

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee held on
Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 7:00pm in the Committee Room at The Henfield Hall.**

Present: Cllr J Jones (Chairman), E Goodyear, M Morgan, R Shaw, G Perry and J Potts.

In attendance: Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager – OM).

The Chairman began the meeting with a pause to pay tribute to former Council Chairman and, more recently, District Councillor, Malcolm Eastwood, who sadly died on Sunday 10th December 2024.

She said that anyone who met Malcolm could not fail to be impressed by his foresight, energy and determination to see his various projects through. He was totally dedicated to maintaining the best features of the community, whilst also managing necessary changes. He leaves a lasting legacy of successful projects and a Parish Council which is well prepared to meet future challenges. He could not have been more helpful to the Chairman when she was a new Councillor and he helped and encouraged many others too. The Parish Council wished to join with many other people in offering sincere condolences to Mrs Eastwood and their family.

Committee members then briefly discussed a possible permanent tribute to Malcolm, which will be addressed at Full Council and discussed with his family after the funeral.

MINUTES

It was all agreed to discuss item 13 at the beginning of the meeting as it was a closed session item and Councillors were all present before 7pm, due to having had a separate meeting beforehand.

1. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Cllr Morgan declared an interest in item 10 as a Trustee of the Henfield Club.

The Chairman and Cllr Goodyear both declared an interest in item 9 as Trustees of the Henfield Hall.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Cllr Leader.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31ST OCTOBER 2023 AND THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 14TH NOVEMBER 2023**

Both sets of minutes were approved by all and signed and dated by the Chairman.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

a) Committee Terms of Reference.

Following discussion at a recent meeting, Cllrs Morgan and Perry had concluded that a working group would be helpful to address the issue of verge management. Cllr Goodyear recommended creating a map to indicate how specific areas would be managed; this would be useful for the Works team as well as Councillors. Cllr Shaw offered to join this group. Cllr May and a Works Officer will also be invited. It was agreed that this was the most urgent issue to resolve, particularly due to the recent difficulties with decisions being taken regarding planting on verges without consultation with the appropriate Committee or Works team.

Cllrs Morgan and Perry will continue to discuss the terms of reference more generally, taking into account that it is looking likely that Horsham District Council (HDC) will now be more directly involved in managing the Commons, and that the Children and Young People Committee now has responsibility for play areas. One suggestion had been to have a Village Amenities Committee, a Nature Recovery and Climate Change Committee and a Playing Fields working group or committee. It was noted that working groups do not have decision making powers or a budget. It was also noted that any work undertaken by the Works team on the Commons should be billed to HDC. It was agreed that the current terms of reference are not currently inefficient so long as Chairmen communicate with each other, the Parish Office and the Works team, therefore this matter was not urgent, particularly as the Parish Council is currently short-handed with

vacancies for Councillors. Cllr Goodyear suggested making use of this Committee as every Chairman is in attendance.

b) Cemetery Lighting Update.

The Clerk had recently received advice from the West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) suggesting that the Cemetery lighting had not been fit for purpose, therefore the Parish Council ought to ask the supplier for replacement or refund, failing that to pursue them via the Small Claims Court. Cllr Morgan will assist the Clerk in drafting an appropriate letter.

Action Point: Cllr Morgan to assist the Clerk in writing a letter to the Cemetery lighting supplier.

c) Henfield's "Big Thank You."

A provisional date had been booked for a recognition event on 18th May 2024. An invitation has been drafted and a list of all of the organisations in the village has been obtained. Cllr Shaw has taken some advice on the production of a promotional video which could be used for the event as well as for future use. It is hoped that this might cost less than £1,000 and a grant may be available. Cllr Shaw will approach Henfield Community Partnership (HCP) and the Volunteer Support team at HDC for assistance with this. Cllr Potts offered to assist. It was suggested that an overall budget of £2,000 to £2,500 may be needed. The working group for the event meets again next week.

Action Point: Cllr Shaw to contact HCP and the Volunteer Support team at HDC regarding the promotional video for the event.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

5. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

6. **UPDATE ON THE TANYARD BARN DEVELOPMENT**

If the Sheddars' planning application is approved, HDC will grant a lease on the Barn. Cllr Morgan reported that there would be a meeting with HDC on 15th December to discuss the potential terms of a lease. So far the term had been modified from 5 years to 20 years with 5-yearly break clause. There would be no automatic right of renewal after 20 years, so there was some concern as to what HDC would do with the Barn afterwards; this reflected residents' concerns. There would also be a discussion on the level of rental. HDC had suggested £1,600 p.a. but would not be contributing to the renovation of the building, apart from the cost of connecting water and electricity. Cllr Goodyear suggested that HDC ought to have the repairing part of the lease if the rental was at this level. HDC had suggested that the rental on the open market would be £10,000 p.a. for light industrial use. Cllr Morgan would raise these issues at the meeting.

