

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting of **Henfield Parish Council**
held on **Tuesday 1st December 2020** at **7:00pm** via Zoom Conferencing.

Present: Cllrs M Eastwood (Chairman), E Goodyear, G Perry, A Donoghue, J Jones, J Potts, R Kendall, A Rickard, N Farrell, C Simmonds, A Sharp, D Jemmett, R Shaw, M Morgan and N Stevens.

In attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk), Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager), Cllr L Barnard (West Sussex County Council - WSCC) and Cllr R Noel (Horsham District Council - HDC) and one member of the public.

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS 'INTERESTS

None.

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3rd NOVEMBER 2020

Approved, to be signed at a later date in the Parish Office by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Cleaning of the Toilet for the Disabled

The Clerk reported that the disabled toilets are currently being cleaned twice a day.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed the Council that Peter Hudson was due to leave hospital yesterday and that he hopes he is well on the road to recovery.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

Cllr Noel stated that he feels that there is currently an increase in developer 'creep', where speculative developers are taking advantage of permitted development and are replacing run down agricultural buildings with new housing in rural areas. In some cases, after getting initial approval for the conversion of an existing outbuilding they then submit a further application using the poor quality of the existing structure to move the building location, or grow the size substantially. He stated that he feels that this is not in the spirit of planning regulations and would like to keep in touch with our Plans Advisory Committee. It was agreed that we are seeing similar applications and Cllr Stevens commented that these applications made under Q class rules and suggested that HDC needs to assess applications more carefully to establish whether they fit Q class criteria.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

6. HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

Cllr Morgan confirmed that Covid 19 is taking a lot of officers 'time, particularly trying to support High Street businesses, and the budget is coming up. Work on the Local Plan and workshops also continue.

Cllr Potts confirmed that progress on the Local Plan is being made and that a decision is imminent. He also reported that there have been ongoing discussions with Grommets. HDC will improve their communications, but are unwilling to sell the site.

7. WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

a) The WSCC Reset Plan and its Impact on Henfield Parish

Cllr Barnard confirmed that the CLC met this week and that the Haven has received a grant. He also confirmed that the proposed speed limit reduction on the A281 between Woodmancote and Henfield was rejected.

With regards to budget cuts, he confirmed WSCC needs £45 million of savings and difficult decisions will need to be taken. Council tax is permitted to rise by 2%. It is suggested that two household waste sites will need to close and there will be a review of library services. CIF grants have been withdrawn and CLC arrangements will be altered. There will also be changes to bus passes and an end to Community Highways Schemes. He suggested that Councillors look at the WSCC website in particular page 105 of the webcast. He will know more a week on Monday and the final debate will take place in February.

Cllr Kendall asked whether the Highway' Capital budget is being transferred to the Highways Maintenance budget. Cllr Barnard was unsure but will find out.

Cllr Perry enquired about the Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee and the Tree Strategy. Cllr Barnard confirmed that the paper is going forward for more discussion.

The Clerk asked whether Operation Watershed would be ended. Cllr Barnard confirmed that the changes are more in relation to traffic regulation orders.

The Chairman asked whether a Parish Council response would be appropriate, Cllr Barnard confirmed it would be, particularly in relation to household waste sites and the proposed charges for DIY waste. The Chairman also confirmed that the Haven and the library are also a concern and suggested requesting consultation with WSCC.

Action Point: The Clerk and the Chairman to draft a letter to WSCC leader Paul Marshall and copied to Jeremy Hunt voicing concerns and requesting consultation.

8. COVID 19 UPDATE

a) Parish Office

Cllr Goodyear confirmed that WSCC is in Tier 2, which will be quite different to previous restrictions. The Parish Office staff will continue to work from home with visits kept to the office as necessary with no more than two staff at a time. The Works Officers are returning to work but will use the outer office for coffee breaks. They will not share the van but will travel independently and the Clerk will arrange to pay petrol expenses. The litter wardens are also returning to work. The public conveniences will re-open, subject to the works officer being happy to clean, but the bus shelter will remain closed so as not to encourage individuals to congregate. Cllr Donoghue confirmed that the Museum will re-open on the 7th December. The Clerk also commented that the Monday market may re start in the Henfield Hall, but this has not yet been confirmed. Cllr Perry asked whether the skate park could re-open. The Clerk confirmed he would check the details. Cllr Potts confirmed that HDC are re-opening all of their outdoor facilities.

