

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee
held on Tuesday 21st July 2020 at 2:30 pm via Zoom Conferencing.**

Present: Cllrs E Goodyear (Chairman), M Eastwood, J Jones, A Donoghue and G Perry.

In attendance: Mrs R Grantham (Administrator).

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

2. APOLOGIES

Cllr N Stevens.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16th JUNE 2020

Cllr Donoghue requested that the wording of item 6 is amended to reflect that it was representatives of the Parish Council that met with the Henfield Hall, not the Museum. Otherwise the minutes were approved. The committee also approved the minutes from the closed session. The Chairman to sign the amended minutes and closed session minutes at a later date.

Action Point: The Administrator to amend the minutes to reflect that members of the Parish Council met with the Henfield Hall, not the Museum.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Cemetery Fees

A note has been added to the website to confirm that implementation of the agreed increase in fees will be reviewed in September.

b) Members of the Public Attending Horsham District Council Meetings

The Chairman raised this issue at the Plans Advisory Committee, Cllr Potts confirmed that members of the public are able to join planning meetings.

c) Disciplinary Policy

This has not yet been circulated to staff.

Action Point: The Chairman to remind the Clerk to circulate the amended policy to all staff.

d) Personnel Group

This will be discussed later on the agenda.

e) Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Cllr Eastwood confirmed that the review and response has been sent to Horsham District Council (HDC).

f) Fidelity Insurance

The increase to the insurance cover has been actioned by the Clerk.

g) Amend Financial Regulations

Cllr Eastwood confirmed he has not yet made the amendment to reflect the Clerks spend limit.

Action Point: Cllr Eastwood to amend the Financial Regulations as above.

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

The Chairman reported that she attended a Horsham Association of Local Council (HALC) meeting last week. She commented that many other parish councils have concerns regarding loss of income from community buildings due to Covid 19. Henfield Parish Council does not own any, but she asked the committee to note that several in the community may still require financial assistance.

She also reported that they were informed at the HALC meeting there seemed to be an increase in claimants of Universal Credit who then don't pay Council Tax. This could result in the precept increasing even without any Parish Council increases as there are less contributors. She commented that it will be important to know the tax base before setting the budget for the next financial year.

The Chairman then reported that the administrator has researched redaction software and has concluded that the most appropriate option would be an Adobe Pro DC subscription. It also has the ability to scan documents and convert them to Word and also allows for electronic signatures. The likely cost is £17.18 per month.

6. COUNCIL COMMITTEES – KEY ISSUES

Cllr Perry reported from Recreation and Open Spaces that the re-opening of play areas has gone well and there will shortly be a working group meeting to discuss replacement of play equipment.

Cllr Jones reported that there had been an extraordinary meeting to appoint a contractor for the laying of the new cemetery paths and to discuss planting. It is hoped that works will start after the final permissions have been agreed by HDC on or before the 25th of August. Cllr Jones also confirmed that the public conveniences on the high street will be opening very shortly. She thanked Cllr Morgan, the Administrator and the Works Officer for assisting with this. She confirmed an additional member of staff has been employed to carry out additional cleaning.

Cllr Eastwood confirmed that the Deed of Variation for the S106 agreement due to benefit the leisure centre and Henfield Hall has not yet been signed. This is because the Directors of Remus have queried the reason for the variation, despite it being agreed by Persimmon. Cllr Eastwood has responded with details of the original request and an explanation but has not yet had a response.

7. AGREE FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The amended Terms of Reference document was circulated prior to the meeting. The Chairman commented that she had changed the emphasis and added a line referring to the Personnel working group. She has also included a general compliance audit in February of each year.

Cllr Donoghue suggested that the personnel focused meetings of this committee take place in November and May, rather than January and July. This allows pay to be discussed in November before budgets are set, and as the Clerk is required to attend personnel meetings, will avoid his usual holiday period.

Cllr Eastwood suggested changing the wording to refer to CIL instead of S106 and to include monthly monitoring of budget reports and a generic review of council documents. The Chairman confirmed that the Clerk is currently drawing up a schedule for the monitoring of council documents and she will check on his progress.

Cllr Donoghue asked whether review of insurance cover ought be included. The Chairman confirmed this would be covered under Compliance with Legal Requirements section.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Eastwood and **VOTED** all in favour to accept the changes to the Terms of Reference, subject to the amendments agreed.

Action Point: The Chairman to make the amendments agreed and circulate to the committee.

8. **AGREE PERSONNEL POLICY**

Cllr Donoghue confirmed that she has made the amendments requested as well as changed the wording of how the policy is implemented as the Clerk did not want voting rights, so it clarifies that he will attend meetings, advise and assist with implementation.

The Chairman suggested outsourcing some HR work such as policies and contracts to professionals. She also suggested a quarterly updates by a professional firm. The likely cost of a pay as you go service is £85 per hour. Cllr Donoghue agreed that this would be useful for employment law advice in particular, however for policy there is good guidance and models also available from NALC and SSALC. Cllr Jones also suggested a general health check to check existing policies and procedures, and to ask for advice on staff appraisal. She also commented that there was a reference to a sub-committee which also needs removing as the committee agreed to use a working group instead.

