

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee held on Tuesday 16th February 2021 at 7:00 pm via Zoom Conferencing.

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

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

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 19th JANUARY 2021

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

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Review of Draft Recruitment & Selection Policy and the Preparation of an Equality, Diversity & Inspection Policy and a Dignity at Work Policy

The Chairman confirmed that that the Draft Recruitment and Selection Policy has been sent to the HR consultant for checking. The Clerk confirmed that he is expecting to receive the Equality, Diversity and Inspection Policy and a Dignity at Work Policies from the HR consultant during the week commencing 8th March.

The Chairman stated that she has drawn up a draft Terms of Reference for the Biodiversity Working Group, but that there has not yet been a meeting to discuss it. It is hoping this will take place in March.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

None.

The Chairman recovered the meeting.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Review of SSALC Chairman's Event

The Chairman confirmed that she attended the event which included a presentation from Sussex Police regarding traffic policing. She asked the Committee to note that Henfield is fortunate in comparison to other parishes which have a significant problem with speeding and excess noise. She commented that Sussex Police now have video enabled remote speed cameras which can be moved around hotspots and also have remote units measuring decibels, particularly in areas with complaints of excessive motorbike noise.

She then confirmed there was presentation from Rob Evans, HR Consultant. He highlighted:

- Potential personnel issues regarding refusal of staff to return to work and refusing vaccinations. He also commented that as yet there was no employment case law for Covid 19.
- Councillors need to complete the 'Working from Home' assessment, as it applies to Councillors as well as staff. The Clerk, OP and Parish Administrator have completed theirs.
- The point was made in regards to local plans in the event of the death of a member of the Royal family and that there are set procedures and protocols that Parish Councils need to adhere to (Cllr Eastwood confirmed that there is a process and procedure in place which has been drawn up along with Rev Paul Doick).

The Chairman then confirmed that there is an expectation that Councils will return to face to face meetings after the 7th May as this is when the current legislation which allows remote meetings, expires. This will be discussed further with regards the implications to Henfield Parish Council.

Finally the Chairman mentioned livestreaming of meetings and asked the committee how they would like these to continue, bearing in mind that over 1,200 people had viewed the latest live stream and there were 529 engagements. Cllr Donoghue mentioned that she felt that the most recent meeting did have a particular public interest.

It was agreed that in future to just live stream Full Council meetings and others by exception if there is a agenda item of particular public interest.

The Chairman then mentioned that some Parish Councils operate hybrid meetings, which the OP is looking into as a possibility, as otherwise the increased public engagement may be lost when face to face meetings resume.

6. **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

The Chairman reported that all of the events have been set up on Zoom and Facebook. It was confirmed that the Clerk will contact Care Homes and the OP will also invite Woodmancote and Shermanbury Parish Council to see if they would be interested in attending.

Action Point: The Clerk to invite resident from the three care homes, Upper Mead, Terrys Cross and Red Oaks.

Action Point: The OP to contact Woodmancote and Shermanbury Parish Councils.

7. **MOTION: TO CONSIDER HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP OF WSALC & SSALC**

The Chairman circulated a briefing note to the committee prior to the meeting. She confirmed that that recent events have resulted in SSALC being broken up; they will cease operation on the 31st March and be wound up by the end of June. She also stated that the majority of the 132 member Parishes had been happy with the service from SSALC and that having East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey combined had given economy of scale and a five day a week service. East Sussex and Surrey have already given notice to leave which means West Sussex parishes need to find a new service provider. Surrey services will be provided ad hoc by Mark Mulberry and East Sussex by Trevor Leggo who will operate two days a week. There is a meeting this Thursday with other parishes to discuss the way forward in advance of the WSALC AGM on the 25th February. She also commented that some other large Town Councils from West Sussex have already resigned from WSALC including Haywards Heath and Littlehampton.

Cllr Eastwood explained that he had had a long conversation with Trevor Leggo who explained that there had been no discussion or consultation on service quality, just on cost with a focus on training. The situation has had a huge impact on Trevor and his team, some who have been made redundant and others who have already moved on. However Trevor would very much like to continue to offer a service. There is a possibility that a new 'Sussex' county association could be formed. He also mentioned that there is a growing number of parishes who are wanting the WSALC board to resign due to a lack of confidence and that many are not happy with the WSALC recommendation to use Hampshire ALC as service provider.

The Clerk confirmed that it is necessary to belong to a County Association in order to be a member of NALC. He also mentioned that the training provided by SSALC had been very good, and that in future, if services were to be provided by Hampshire this would mean potentially travelling to Winchester.

Following brief discussion it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Donoghue, **SECONDED** by Cllr Jones and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to permit the Chairman and Cllr Eastwood to attend the meetings on the 18th and 25th February 2021 and vote on behalf of Council. Also to seek to remain part of an County Association and to resign from WSALC as a last resort if there are no other viable options on the table.

