - April to June 2023

Approval Date	Payment Voucher No.	Supplier	Description	Date Cleared Bank Account	Gross
19/04/2023	14	CF Corporate Finance	Printer Lease Charge	03/04/2023	77.40
19/04/2023	15	Prism Solutions	Telephones	03/04/2023	168.63
04/04/2023	N/A	HSBC	Total Charges	04/04/2023	19.42
11/04/2023	1	KMBC	Business Rates - Browns Field	11/04/2023	230.54
11/04/2023	2	KMBC	Business Rates - Town Hall	11/04/2023	6,418.39
11/04/2023	3	KMBC	Premises Licence for Prescot Town Hall	11/04/2023	180.00
11/04/2023	4	Lyreco	Office Supplies and Cleaning Products	11/04/2023	358.69
11/04/2023	5	KMBC	HR & Employees Services SLA Charge from 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024	11/04/2023	1,280.40
11/04/2023	7	WaterPlus	Water and Wastewater Bill 01/03/2023 - 31/03/2023 (Browns Field)	11/04/2023	8.58
11/04/2023	8	WaterPlus	Water and Wastewater Bill 03/03/2023 - 02/04/2023 (Eaton Street)	11/04/2023	11.50
11/04/2023	9	Xtreme	Deposit for hire of Climbing Wall, Airstreams and Bungee Trampoline - Prescot Carnival 2023	11/04/2023	437.50
12/04/2023	10	All Services 4 U Ltd	Fix lock/mechanism/new gearbox - Eaton Street Pavilion Doors	12/04/2023	300.00
13/04/2023	11	Lumalite	Installation of year 3 of 3 year contract for festive lighting	13/04/2023	652.80
14/04/2023	12	SSE	Gas Bill 01/03/2023 - 31/03/2023	14/04/2023	173.13
14/04/2023	13	ASL	Printing & Photocopying	14/04/2023	153.28
14/04/2023	6	ASL	Printing & Photocopying	14/04/2023	78.91
19/04/2023	17	DRAX	Electricity Bill 01/03/2023 - 31/03/2023 (Town Hall)	19/04/2023	512.94
20/04/2023	18	B&M Waste Services	Bin Collection for March 2023	20/04/2023	232.84
25/04/2023	20	Prism Solutions	IT Services	25/04/2023	260.85
26/04/2023	16	PSD Vehicle Rental	Hire of Van for Prescot Carnival 2023	26/04/2023	605.00
28/04/2023	21	Peninsula Business	Health & Safety Training Package	28/04/2023	311.58
N/A	N/A	HSBC	Internet Transfer	28/04/2023	300,000.00
03/05/2023	22	Lyreco	Cleaning Products and Office Equipment	02/05/2023	95.99
02/05/2023	37	Prism Solutions	Telephones	02/05/2023	168.62
03/05/2023	19	WaterPlus	Water and Wastewater Bill 14/03/2023 - 13/04/2023 (Town Hall)	03/05/2023	174.80
03/05/2023	23	Algar Professional Cleaning Service	Clean out gutters at Eaton Street Park	03/05/2023	55.00
04/05/2023	26	KMBC	TENS Licence for Katie Segar on 17/06/2023	04/05/2023	21.00
04/05/2023	25	KMBC	TENS Licence for Prescot Carnival on 25/08/2023	04/05/2023	21.00
04/05/2023	24	WaterPlus	Water and Wastewater Bill 01/04/2023 - 30/04/2023 (Browns Field)	04/05/2023	10.78
05/05/2023	N/A	HSBC	Total Charges	05/05/2023	22.95
09/05/2023	27	WaterPlus	Water and Wastewater Bill 03/04/2023 - 02/05/2023 (Eaton Street)	09/05/2023	13.95
10/05/2023	30	SHL Solicitors	Reading lease and drafting responses to queries	10/05/2023	300.00
10/05/2023	29	Carequick	Investigating fault on the AC	10/05/2023	175.20
09/05/2023	28	SSE	Gas Bill 01/04/2023 - 30/04/2023 (Town Hall)	10/05/2023	133.06
10/05/2023	38	KMBC	PTC Salaries	10/05/2023	12,503.56
11/05/2023	31	ASL	Printing & Photocopying	15/05/2023	20.95
16/05/2023	32	Initial	Service Period 23/05/2023 - 22/05/2023	16/05/2023	910.09
16/05/2023	33	Claire Whalley	Reimbursement of Security Bond	16/05/2023	87.50
17/05/2023	34	WaterPlus	Water and Wastewater Bill 14/04/2023 - 13/05/2023 (Town Hall)	17/05/2023	171.22
18/05/2023	35	KMBC	Change of designated premises supervisor	18/05/2023	23.00
18/05/2023	36	VSP Printing	2500 Carnival leaflets and 50 A4 posters	18/05/2023	95.00
19/05/2023	41	SLCC	Qualification Fee - Alex Spencer	19/05/2023	450.00
22/05/2023	39	Nickys Laundry	Laundry	22/05/2023	132.50
22/05/2023	40	Samantha Martin	Reimbursement of Security Bond	22/05/2023	50.00
22/05/2023	46	DRAX	Electricity Bill 01/04/2023 - 30/04/2023 (Town Hall)	22/05/2023	370.47
22/05/2023	47	B&M Waste Services	Bin Collection for April 2023	22/05/2023	179.24
23/05/2023	42	Tracey Murray	Mayoral Allowance	23/05/2023	850.00
24/05/2023	48	KMBC	PTC Salaries	24/05/2023	12,415.65
25/05/2023	43	Amazon	300 pcs sealing wax beads	25/05/2023	10.97
25/05/2023	44	Prescot Festival	Contribution towards Prescot Festival	25/05/2023	1,000.00
25/05/2023	49	Prism Solutions	IT Services	25/05/2023	250.85
31/05/2023	53	Peninsula Business	Health & Safety Training Package	31/05/2023	311.58