7. **MOTION: APPROVAL OF 2024/25 BUDGETS FOR SUBMISSION TO FULL COUNCIL IN JANUARY**

A draft budget was circulated prior to the meeting proposing income and expenditure for 2024/25 of £398,585.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Potts and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the income and expenditure budgets as per the draft circulated for submission to Full Council, subject to the increases in employment costs agreed following discussion under item 13.

It was noted that, as the calculation with increased employment costs had not yet been made, there may need to be an extraordinary meeting of this Committee to agree the final figure for the income and expenditure budget.

8. **MOTION: APPROVAL OF 2024/25 PRECEPT FOR SUBMISSION TO FULL COUNCIL IN JANUARY**

A draft budget was circulated prior to the meeting proposing a precept for 2024/25 of £341,185.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Goodyear and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the precept for 2024/25 detailed in the draft circulated for submission to Full Council in January, subject to the increases in employment costs agreed following discussion under item 13.

It was noted that, as the calculation with increased employment costs had not yet been made, there may need to be an extraordinary meeting of this Committee to agree the final figure for the precept.

9. **CONSIDER THE APPLICATION FROM THE HENFIELD HALL FOR £1,920 TOWARDS NEW BATTERIES TO STORE ELECTRICITY FROM THE SOLAR PANELS. FUNDING TO BE TAKEN FROM THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) RESERVE**

It was noted that there was currently £22,869.08 in CIL reserve. It was also noted that the Parish Council should eventually benefit from reduced electricity bills as a tenant of the Henfield Hall.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Potts, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED 4 in favour with 2 abstentions** to approve payment of £1,920 towards new batteries to store electricity from the solar panels at the Henfield Hall, to be taken from CIL reserves.

10. **CONSIDER PAYMENTS TO ST PETER'S CHURCH & THE HENFIELD CLUB**

The proposed payment for the Church was £500 towards the upkeep of the Churchyard; this would become a Parish Council responsibility if the Church decided not to maintain it. It was noted that the area is well-managed for biodiversity, being particularly rich in fungi.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Morgan and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the payment of £500 to St Peter's Church.

The proposed payment for the Henfield Club was £200, towards the expenses of the Remembrance event and upkeep of the war memorial. It was noted that the constitution of the Henfield Club has been updated to state that, if it closes, the war memorial will be passed to the Parish Council and remaining funds will be distributed to local clubs and organisations.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Shaw, **SECONDED** by Cllr Potts and **VOTED 5 in favour with 1 abstention** to approve the payment of £200 to the Henfield Club.

11. **FINANCE**

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

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

c) Consider the Cyber Insurance Quotations of £351.68 and £390.25.
The quotations and a summary of cover were circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that WSALC and the auditor did not have a particular view and that the Parish Council already have several measures in place such as cloud back-ups of data and systems. It was also noted that the Parish Council do not hold any residents' personal data, most of Council data is already in the public domain and no payments are taken via the website, therefore Council could be considered at low risk of cyber attack. However it was agreed that there could be significant reputational damage and, as the cost of the insurance was relatively small, it was agreed to go ahead with the lower-priced cover.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Morgan, **SECONDED** by Cllr Shaw and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to accept the quotation of £351.68 for £250,000 of cover.

- d) Switch £1,900 From the Kings Field Account.
This is used for upkeep of the Kings Field including dog bin emptying, litter wardens and grass cutting.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Goodyear, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the transfer of £1,900 from the Kings Field account.

- e) To Approve the increase in Fraud and Dishonesty Insurance from £500,000 to £600,000.
A quotation was circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that in October there was £485,500 in the bank account, which was close to the limit of existing cover. It is recommended by the auditor to review this regularly.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Shaw, **SECONDED** by the Chairman and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the increase in fraud and dishonesty Insurance cover from £500,000 to £600,000.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Morgan reminded the Committee that the Football Club's licence had expired two years ago, and that the cost and terms need to be reviewed, as they currently only pay £100 p.a. Action had not been taken previously, as it had been unclear whether the Club were still pursuing the new pavilion project. It was noted that Cllr Goodyear had requested a meeting with the Club two months ago but had not received a response.

Action Point: Cllr Goodyear to try again to arrange a meeting with the Football Club.

Cllr Perry reminded the Committee that 2024 is the Year of Biodiversity and asked that there is an item to discuss this on the agenda for the next Full Council meeting. She also asked all Committee Chairs to consider how they will support this.

Action Point: The Clerk to include the Year of Biodiversity on the agenda for Full Council in January 2024.

To resolve, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, in accordance with Standing Orders s.1(d) to exclude the press and public on the grounds that the confidential matters to be discussed under the item below would be prejudicial in the public interest.

13. CONSIDER THE CURRENT PARISH OFFICE STAFF JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND SALARY SCALES.

This item took place under closed session at the beginning of the meeting.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

16th January 2024, not 31st January as stated on the agenda.

Meeting Closed at 8.22pm.