

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting of the **Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee**
held on **Tuesday 20th October 2020** at **7:00 pm** via Zoom Conferencing.

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

In attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk) and Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager).

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 15th SEPTEMBER 2020

Approved, to be signed at later date by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Consider Existing Staff for Cleaning Job in the Parish Office

The Clerk confirmed he has emailed one of our litter wardens. Unfortunately they were unable to help at this time

Action Point: The Clerk to approach other litter wardens and the Haven, who have recently employed a new cleaner.

b) Changes to Bank Mandates

Two ex-councillors have now been removed from the Nat West mandate. Cllrs Eastwood and the Operations Manager (OM) have been added.

The Parish Office are awaiting confirmation from Barclays that the OM is now on the mandate. The application can then be made for online banking.

The Clerk has had difficulties contacting HSBC, however has now received a mandate in the post to complete, which he will do this week.

Action Point: Cllr Donoghue to attend the Parish Office to sign the mandate.

c) Grievance Review

The amended Grievance policy was circulated to staff members and has been added to the electronic staff handbook.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

None

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Community Resilience

The Chairman reported that she has met with community representatives to discuss lessons learned from Covid 19 and what the community may need to have in place to deal with future incidents. She also raised the subject at a recent community facilities meeting in order to establish how community buildings may be utilised. Tomorrow she will be discussing communication capabilities and this will all form part of the Community Resilience Framework. Further information will be then be sought from West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and she confirmed that she would welcome any ideas.

b) Budgets for 2021/22

The Chairman confirmed that all committees now need to start thinking about budgets for the 2021/22 financial year. This committee will need to have agreed all budgets at the December meeting. Full Council will then need to approve final budgets at the January meeting.

Action Point: The Ops Manager to ensure that budgets are included on the agenda for the next Village Amenities and Recreation and Open Spaces meetings.

c) Society of Local Council Clerks – Virtual National Conference

The Clerk and Ops Manager attended a number of useful webinars run last week by the Society of Local Council Clerks. These included Risk and Insurance, Climate Emergency and Communications and Coronavirus

6. **COUNCIL COMMITTEES – KEY ISSUES**

Cllr Donoghue confirmed that there were no issues to raise from the Museum Committee.

Cllr Perry reported from Recreation and Opens Spaces that there had been a lot of discussion about the various sports clubs' projects, as well as discussion on trees and trails. Cllr Stevens commented that the recent meeting was long and asked whether meetings could resume monthly. The Chairman confirmed that it had been agreed to review the situation in January and that emergency meetings can be held if necessary and that some decisions can be made via email. Cllr Jones confirmed that this has been successfully done by Village Amenities. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Office could not revert to monthly meetings yet due to current commitments and training.

Cllr Jones reported from Village Amenities that there were some issues with vandalism and anti social behaviour at the bus shelter and that the PCSO will be attending the Parish Office to discuss on Monday morning. Installation of CCTV will be discussed at the next meeting. Cllr Eastwood confirmed that the Youth Club are also attempting some dialogue with youths involved.

Cllr Eastwood then reported that Horsham District Council are sending a film crew to Relish café as part of their coverage of the food festival and that as the film crew had been booked for a whole day, they will also be doing some filming on the trails.

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

The Chairman confirmed that there are no current issues to review.

8. **HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL SEVERE WEATHER PLAN**

The updated plan has been now been prepared by the Chairman, Cllr Perry and Cllr Simmonds. The Chairman thanked them Cllrs Perry and Simmonds for their work. The scope has been widened from snow to also cover flooding and heatwave. She also confirmed that there may need to be some changes to the Council's safe working procedures to take into account the current situation with Covid. Cllr Donoghue asked about the list of volunteers and vulnerable people, the Chairman confirmed that this will be removed and will form part of the Community Resilience framework so that the severe weather plan is future proof. **It was agreed** to adopt Issue 3 of the HPC Severe Weather Plan.