Quarterly Total 343,488.31

Actual Running Total 343,488.31

Less VAT 1,277.62

Less Transfers 300,000.00

Less Cash and Credit Card Payments from Bank -

Plus actual Cash and Credit Card Payments 31.53

Deposit Acc Bnk Charges 939.19

Less unrepresented payments 5,000.00

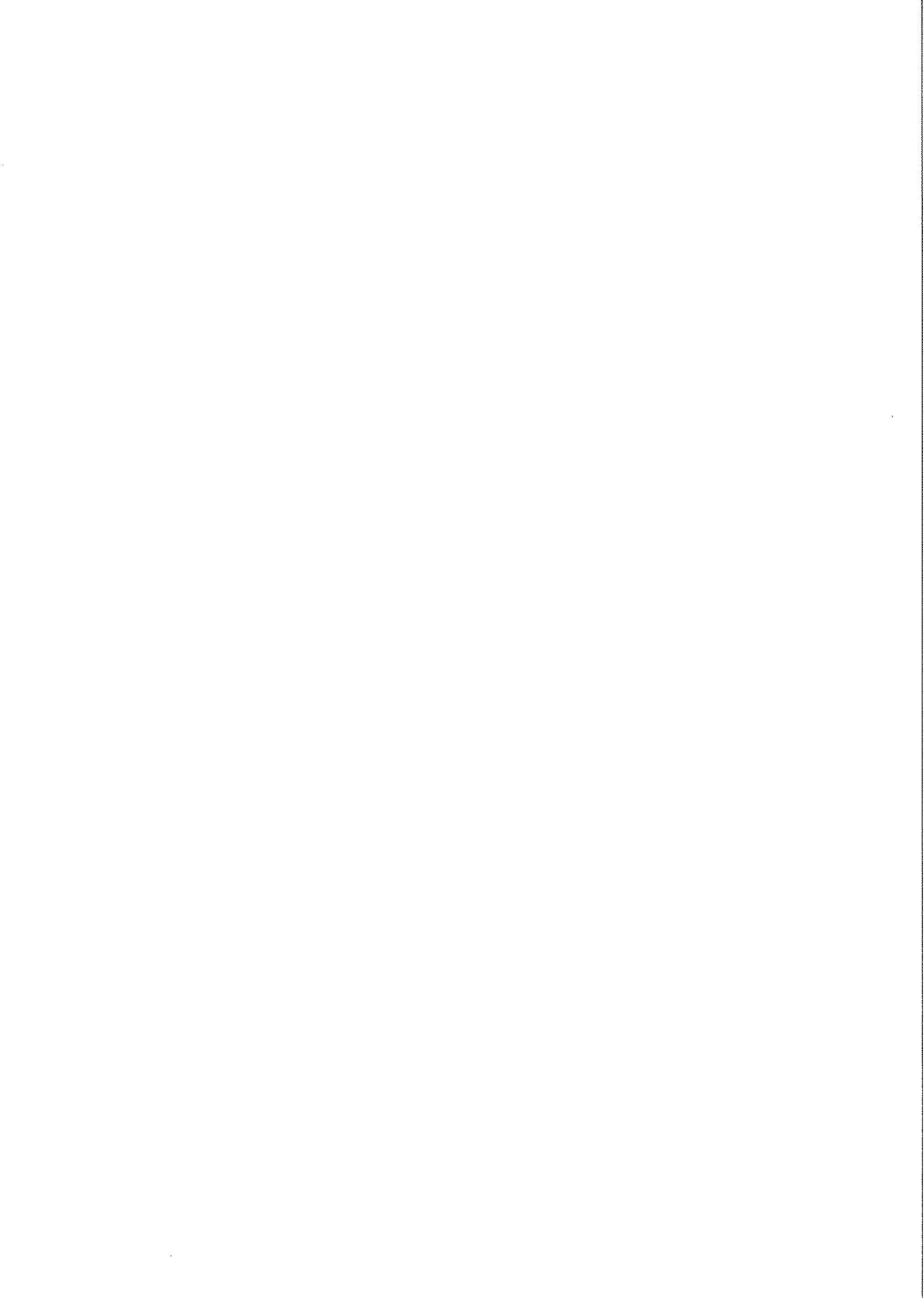
Less Ye Creditors -

Actual Total 48,181.41

Difference to Forecast -

Additional Payments upto meeting date

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PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE GENERAL PURPOSE AND HUMAN
RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
22nd JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE

Annual Return 2022/23

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

As members are aware Prescot Town Council are required under the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015 to provide an annual return detailing the Town Council's financial position. The annual return must then be provided to the external auditor no later than 2nd July 2023.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report provides Members with section 2 of the Annual Return for approval prior to submission to the Council's external auditors.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

Alex Spencer – Town Clerk

PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Return 2022/23

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As members are aware Prescott Town Council is required under the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015 to provide an annual return detailing the Town Council's financial position. The annual return must then be provided to the external auditor no later than 2nd July 2023.

2. THE ANNUAL RETURN

- 2.1 The Annual Return (for the Year Ended 31st March 2023) comprises of three sections and an internal audit certificate. The Town Council are required to approve sections 1 and 2 for submission to the external auditor.
- 2.2 As Responsible Financial Officer the Annual Return is completed and signed by the Town Clerk prior to Council approval.
- 2.3 Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement must be agreed in advance of the Annual Return and has been submitted to Council for approval at its meeting in May 2023. Section 2 remains to be approved by Council but is submitted to Finance General Purpose and Human Resources Committee as a courtesy with Committee having monitored the council budgets throughout the year. Section 2 is provided as appendix 1.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Under the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015, Members are asked to:
1. Consider the information contained within the annual return section 2 and resolve to submit the Annual Return to Full Council for approval, before submission to the external auditor.
 2. Note the contents of the report.

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 for

PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2022 £	31 March 2023 £	
1. Balances brought forward	£214,377	£276,421	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	£307,234	£326,171	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	£74,088	£75,017	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	£143,583	£152,215	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	£34,010	£34,010	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	£141,686	£141,530	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	£276,421	£349,854	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	£281,810	£338,476	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	£840,236	£845,646	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	£325,253	£325,253	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)				<i>The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2023 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval



Date

15/05/2023

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE POLICY & HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING

22nd JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:

Review of Community Grant Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria
2023

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

At a meeting of Full Council in January 2023, Members resolved that a review of Council's Community Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria be completed by the Town Clerk; and that a report be produced for Members' consideration as to whether amendment(s) were necessary.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To outline Council's existing Community Grant Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria, demonstrate how it operated during 2022/23 and where appropriate recommend amendments where necessary.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

Alex Spencer – Town Clerk



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

Review of Community Grant Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At a meeting of Full Council in January 2023, Members resolved that the Town Clerk reviewed Council's Community Fund Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria; and that a report be presented for Members' consideration as to whether amendments were necessary.
- 1.2 Since this meeting and as reported to Full Council in May 2023, Council's internal audit for 2022/23 has been completed.
- 1.3 As part of this audit, the internal auditor focussed heavily upon Community Grants in terms of policy, processing applications, Member approval and officer follow-up to obtain evidence of expenditure.
- 1.4 A copy of council's 2022/23 internal audit report is attached for Members' consideration, in addition to Council's existing Community Fund Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 Council operates a community fund through S.137 of the Local Government Act 1972, which empowers local councils to spend up to a prescribed amount in any one year for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area or part of them.
- 2.2 At the time of writing, Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria are clear insofar as it stipulates that the "*Community Fund is open to any community, voluntary, charitable or non-profit making organisation based in Prescot or predominately serving the Prescot community.*"
- 2.3 Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria further stipulates:-
 - Funding is to a maximum level of £500.00.
 - Only one application per organisation per year is permitted.
 - Submission of a constitution, bank statement and evidence of benefit to Prescot residents is required.
 - Limitations of the fund i.e. it cannot be used for retrospective expenditure.
 - (As stated on Grant Application Form but not on Guidance Notes or Grant Criteria) It is necessary for the successful applicant to submit evidence of expenditure no later than three months after project completion.