Action Point: The Clerk to check that the Works Officer is happy to clean the toilets prior to re-opening and to check whether the skate park can re-open.

b) In the Community

The Chairman explained that he is in discussion with Dr Crawford-Clarke at the Medical Centre regarding the vaccination programme, which is like to start mid-January and take place at Henfield Medical Centre for residents of both Steyning and Henfield. He has offered assistance from the Parish Office with regards to logistics and administration. There may also be some vaccination taking place for NHS staff and in care homes prior to the end of the year.

Cllr Kendall asked why the Henfield Hall is not being used and the Chairman confirmed there were security concerns as well as the issue of the maintenance of the cold chain, which if broken could compromise the vaccine.

Cllr Donoghue commented that WSCC is advertising job vacancies for the vaccination programme and wondered whether these new staff could be available to Henfield. The Chairman confirmed that the Medical Centre already has a small pool of staff and former staff they can call on, and that there may be a need to use volunteers. The budgeting and reporting for the vaccination programme needs to be kept within each surgery as the medical centres are not allowed to make any profit from the vaccination programme. More information is expected to follow.

9. **BUDGETS FOR 2021/22**

a) Proposed Budget Report for 2021/22

The Clerk circulated draft budgets prior to the meeting and emphasised that these were up for discussion. He explained that the Finance Risk and Change (FRC) Committee had not held a formal meeting in November, but had a working group discussion on the budget instead. The FRC will meet in December and will put together its final recommendations, which will be submitted to Full Council in January. The Recreation and Open Spaces Committee (ROS) will be discussing their budget in more detail at their meeting next week. The current draft budgets propose an increase in expenditure of 2% and an increase in precept of 2.5%. This would result in a 4.1% increase for Band D properties, as the number of Band D properties has reduced due to the current economic downturn. He invited questions on the drafts and the Chairman asked whether generally the Council were comfortable with a 2% increase. Cllr Kendall agreed that the increase is reasonable and results in less than a £1 per property increase, which he felt most people would be happy with.

b) Community Buildings Review

A summary was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting. The Chairman confirmed that it was a useful process and suggested an annual review to discuss any changes and progress. He also explained that the review was prompted by a revisit of the Parish Council Strategy document, which highlights the seven priorities of the Council, and in this case our commitment to nurturing and encouraging the 100+ clubs and societies in the village.

c) Provisions and Reserves

The Community Buildings Review has also led to the Chairman reshaping provisioning and how reserves are handled in order to support this strategy and be able to provide some funding to the priority projects on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), using both precept and CIL monies. These draft proposals were discussed and supported by the FRC working group. He hopes that this new approach will enable a bank of money to be built, in order to fund local infrastructure projects and hopefully avoid peaks and troughs in our budgets when we need to fund a large item like the new cemetery extension. He asked the Council for general support for the approach.

Cllr Simmonds confirmed that the Scout building project is close to commencing and that a contribution from the Parish Council would be very welcome. Cllr Kendall stated he is in favour of long-term planning but is yet to be convinced that every project should be supported and that this could raise expectations unnecessarily. He also commented that there may be a need to fund works and services that HDC and WSCC withdraw, due to budget cuts. Cllr Stevens urged caution as some projects may not be feasible and questioned some of the figures allocated against the Henfield Hall. The Chairman responded that in these cases, the projects should be

removed from the IDP and the reserve funding could be reallocated within the four broad funding pools that have been outlined in the proposal.

Cllr Goodyear confirmed her support and explained that it seems likely that financial support would be on a 50/50 match funding basis and that in the proposal, the CIL and Council funding is only delivered when all of the other finance to support the project is in place. The Chairman commented this could be motivating for groups, such as the Youth Club who need to raise £90,000 for their proposed works and will find raising half of that sum more achievable. He also commented that he does not wish funding decisions to be discriminatory and wants to be even handed across the groups and not limit funding to assets that are entirely the responsibility of the Council. Not all projects will be delivered but funding can be moved between the project lines but within the broader reserve pools as they become ready to deliver. He has kept the headings fairly general to allow this flexibility. These should also be specific enough satisfy the auditors.

Cllr Morgan explained that currently not many groups come to the Parish Council for funding, but that the new process of CIL means that groups will be able to bid for funding in a similar way that organisations had to bid to HDC for S106 funds. He also asked whether undistributed reserves would total more than 50% of the precept. The Clerk confirmed that this would not be the case. Cllr Donoghue confirmed that she is supportive of the new approach, that it is flexible and does include capping. She also commented that there will inevitably be conflicting priorities but that decisions can be discussed when necessary. Cllr Potts also voiced his support and commented that the approach is aspirational and innovative while retaining flexibility. Cllr Shaw commented that groups will have different interests, and that they should be assessed based on value and in particular usage which may encourage groups to share facilities.