Action Point: Cllr Donoghue to amend the document to include a statement to reflect that this committee will check with a qualified HR professional where appropriate and to remove the reference to a sub-committee.

Action Point: The Chairman to check with the Clerk whether this document needs to be approved by Full Council as it is a new document, and ensure that the policy is included on the agenda for the Full Council in September, either for approval or for information.

The Chairman confirmed that all draft documents loaded on the website as “supporting documents” will now need to be watermarked “Draft” to avoid any confusion for the public using the search facility on the website.

9. **HEALTH AND SAFETY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY RISK REGISTERS – REVIEW OF ANY CURRENT ISSUES**

There are no issues to consider.

10. **RETURN TO NORMAL FRAMEWORK – PROGRESS UPDATE**

The Chairman confirmed that she has met with the Administrator and the Works Officer to discuss how to safely re-open the parish office from the 7th September. She and the Administrator will be attending the office next week to start clearing files, confidential waste bags have been ordered. Cllrs Perry, Donoghue and Jones all offered to help. The Works Officers can then remove the counter, move filing cabinets and the large table, redecorate if necessary and create three safe working stations in the Parish Office and an area for appointments only in the reception area. Cllr Jones asked whether there is a need to gain permission from the Hall.

Action Point: The Chairman to check whether permission is needed from the Hall for any alterations to the office.

The Chairman also commented that NALC have recently sent a newsletter confirming that they strongly advise Parish Councils continue to meet remotely unless it is vital to meet in person, and that the cleaning protocols that will be required to use any of the Henfield Hall rooms for meetings is still unclear.

11. LOCAL CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN AND LOCAL CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Cllr Perry confirmed that she has reviewed the current document and will continue to do so to include looking at individual committees. She will also amend to include a section on Covid 19.

She commented that she would like the document to be included on the website with a link in a prominent position, as it is relevant to the whole Parish Council, not just the Recreation and Open Spaces committee.

Cllr Eastwood recommended updating the document to mark actions that are now completed such as the LED lights at the Youth Club and Cllr Donoghue suggested pointing out that the Kinder Living event is not taking place and that there may be a future impact of Rampion 2.

Action Point: Cllr Perry to update the document to mark completed items and to include the impact of Covid 19 and potential impact of Rampion 2.

12. PARISH OFFICE WORKLOAD

It was agreed to move the following item to the end of the meeting in order to exclude the administrator. This item was discussed under closed session.

13. FINANCE

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (June)

The Chairman confirmed that she has signed all of the statements back to March and asked that another committee member attends the office to counter sign.

b) Progress Report 2020/21

The progress report supplied by the Clerk stated that expenditure is at 19.2% at 25% through the year. Income from the cemetery is slightly down.

c) Cemetery Path Expenditure.

Cllr Jones confirmed that the contractor instructed provided the lowest quotation at a cost of £26,500, however there is only £24,944 available in the cemetery budget. She has spoken to the Clerk who confirmed that the additional cost could be taken from general reserves. She also commented that additional funds will also be required for planting of trees.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Jones, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED** all in favour to approve the additional funds for laying of cemetery paths to be taken from general reserves.

d) The Henfield Hall Maintenance Expenditure 2020/21

The Chairman confirmed that the Clerk received an email from the Hall stating that £45,000 will need to be spent on Hall maintenance and that the Parish Council will be required to contribute 16% of this cost. The Clerk and Cllr Morgan will examine the contents of the lease. Cllr Donoghue asked whether the Hall ought to redecorate the Parish Office rather than works officers, as the obligation could be with the landlord.

Action Point: The Chairman to check whether redecoration of the Parish Office is the responsibility of Henfield Hall.

e) IDP & Community Buildings

Cllr Eastwood reminded the committee that there was a version of the IDP sent to HDC and another retained by the parish council which includes the smaller projects. He commented that most community buildings are conducting a review of their position and focus due to Covid 19, for example the Haven are now intending to offer support to younger people rather than just the elderly. He has offered to facilitate a discussion between these groups and suggested separating them into two groups, sporting facilities (to be discussed by the Playing Fields Committee) and community groups such as the Hall, Haven, Youth Club, Scouts, Church Hall, school and medical centre where representatives from each will be invited to a Zoom meeting to discuss ideas, approach and how best groups can work together and complement each other.

Action Point: Cllr Eastwood to send invitations to the above groups for a Zoom meeting in September.

Cllr Eastwood also asked all committees to consider the IDP by November, in order to prioritise projects for budget planning.

Cllr Eastwood then reported that he has located the Henfield Local Transport Plan document from 1996 which he considers to be a useful starting point for a report into safe travel.

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

Cllr Donoghue queried the new licences permitting High Street businesses to operate with tables and chairs outside on the pavement. She commented that she could foresee problems with WSCC handing over the process to HDC, which could cause delays. Cllr Eastwood confirmed that representatives from the Community Partnership will be visiting High Street businesses shortly in order to attempt to set up a traders' association and to advise them to apply for the new licence.

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 18th August 2020 at 12.30pm by Zoom conferencing.

Meeting Closed at 16.35.