3. OPERATION OF COMMUNITY FUND DURING 2022/23

- 3.1 As part of the budget setting process for 2022/23, Members resolved an allocation of £9,000.00 to the Community Fund.
- 3.2 During 2022/23, a total of 11 community fund applications were received – all of which were approved by members.
- 3.3 Total expenditure against the community fund was £4,818.00; resulting in an underspend of £4,182.00.
- 3.4 Based on 11 successful applications, the average amount of funding awarded to each organisation was £438.01.
- 3.5 10 of 11 successful applications could be described *as an organisation based in Prescot*, with a single organisation being described *as predominately serving the Prescot Community*.
- 3.6 8 of 11 successful applications have provided evidence of expenditure within the stipulated 3-month submission period. However, 3 of those who were successful are still to submit evidence of expenditure despite being contacted by officers.
- 3.7 Within Council’s 2022/23 Internal Audit Report, reference was made to two organisations who were awarded Community Funding, yet had considerable funds within their respective bank accounts.

At the time of writing, Council’s Community Fund Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria does not stipulate a minimum or maximum level of money which must be in a bank account before the application is put forward for Members’ consideration. Instead, Members delegate to the judgement of officers as to whether the application should proceed for their consideration at Full Council.

4. OUTCOME OF REVIEW

- 4.1 Having completed his review, the Town Clerk has focussed on specific issues relating to Community Fund Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria and has set out recommendations for Members’ consideration.

Issue	Options / Amendment(s) Necessary
Location / Serving Community	<p>At the time of writing, having a community fund which is open to <i>any community, voluntary, charitable or non-profit making organisation based in Prescot or predominately serving the Prescot community</i>, gives flexibility to award funding to organisations both within and outside of the Prescot boundary.</p> <p>Although the majority of successful applicants during 2022/23 were based in Prescot (10); it is advantageous to have flexibility to award to organisation not within the boundary yet benefitting Prescot residents.</p> <p>Where the latter applies, it seems logical that officers speak to the applicant to determine exactly how many Prescot residents are benefiting from the work of the organisation – and that this</p>

Issue	Options / Amendment(s) Necessary
	<p>information is stated to Members in consideration of the application overall.</p> <p>Recommendation(s): That there is no amendment to Community Funding Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria regarding location / serving Prescot Residents.</p> <p>Where the latter applies, officers determine the number of Prescot residents benefiting from the organisation before the application is tabled to Full Council to inform Members at the meeting.</p>
Level of Funding Available	<p>At the time of writing, the maximum level of funding which can be applied for is £500.00, and based on 2022/23, across 11 applications the average amount awarded was £438.01.</p> <p>Having a “cap” on the level of funding which can be awarded gives certainty both to Council and the applicant.</p> <p>Although it is disappointing that all community funding was not accessed during 2022/23, perhaps more effective promotion of the community fund itself would achieve this.</p> <p>Recommendations(s): That there is no amendment to Community Funding Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria regarding the level of funding which can be awarded, although officers try to better promote the fund during 2023/24.</p>
One Application Per Year	<p>At the time of writing, eligible organisations can make one application per year.</p> <p>This approach is advantageous insofar as it enables the organisation to apply for funds to support their work and by only permitting a single application during the year, ensures the fund is not abused.</p> <p>Although it is disappointing that the fund as a whole was not completely utilised during 2022/23, to open it up to multiple applications by a single organisation, would give a potential for abuse and may lead to the exclusion of other organisation seeking funding.</p> <p>Having reviewed the operation of the fund over 3 years, some organisations do access funding “year in, year out” with community funding effectively becoming part of their revenue stream. However, these types of organisations have few members and have low funds within their accounts.</p> <p>Recommendation(s) That there is no amendment to Community Grant Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria and we continue to operate a policy of one application per year per organisation.</p>