8. COUNCIL COMMITTEES – KEY ISSUES

Cllr Jones commented that the Magnolia Grandiflora in the library car park had been removed, despite best efforts to save it. Horsham District Council decided that removal was necessary to prevent further damage to drains and a nearby property. A comprehensive report had been provided.

Cllr Perry reported from Recreation and Open Spaces that there are likely to be financial implications relating to the issues in the Sandpit and that a survey has been instructed. She also asked all Chairs to consider their committees' impacts on the Climate Action Plan over the last year. The Chairman suggested that once completed, these are discussed by the Biodiversity Group.

Action Point: Cllr Perry to send a pro forma and each committee Chairman to complete with consideration to their actions on the Climate Action Plan.

Cllr Perry then stated that a lot of discussion in the Committee had been focused on sports clubs and she felt the issues would be better addressed by the Playing Fields committee.

Action Point: Cllr Perry to contact Cllr Jemmett to suggest a meeting of the Playing Field committee.

Cllr Perry then thanked the Chairman for pointing out the issues relating to the ICO that arose from the minutes of the recent meeting.

Cllr Stevens reported from the Plans Advisory Committee that he felt it was likely that the planning application for Brangwyns would be turned down again by Horsham District Council, despite support for it from Henfield Parish Council.

Cllr Donoghue reported from the Museum Committee that an architect will be visiting the site on Wednesday to advise on the possibility and potential cost of adding an additional storey to the building. Cllr Stevens commented that this had been looked into in the past and that it had been found that the footings were insufficient and that the likely cost would be in the region of £500,000. **It was agreed** to go ahead and investigate the possibility as there will be no initial cost.

Action Point: The Clerk to look in the Parish Office files to see if there are any plans for the original building that might assist the architect.

9. MOTION: TO APPROVE THE AUDITS OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY RISK REGISTERS

The Chairman explained that these had been audited with the Clerk and OP and revised versions were circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chairman stated that there had been a few changes, including a lowering of risk to the cemetery records now that the registers have been digitally scanned and new database is operational. She asked the Committee to note that the separate COVID risk assessments need to be considered alongside and also pointed out that the procedures put in place have demonstrated a much lower risk to business continuity, as Parish Office staff have demonstrated that they can successfully work from home. Despite the low risk to Council operations there is however a significant risk to the community as a whole, and she is working on a Community Resilience document which she hopes will be ready shortly.

Cllr Donoghue asked about the alarm for museum volunteers, the Clerk confirmed that there is a handheld one. Cllr Donoghue stated she would ensure it is mentioned in the Museum emergency plan along with the fact that there ought to be two volunteers on a Saturday.

The Chairman also confirmed that the emergency alarm from the Parish Office was previously located under the counter, but as this has now been removed will be relocated to the wall next to the door.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the audits of the Health and Safety and Business Continuity Risk Registers.

10. FINANCE

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (January)

The Clerk confirmed that there has been a small build up of reconciliations from October 2020 and asked for volunteers to attend the Parish Office to sign them as well as the Internal Controls. Cllr Stevens stated he would attend the office tomorrow if the Clerk left the paperwork ready. Cllr Eastwood stated that he would collect the documents the next day so that he could act as second signatory.

b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – PMW Ltd (£700.00)

Please see above.

c) Progress Report 2020/21

The Clerk confirmed that taking into account two large spends that will be offset by allocated reserves and also taking onto account provisions, the Council is currently at 75% of expenditure at 83% of the way through the year. As things stand, expenditure is likely to be slightly below budget. In terms of income, Council is already at 99.8% of budget. He also reminded members that there will be a payment of £10,000 from general reserves as a contribution to the Scout building appeal and that a new computer has recently been purchased for the Parish Office. This was within the agreed budget.

d) Approve a Grant to the Henfield Community Partnership of £750

The Chairman confirmed that this has been budgeted for.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Donoghue, **SECONDED** by Cllr Jones and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the grant to Henfield Community Partnership (HCP).

The Chairman then asked the committee to consider HCP's request to reduce the number of Parish Councillors on the committee from three to one. **It was agreed** that the Chairman would remain on the HCP committee, however Cllr Stevens pointed out that there could be a potential conflict of interest with regards to finance due to her position as Chairman of this committee. The Chairman confirmed that she would be happy to declare an interest or abstain from voting when budget setting is discussed by HCP and will discuss further with the Chairman of HCP.

Action Point: The Chairman to discuss any potential implications with her remaining as the only Parish Councillor on the HCP committee with the HCP Chairman.

e) CIL Procedure

The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Morgan had some concerns regarding the release of funds which has now been resolved. Cllr Eastwood explained that Cllr Morgan had suggested that funds should not be released until a project is complete but a compromise was reached in that funds could be released on production of a final invoice. This change has been reflected in the policy and in the guidance for organisations. The Clerk confirmed that step 10 had been removed. The Chairman confirmed that this both safeguards the Council's interests and also allows projects to get over their final hurdle.

11. ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

The Chairman confirmed that staff salaries and appraisals would be discussed in March.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 16th March 2021.

Meeting Closed at 19.58pm.