The Chairman asked that any further views are passed to the Clerk before the next FRC Meeting when the Budget and Precept draft proposals will be finalised, with Councillors asked to approve them at the January Parish Council Meeting.

10. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

(A) **Finance Risk & Change Governance**

Cllr Goodyear to report.

- a) Summary of £23,750.25 - Period 1st November to 30th November 2020
Noted by Councillors.
- b) Select Expenditure as the Monthly Random Audit Check (November)
Cllr Morgan selected Tracmaster Ltd - £16
- c) Approve Spending of £2,500 from the General Reserves on New Shutters at the Bus Shelter and CCTV. Cllr Jones explained that the current bus shelter shutters are old and difficult to use and they require operation by someone strong and tall. The proposal is to replace them with electrically operated shutters. The Village Amenities Committee would also like to install CCTV opposite the bus shelter (subject to the agreement of the house owner) in order to act as a deterrent for anti-social behaviour, but also provide evidence if there were any reported incidents. Other strategies are also being explored by the Youth Club and PCSOs to deal with the issue. Cllr Goodyear pointed out that these steps represented prevention activities and that she was pleased to note the work was also progressing to find a cure solution.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Simmonds, **SECONDED** by Cllr Potts and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve spending of £2,500 from General Reserves on new shutters for the bus shelter and CCTV

Cllr Goodyear then reported that herself and the Operations Manager had attended training courses on Communication and that she is working on a Communications Strategy. The aim is to get in touch with more people and for the Parish Council to be more accessible. The next

Full Council meeting in January will be live streamed on Facebook. This is already in place at some other local parishes and may be rolled out across more of the meetings if successful.

(B) Plans Advisory

Cllr Stevens invited questions on recent minutes.

(C) Recreation & Open Spaces

Cllr Perry reported that there are a lot of ongoing actions relating to the latest meeting and that she has also discussed the suggestion of a youth shelter to support Village Amenities with the issue of anti-social behaviour at the bus stop. It is National Tree Week and she explained that a small working group is discussing some ideas and proposals.

(D) Village Amenities

Cllr Jones reported that a formal decision to discharge planning conditions on the cemetery extension has now been granted by HDC and that path laying work is due to commence later this week. The Committee is also in receipt of quotations for winter planting and for the raised bed in the Village Square.

(E) Museum

Cllr Donoghue reported that the online Museum continues to be popular and that the physical museum will reopen on the 7th December. They are also moving to cashless payments for purchases and donations can be made online via the website. The Committee is looking into purchasing a tablet and small scanner for use in the Museum itself.

(F) Commons

Cllr Sharp invited questions on the recent minutes and reported that there has been discussion regarding the Park Oak on the Common that has some very large branches extending south. The intention is to arrange support for the limbs using nearby trees and to conduct an aerial survey.

(G) Neighbourhood Plan

Cllr Stevens confirmed there is nothing to report until the referendum is permitted and suggested that the item is removed from future agendas for the time being.

Action Point: The Clerk will remove the item from the agenda.

11. REPORTS OF MEMBERS REPRESENTING COUNCIL ON EXTERNAL BODIES

a) SSALC Chairs' Networking Day

The Chairman confirmed this was a useful and well attended online event, focussing on roads and policing, Covid and resilience planning.

Cllr Kendall confirmed that the Leisure Centre is reopening tomorrow and asked if high needs care is returning to the Haven. Cllr Shaw confirmed that this is being discussed tomorrow and by the trustees next week. He has produced a business plan which aims for high needs care three days a week, but a discussion is needed on whether this is viable. He also commented that respite care for carers is also critical. Plans will need to be finalised by January for commissioning and grant applications. The Chairman commented that the Haven is still being used by high needs clients, but that currently they need to be accompanied by a carer.

12. SUSSEX POLICE REPORT

The Clerk confirmed that he has met with the new additional PCSO Graham Foster who will be focussing on Steyning and Henfield. The current PCSO will continue to cover the additional villages of Shermanbury, Cowfold and Partridge Green, as well as Henfield. He is aware of the issues at the bus shelter with anti-social behaviour. He also stated that there are no further developments on the peacocks.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

14. ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

None.

15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 5th January 2021 at 7:00pm via Zoom Conferencing.

The Chairman wished a Merry Christmas to all and hopes for a more normal 2021.

Meeting Closed at 8.49pm.