Issue	Options / Amendment(s) Necessary
	<p>Where an organisation is makes an application “year in, year out” that Members are informed of this at the meeting of Full Council, but that the application is determined on its merits.</p>
<p>Officer processing application and level of funds within account of organisation.</p>	<p>It is right and proper that officers continue to review applications and get as much information as possible prior to the application being presented to members; and it was encouraging that the Internal Auditor was satisfied that this role was being performed well during 2022/23.</p> <p>In the first instance, officers should continue to ensure that eligibility criteria is satisfied.</p> <p>Upon the submission of the organisation’s constitution and bank details, officers should continue to interrogate thoroughly.</p> <p>With regards to the latter, officers should receive the most recent up-to-date bank statement to determine the organisations financial status and where there is a large sum in an bank account, question (with the organisation) exactly why community funding is being applied for.</p> <p>Where large bank accounts are held, that this is disclosed to Members at the Full Council meeting, but that the exact sum within the account is not. Also, that the rationale for applying for community funding is disclosed.</p> <p>Recommendation(s) As above, and that in the event of large bank accounts being disclosed as part of the application process, that officers determine exactly why community funding is being applied for (by speaking to the organisation) and that this is disclosed to members at Full Council meeting.</p>
<p>Funding “up front” or Reimbursement</p>	<p>As part of the 2022/23 Internal Audit, the Town Clerk spoke at length with the Internal Auditor as to whether the Community Fund should operate to provide funds “up front” and rely on evidence of expenditure being submitted after funds have been granted, or whether it should operate on a reimbursement basis.</p> <p>There is a difficult balance to be struck. However, there is slight preference for an “up front” approach.</p> <p>Recommendations(s): That there is no amendment to Community Funding Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria regarding the approach of the fund and that there is a continued requirement for organisations to submit within three months.</p>
<p>CLAW Back / Exclusion from future applications</p>	<p>Grant Funding Application Forms make reference to the option of Council “Clawing Back” money where evidence of expenditure has not been provided within the specified three-month period (this is specified on Grant Application Forms not on Grand Funding Guidance Notes and/or Grant Criteria)</p>

Issue	Options / Amendment(s) Necessary
	<p>In real terms, it will be difficult to claw back such funding, although having reviewed the operation of the fund in 2022/23, the majority of successful applicants do indeed submit the required evidence of expenditure.</p> <p>Neither document precludes an organisation from making a further application for community funding, even though they have not previously submitted evidence of expenditure.</p> <p><u>Recommendations(s):</u> That Community Fund Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria states that failure to submit evidence of expenditure will preclude the organisation from making future applications.</p>

5. RECOMMENDATION(S)

5.1 Members are asked to resolve the following recommendations: -

1. That Members consider the recommendations of the Town Clerk within the table at point 4 of this report, and consider and approve amendment to Council's Community Fund Guidance Notes and Grant Criteria.
2. That Members note the contents of this report.



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Internal Audit Forum
THE VOICE FOR LOCAL COUNCIL AUDIT

13th April 2023

Mr. A Spencer
Town Clerk
Prescot Town Hall
1 Warrington Road
Prescot
L34 5QX

Internal Audit Report 2022/23

I am pleased to confirm that I undertook the “Internal Audit” function in relation to the 2022/23 financial year on 5th April 2023. Acting independently, I have examined the systems of internal controls by undertaking the tests laid down and detailed in the Annual Audit Return. I would thank your Town Clerk Mr. Spencer and his staff who assisted in the conduct of the audit by providing me with all the necessary paperwork and documentation.

Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation’s operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

My main role is to provide assurance to the Council that the internal control environment is operating soundly.

As the Council’s Internal Auditor, I have a duty to complete the internal audit certificate in the Council’s Annual Return, which covers the basic financial systems and requires assurances in several separate areas. This report sets out the main areas of work examined during my visit to the Council.

Overall Conclusion

Based on my examination of your procedures and documentation I am happy to confirm that the Council’s systems of internal controls are effective and appropriate for the purpose intended. Your staff demonstrated a sound knowledge of all the systems and speedily produced all the documentation and information I request. I have signed the Annual Audit Return confirming my satisfaction with your procedures.

I would ask that the Council give attention to addressing the three areas identified in the attached report, under the heading “RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY COUNCIL” I feel doing so would enhance the Councils procedures and ensure probity of the system.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Blanchflower'.

David Blanchflower
Internal Auditor

Enc: Report of Audit findings and invoice.

**PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL
INTERNAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2022/2023**

Maintenance of Accounting Records/ Bank Reconciliations / Payment Controls

The objective here is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers.

