

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee held on
Wednesday 18th December 2024 at 10:30am in the Committee Room at The Henfield Hall.**

Present: Cllrs J Jones (Chairman), E Goodyear, M Morgan, G Perry and S Leader.

In attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk), Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager – OM) and a representative from Community Transport Sussex - CTS.

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Cllr Perry declared an interest in item 6 as a volunteer driver and steering committee member for the Henfield Electric Car Club (HECC).

2. APOLOGIES

Cllr Potts.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20th NOVEMBER 2024

Approved. Signed and dated by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Cemetery Lighting - Update.

The lighting heads have been replaced but the units are still not working. Following a recent inspection by the original installer, it was discovered that the bollards are still letting in water. The suppliers have claimed that the problem is underground cabling. Cllr Grossmith has offered to look at the reports and correspondence. It was noted that it has been confirmed in writing by the supplier that they will replace the whole bollards if necessary.

Action Point: The Clerk to send all relevant information to Cllr Grossmith.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

The CTS representative presented usage data for the Community Bus (thirty trips since 2022) and asked that a portion of the £5845 surplus Parish Council funding is allocated instead to the HECC. He also suggested further promotion of the Community Bus and asked whether the Parish Council would like to run excursions. It was noted that on weekdays the Bus is only available from 9.30am to 2pm, due to a school contract. However, it is also available for evenings and weekends. There are sometimes issues with having an available driver. Councillors commented that perhaps the Community Bus is not being used for the Monday shopping trips due to the current price cap on regular bus fares and free travel for over 60s. This service has now been stopped. A local Lions group have committed to a £5000 grant for HECC and a decision on a substantial grant application to Motability is due in the first quarter of 2025. CTS will be looking at increasing the HECC hire cost from £5 to £6 per hour and will be charging a monthly membership of £5 per month rather than a one-off joining fee. They are also hoping to upgrade bookings software. They currently have 70 members with around 40 users and are seeking feedback from users on how they could improve the service. CTS are in the process of becoming a CIO in order to be able to apply for more funding.

The CTS representative left the meeting.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

6. **CONSIDER FUTURE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SUSSEX**

Following on from the discussion under Open Forum, the Committee acknowledged that the HECC seems to be a long way off being self-funding and is relying very heavily on current grant applications being successful. It was noted that allocating the funding surplus of £5845 to HECC for 40 users may not represent good value for money and that taxi fares may have been cheaper. However it was felt that it is a worthwhile scheme and all hoped that it could continue and expand. It was questioned whether any provision was being made for the depreciation of vehicles. It was suggested that Henfield Community Partnership (HCP) would be best placed to assist with promotion and the development of a more thorough business plan; this will be put to CTS. It was felt that it would not be wise to commit to any further funding until the future viability of the scheme can be assured. Therefore it was agreed that the £5845 Community Bus surplus could be allocated to HECC and that the current £1000 invoice for the quarterly payment to end December will be paid by Henfield Parish Council (HPC) but ringfenced for future Community Bus trips. This Committee will then request updated usage data and a business plan for consideration at their March 2025 meeting in order to decide whether or not to pay the final invoice of £1000 due for this tax year (as HPC had committed to a total grant of £4000 for 2024/25). This is in the hope that the financial position with regards to outstanding grant applications and general viability of the scheme will become clearer.

7. **WORKS OFFICERS STORAGE**

Cllr Morgan explained that the Works team have recently had difficulty in accessing their storage for equipment due to lack of staff at the location and are not now able to enter the units at weekends or over an extended shutdown period over Christmas. As emergency responders for the village, particularly in situations of heavy snow and bad weather, it was felt that this is not satisfactory. It was agreed that the Clerk would write to the company to request that this issue is rectified, particularly for the winter months. Due to these issues, it was also agreed to move forward with some urgency with plans for Works Officers' storage on Parish Council land. There are some security concerns that will need to be addressed. A concrete base may be needed if on a grassed area, such as alongside the Eric Holder pavilion on the Kings Field. Planning permission would be required for a permanent structure. It was noted that shipping containers could be clad to make them less unattractive. Electricity and water will be required. Cllr Morgan will discuss suitable locations further with the Works team.

8. **MOTION: TO APPROVE THE 2025/26 BUDGETS FOR SUBMISSION TO FULL COUNCIL IN JANUARY**

A draft was circulated prior to the meeting; the same version seen by Full Council in December. There had been no comments or alterations requested by Councillors since. There has been an increase of 7.7% on last year to an income/expenditure of £437,355.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the 2025/26 budget for submission to Full Council in January.

9. **MOTION: TO APPROVE THE 2025/26 PRECEPT FOR SUBMISSION TO FULL COUNCIL IN JANUARY**

The proposed precept is £373,220. This is an increase of 7% on last year, 6.8% (or 17p per week) for a band D property.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Goodyear and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the 2025/26 precept for submission to Full Council in January.

10. **FINANCE**

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (November).
Each signed and dated by two Councillors.

b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – (November).
Each signed and dated by two Councillors.

c) Agree to Switch £1,900 From the Kings Field Account.
Every year an amount to cover dog bins, litter wardens, mowing and playground inspections is moved from the Kings Field account to the Parish Council account. This has been budgeted for and it was all agreed to go ahead and make the transfer.

11. **ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Morgan reminded the Committee that there will need to be a discussion on Terms of Reference at the next meeting.

Cllr Leader asked about next steps given the recent devolution announcement. It was agreed to wait for further detail which is likely to be received in the New Year.

Councillors were disappointed to note that the Planning Inspector has put a halt to the Horsham Local Plan progressing further at this stage. There is no further detail or timescales provided.

The Clerk reported that water bills are predicted to rise by up to 35% next year.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

15th January 2025.

Meeting closed at 11.51am.