Longridge Town Council

Finance Committee – Minutes

Date:	3 June 2026		
Place:	Council Offices, Station Buildings, Berry Lane, Longridge.		
Present:	Councillors: Walker, Rogerson, Smith, Stubbs and Gornall		
In attendance:	Town Clerk and Cllr. L. Jameson		
Meeting started:	18:30	**Meeting closed:**	19:20

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1. **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR.**
   The Committee proceeded to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the civic year 2026/27.
   RESOLVED:
   a. That Cllr. Mark Gornall be elected Chair of the Finance Committee for the civic year 2026/27.
   b. That Cllr. Philip Smith be elected Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee for the civic year 2026/27.
2. **WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**
   The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**
   Apologies were accepted from Cllrs. Eccles.
4. **DECLARATIONS INTEREST**
   No declarations of interest were recorded against this agenda.
5. **APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 22 APRIL 2026.**
   The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.**
   There was no public participation.
7. **TERMS OF REFEENCE FOR THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**
   The Clerk presented a report inviting Members to review and recommend to Full Council the adoption of the Finance Committee's Terms of Reference for the 2026/27 municipal year.
   RESOLVED:
   a. That the Finance Committee Terms of Reference for 2026/27 be approved and adopted unchanged from 2025/26, including retention of the £1,000 delegated financial authority threshold; and
   b. That the adopted Terms of Reference be submitted to Full Council for formal approval and inclusion within the Council's Standing Orders.

8. FINANCE REPORT.

The Clerk submitted the Finance Report, including the schedule of payments, receipts, expenditure, bank summary and NatWest reserve account balances.

The Committee noted that the Council remains in a strong financial position, with total available funds of £161,103.79 (subsequently described in discussion as approximately £161,000).

Of this, £70,000 is held in the Unity Trust 32-day notice account. With the precept received in full, and expenditure to date is low relative to the point reached in the financial year. Bank reconciliation has been completed to 30 May 2026 with no discrepancies.

Members discussed the following variances and queries arising from the report:

a. The Allotments budget line (code 460) shows an overspend of approximately £740, relating to the emergency repair of the allotment fence following vehicle damage, as previously agreed by the Committee on 22 April 2026. Members agreed that this highlighted the need for improved contingency planning and the use of earmarked reserves for areas of recurring risk.

b. The £23 charge coded to Maintenance of Open Space and Misc. (code 540), relating to the purchase of toilet rolls, had been incorrectly coded and is to be moved to the appropriate budget line.

c. Certain prior-year costs, including the Chauffeur allowance (£711.70) and elements of the Mayoral Fundraising line, relate to 2025/26 activity but fall to be reported against the 2026/27 budget; the Clerk confirmed this had already been flagged for clarification in future reporting.

d. The Committee noted that a new Unity Trust 32-day notice savings account has been established to maximise interest earned on reserve balances, and agreed that current reserve levels (equivalent to approximately 3–4 months' operating expenditure) remain appropriate, while noting earmarked reserves of £6,000 for the Heritage Centre, £1,000 for Longridge in Bloom and £4,000 for festive lighting.

Members had a wider discussion regarding precept-setting for 2027/28, noting that Longridge's precept is currently low relative to comparable councils, and agreed that a zero-based budgeting approach and improved long-term asset planning should inform preparation of next year's budget.

RESOLVED:

a. That the Finance Report and the accounts to date be approved; and

b. That the Schedule of Payments be approved.

c. That the toilet roll expenditure be recoded to the correct budget line.

d. That the Clerk is requested to consider how outstanding liabilities can be shown in the Report, similar to how we show funds carried forward.

9. REVISED GRANT POLICY

The Clerk presented a revised Grant Policy for adoption, prepared in accordance with the principles agreed at Minute 7.1 of the meeting held on 22 April 2026. The Committee considered the draft policy in detail and agreed the following amendments to the indicative funding ranges set out in the officer's draft:

a. Event Support: indicative range of £500–£2,500, with no hard maximum, to allow flexibility for exceptional cases (amending the draft maximum of £5,000).

b. Capital Improvements: indicative range of £1,000–£3,500, with no hard maximum, on the same basis (amending the draft range of £1,001–£5,500 and maximum of £5,500).

The Committee confirmed that, consistent with the policy's stated preference for smaller awards (£200–£500), any application exceeding the relevant indicative range should be referred to Full Council for consideration. Members also agreed that the policy should make clear that grants are intended to support one-off projects and activities, and not the ongoing running costs of an organisation.

RESOLVED:

a. That the revised Grant Policy be adopted, subject to the amendments to the Event Support and Capital Improvements funding ranges as set out above;

b. That the revised Grant Policy be recommended to Full Council for formal approval and adoption; and

c. That the Clerk be requested to draft revised grant application forms to reflect the new policy, taking account of feedback from community groups where this can be obtained before the Full Council meeting.

10. GRANT APPLICATIONS

Longridge Community Hospital Group – £1,000 (requested)

The Committee considered the application from the Longridge Community Hospital Group, noting the Council's pledge of support to the Hospital Campaign made at the Annual Meeting on 13 May 2026, and the proposed payment mechanism whereby the grant would be applied solely against invoices submitted by suppliers, rather than paid directly to the Group.

Members agreed that, notwithstanding the Council's wish to support the campaign, the sum should be reduced to align more closely with the policy's preference for smaller awards, while retaining the invoice-based payment mechanism to preserve a clear audit trail and enable VAT recovery.

RESOLVED:

a. That a grant of up to £500 be approved to the Longridge Community Hospital Group, to be applied solely by way of payment by the Council of invoices rendered by suppliers of print and promotional material, on production of those invoices to the Town Clerk, up to the aggregate sum approved; and

b. That the Council order the relevant printing directly where practicable and settle supplier invoices accordingly.

c. The deferred application from Longridge Girl Guides (Minute 7c of 22 April 2026) was noted as remaining deferred and will return to the Committee for determination under the new Grant Policy, following its adoption by Full Council.

11. CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Potential Transfer of Ribble Valley Borough Council Assets.

The Clerk updated Members on the possibility that RVBC may offer to transfer certain parish-level assets to local town and parish councils. The Committee noted that an earlier enquiry on this matter had not been progressed and agreed that it should be resubmitted to RVBC's new Chief Executive. Members raised concerns regarding the ongoing maintenance costs and liabilities that would accompany any such transfer, and agreed that these should be fully understood before any transfer is accepted.

RESOLVED:

That the Clerk resubmit the Council's earlier enquiry regarding potential asset transfers to the new Chief Executive of RVBC, and report back to a future meeting.

12. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The Committee noted that it will continue to meet on the fourth Wednesday of each month, with the exception of August 2026, when the meeting will be cancelled to reflect the school holiday period.

SIGNED BY CHAIR FOR THE MEETING Mark Gornall *DATE:* 3 June 2026

A 'wet' copy is on file.