I therefore:

- Checked a random sample of the transactions.
- Reviewed the timing and the accuracy of detail on the bank reconciliations.
- Are payments supported by invoices, authorised and minuted.
- Verified that VAT on payments had been identified, recorded and reclaimed.
- Examined the level of financial reserves maintained.

Findings:

There were no matters arising from the sample transaction testing.

- **From sample testing, VAT on payments had been identified, recorded and reclaimed. VAT was also correctly accounted for on Petty Cash payments.**
- **Receipts from room hire had been received and accounted for.**
- **It is recommended that the Council produces a written Investment Strategy, reviews its Community Grants procedures and produces a policy document in relation £850 allocated in the budget under the heading Mayor.**

Review of Corporate Governance and Risk Management

The objective is to ensure that the Council has a robust series of corporate governance documentation in place. That Council and Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and that no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation.

I have therefore undertaken the following work in this area:

- A review of the minutes to identify any unusual financial activity.
- Minutes record the council conducting an annual risk assessment.
- Insurance cover appropriate and adequate?
- Internal financial controls documented and regularly reviewed.

I reviewed of the minutes of the Full Council and Committee meetings for 2022/23 to identify if any issues exist that may have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council's future financial stability and confirm no concerns exist.

Findings:

- **The standing orders and financial regulations were in order and had been formally adopted by the Council.**
- **An annual risk assessment had been reported to Council.**

- **Appropriate insurance was in place.**

Review of Budgetary Control

My aim here is to ensure that the Council has a robust procedure in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and level of precept to be drawn down. Also, that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also aim to ensure that the Council retains appropriate funds in general and earmarked reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

I have therefore undertaken the following work in this area:

- Has the Council prepared an annual budget in support of its precept?
- Is actual expenditure against the budget regularly reported to the Council?
- Are there any significant unexplained variances from budget?
- Has the RFO reported at least quarterly to Council Financial Statements which include budget comparisons?
- Has the RFO reported and explained any significant variations to Council?

Findings:

- **It was noted that a detailed and comprehensive budget had been prepared and that there was regular reporting to the Council.**
- **It was noted for 2023/24 an appropriate Precept had been set which would raise £338,060 which effectively was a nil increase based on band 'D' properties.**

Review of Income Controls

The aim here is to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the identification of all income due to the Council that invoices are raised to recover that income and that monies are received and banked within a reasonable time limit.

Findings: It was seen that sound and effective procedures were in place and fully adhered to by staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY COUNCIL

Community Grants

It was seen that the Council had a system for allocating Community Grants and the minutes indicated a desire to review procedures. An inspection of the grants made in the 2022/23 financial year indicates most of those organisations receiving grants failed to provide proof of expenditure of the grant even when the Council staff sent follow-up letters requesting the information. This has been a regular difficulty over a number of years.

It was also noted that some grants were made to national organisations with large financial balances, one being a registered company with a bank balance of £136,367 and no receipt had been provided for the Community Grant they received.

Another grant was made to an organisation that was not a registered charity but had a large bank balance of £20,395. They failed to provide the Council with proof of expenditure.

Whilst I recognise the Council has within its power to make community grants I would recommend that the Council undertakes a full review of its Community Grant making procedures with a view to having stricter procedures. It is suggested that Council ask for the applicants most recent annual accounts report.

Requires full documentary proof of the expenditure of the grant and a rule that failure to provide evidence of expenditure bars the applicant from making future grant applications.

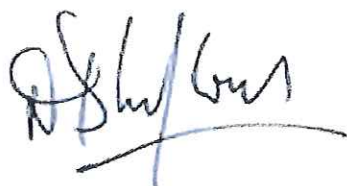
I would also ask the Council to consider if it is appropriate to make grants from public funds to businesses and to organisations with large financial reserves.

Investment Strategy Policy

Statutory Guidance has been issued by the Government on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition) issued under section 15 (1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and effective for financial years commencing on or after 1 April 2018. key principles of the guidance are transparency and democratic accountability. The guidance is statutory for parish councils, providing their total investments exceed or are expected to exceed £100,000 at any time during the financial year. As this legal requirement exists the Council should take steps to implement a defined Investment Strategy. This policy document would enable the Council to undertake an annual review of its strategies for the investment of reserves. It would also ensure the Council considered where it places its large amount of Precept income at the start of each financial year to maximise investment income on these monies.