9. AGREE DRAFTS OF PARISH COUNCIL PERSONNEL DOCUMENTS

The Chairman pointed out the the following policies are presented for agreement rather than adoption as they will be checked prior to adoption by an HR Consultant. Cllr Donoghue confirmed that she used NALC models to produce the following two policies and stressed the importance that the Clerk finds them understandable, manageable and appropriate.

a) Performance Management Policy

The Chairman commented that she felt the review form could be more objective and include key markers for more structured feedback. Cllr Eastwood requested that the requirement for a Vice Chairman to be experienced in conducting performance reviews is reworded to clarify that training can be given. He also asked whether Mr Nye would be carrying out reviews for the other works officers.

Action Point: The Clerk to discuss the review process for Works Officers with Mr Nye.

b) Training & Development Policy

The Chairman requested that it is reworded, so as not to discourage any candidates who do not have mandatory training, as this can be provided by the Parish Council.

b) Equality & Diversity Policy

Cllr Stevens commented that in section 4, everyone is responsible within the terms of the act and the Chairman is responsible, but the Clerk is the nominated officer. He felt that the Clerk ought to perform both roles.

The Absence from Work policy was also circulated prior to the meeting by Cllr Shaw. The Chairman commented that the policy did not cover maternity, paternity, adoption leave or flexible working. Cllr Donoghue explained that a short paragraph can be added to state that the Parish Council will adhere to NALC guidelines.

Action Point: The Chairman to carry out the agreed amendments to all four policies and forward them to the HR Consultant for checking.

10. FINANCE

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (September)

Barclays Current, Nat West Business Reserve, HSBC Community, HSBC Money Manager and Barclays Rate Reward.

b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – Local Government Pension Scheme (£886.22)

b) Progress Report 2020/21 – Including External Audit

The Clerk reported that at the half way point in the year, expenditure sits at 52.6% of budget. However, there is £24,500 in the Leisure Centre Car Park Reserve to offset against this at the end of the financial year. This gives an underlying expenditure of £129,102, which is 44.2% of budget.

Income was 93.5% of budget at the end of September and Council has since received the outstanding £7,413 for the Environmental Cleansing Grant.

The Clerk then reported that he wrote to Trevor Leggo at SSALC on 9th October to ask if Council could lobby for a different External Auditor. The current auditor has had the paperwork for more than four and a half months. Mr Leggo confirmed that his colleague at Oxfordshire ALC was also of the same view and hence wrote to the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments (SAAA). The SAAA stated that the Government had extended the deadline for audits to be completed from 31st August to 30th November. The Clerk stated that he felt this was a 'cop-out,' as it should not be taking more than four and a half months to complete the audit.

A 'virtual' interim internal audit was held on 29th September and the result is expected shortly.

c) Insurance Policy for 2020/21

The insurance premium has increased from £1,837.65 for 2019/20 to £2,505.71 for 2020/21. This is due to the increase in the employee dishonesty premium (increasing cover from £300K to £400K) which cost an extra £379.75. In addition there was also the claim for the theft of the tractor unit and flail which also increased the premium.

d) Community Transport Sussex Bus Service

There has been no Monday bus service to Holmbush, nor free Thursday bus service since February. The Parish Council have not been asked for any payment since March. Community Transport Sussex is now resuming these services and has sent the usual quarterly invoice for £1,000 for October to December 2020.

It was agreed to resume payments for the service.

Action Point: The Clerk to request details of the service so that it can be publicised in the village.

e) Consider the Use of General Reserves for Cemetery Extension

The Clerk explained that expenditure on the cemetery is likely to exceed the budget and allocated reserve. The estimated costs on trees required and new cemetery paths comes to approximately £29,250, leaving a shortfall of £4,306. The Chairman recommended that the committee considers approving up to £7,000 in additional funding from general reserves.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Jones, **SECONDED** by the Chairman and **agreed by all** to approve a further £7,000 funding from general reserves for the cemetery extension project.

f) Use of Parish Council Zoom Account

The Council has received requests from Henfield Community Partnership and the Haven to use the Parish Council Zoom account. **It was agreed** by all, on the basis that it is for exceptional circumstances only at the discretion of the Clerk and when not required for use by the Parish Council at the time.

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

None.

12. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 17th November 2020.

Meeting Closed at 8.19pm.