Mayor Allowance

It was noted that in the budget setting process a sum of £850 was allocated under the sub heading *Mayor* in the *Cost Centre 1 Staff & Training Costs*, no policy document exists in relation to the purpose or use of this money. Other Councils that have a Mayoral allocation of funding also have a policy document that defines the conditions relating to this allocation. The Council may like to consider if it would be prudent to have such a policy document.



David Blanchflower
Internal Auditor

PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE POLICY & HUMAN RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING

22nd JUNE 2023

REPORT TITLE:

Proposed Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy 2023 (Post Insurance Advice)

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

At a meeting of Finance, Policy and HR Committee in January 2023, the Town Clerk presented a report for the adoption of a Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy.

Members resolved that adoption of this policy be deferred pending advice from council's insurers as to whether such a policy was required and what responsibilities and duties council has during periods of snow and ice.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To outline a proposed Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy in light of advice received from Council's insurers.

REPORT PREPARED BY:

Alex Spencer – Town Clerk

PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

Proposed Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy 2023 (Post Insurance Advice)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At a meeting of Finance, Policy and HR Committee in January 2023, the Town Clerk Presented a report seeking Member resolution to adopt a policy for gritting and snow clearance.
- 1.2 Presentation of the report prompted a health debate amongst members as to the duties and responsibilities of council during periods of poor weather, and although Members agreed with the ethos of the proposed policy, formal resolution was deferred until the Town Clerk obtained advice from Council's insurers to establish what Council's position was.

2. ADVICE OBTAINED FROM INSURERS

- 2.1 Following Member resolution, the Town Clerk contacted council's insurers who have provided the following advice:-
 - The Town Council, with regards to areas for which they have a responsibility to maintain, owes a duty of care to any persons entering those areas.
 - During periods of poor weather, where council considers that there is a risk of injury to persons entering areas for which council has a responsibility to maintain, council has a duty to reduce that risk.
 - The reduction of risk in such circumstances will include gritting, snow clearance or the closure of the area altogether.
 - Where an injury occurs during periods of poor weather and a claim is subsequently brought against Council, our insurer would deal with any claim by way of public liability insurance – whether gritting, snow clearance or closure was or was not undertaken.

However, future premiums may increase in consideration of what risk mitigation has been undertaken in the past.
 - Given that gritting, snow clearance or closure is relates to areas for which the council has a duty to maintain, these operations should be completed by town council staff, councillors or authorised volunteers.
 - Before any work is completed, a risk assessment should be completed and kept on file to ensure that risks have been identified and where possible, mitigated.
 - Where an employee, councillor or volunteer sustains injury as a result of completing gritting or snow clearance operations, any claim would be dealt with under Employers' Liability.
 - If the area requiring a reduction of risk is not the Town Council's responsibility, it is recommended that the council does not get involved in any gritting, snow clearance or closure as it is the responsibility of another party, yet the Town Council could be implicated in a claim that has nothing to do with it.

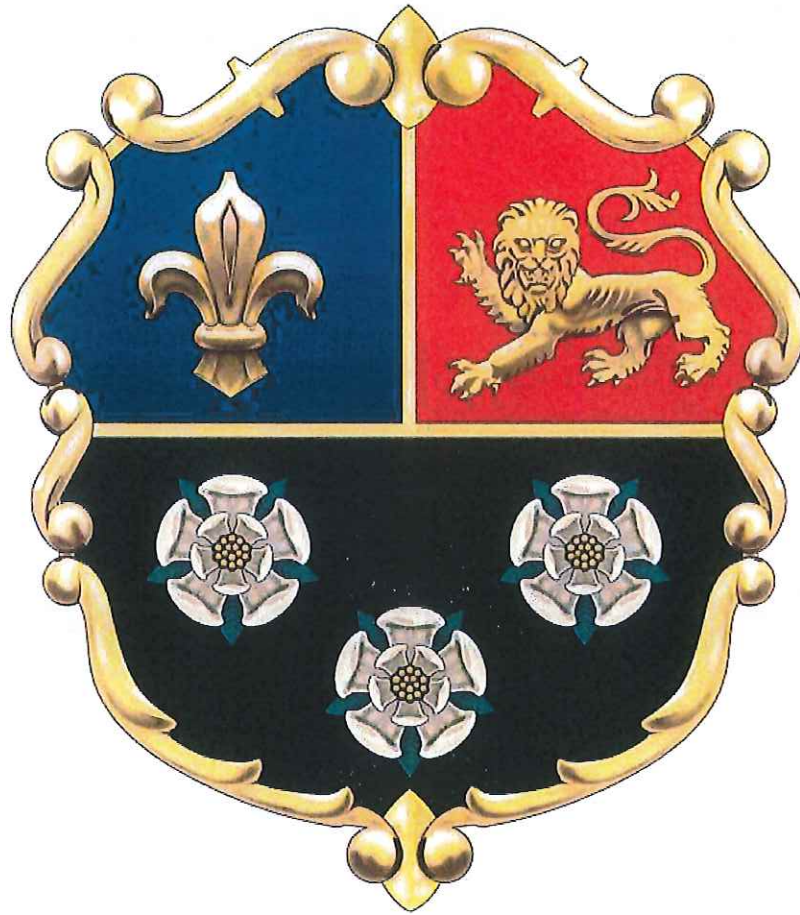
3. PROPOSED SNOW CLEARANCE AND GRITTING POLICY

- 3.1 In consideration of the advice provided by Council's insurers as stated within 2 above, Members are asked to consider the attached proposed Snow Clearance and Gritting Policy and accompanying operational documents.

4. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are asked to resolve the following recommendations:-

1. To adopt the proposed Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy 2023
2. To commit resources in the form of equipment, training and personal protective equipment (PPE) so that the policy can be safely implemented by officers.
3. Note the contents of this report.



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

Gritting and Snow Clearance Policy 2023

Date approved:	To be Confirmed (DRAFT)
Date to be reviewed	Draft

POLICY CONTROL SHEET	
POLICY AUTHOR	Alex Spencer – Town Clerk
POLICY STATUS	To Be Approved
POLICY APPROVAL DATE	To Be Approved
APPROVING COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy & Human Resources Committee
DATE OF POLICY REVIEW	To Be Confirmed

POLICY VERSION CONTROL SHEET	
PREVIOUS VERSION OF POLICY	None
POLICY STATUS	To Be Approved
POLICY APPROVAL DATE	To Be Approved
APPROVING COMMITTEE	Finance Policy & Human Resources Committee
DATE OF POLICY REVIEW	To Be Confirmed

Introduction

Prescot Town Council owes a duty of care to visitors to ensure that whilst they visit a site owned/managed by Council, that site is a safe environment where the risk of injury is low.

During winter weather (ice, frost, sleet and/or snow) the risk of injury arising from slips, trips, or falls significantly increases.

Despite this increased risk, Council's duty of care to provide a safe environment continues to apply – albeit that there is due consideration of what steps can be reasonably taken to provide that safe environment in the discharge of this duty.

Although council cannot stop or pass on its duty of care, it can recommend that during periods of winter weather visitors take note of weather conditions **before** visiting any council owned/managed site and that steps are taken by the visitor to ensure their personal safety e.g. by wearing appropriate clothing, footwear and even considering whether a visit is necessary.

Due to the number of sites owned/managed by Prescot Town Council, it is both impractical and impossible to ensure that all sites are kept free from ice, frost sleet and/or snow during winter weather.

As a result, this policy provides a prioritised list of sites/areas where gritting and/or snow clearance will be implemented; in addition to stating a frequency for each prioritised site.

Priority Areas for Gritting and Snow Clearance

Priority	Site / Area
One	Main entrance and egress points of Town Hall (including fire escapes)
Two	Pathways leading to and from main entrance and egress points of Town Hall (including fire escapes)
Three	Where practicable all other areas e.g. car park.

Frequency of Gritting and Snow Clearance

Priority	Frequency
One	Where reasonably practicable, areas will be gritted and/or kept clear of snow during Town Hall business hours.
Two	Where reasonably practicable, areas will be gritted and/or kept clear of snow during Town Hall business hours.
Three	Areas will be gritted and/or cleared of snow if resources (staff and grit) permit

Responsibilities for Gritting and Snow Clearance

The Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk will have responsibility for instructing that gritting and/or snow clearance should be undertaken.

Responsibility for undertaking gritting and/or snow clearance applies to **any** council officer who has undertaken appropriate training.

Any officer(s) undertaking gritting and/or snow clearance must wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Recording Gritting and Snow Clearance

Where gritting and/or snow clearance is undertaken under this policy, the officer(s) completing works shall complete a "Gritting and Snow Clearance Recording Sheet" (See appendix A) to evidence what has been completed.

Responsibility for Record Keeping

The Town Clerk will have responsibility for keeping a record of all gritting and/or snow clearing undertaken under this policy.

Responsibility for Ensuring Adequate Equipment, Stock Levels and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The Town Clerk will have responsibility for ensuring that council has appropriate equipment, stock and PPE for officers to enable gritting and/or snow clearance works to commence.

