

## **HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee  
held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 7:00 pm via Zoom Conferencing.**

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

**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 16<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021**

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

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

##### **a) WSALC/SSALC Update**

Cllr Eastwood explained that there is a new board of WSALC with a new Chair, and that they have voted against the proposal to use Hampshire ALC's services. A new service proposal has been agreed with Trevor Leggo and Mark Mulberry. The annual subscription has been reduced and service continuity is expected for at least six months while finer details are worked out. Horsham ALC are the only district not to have called their AGM yet, with it currently planned for the 29<sup>th</sup> April. This means a new Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary cannot be elected until then. However, Cllr Eastwood continues to apply pressure for this meeting to take place earlier.

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting.*

### **OPEN FORUM**

There were no members of the public present.

*The Chairman reconvened the meeting.*

#### **5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that during recent local government finance training she, Cllr Jones and Cllr Eastwood attended, it was suggested that there is further explanation of how costs to all Council Tax Bands are affected, not just Band D. Cllr Eastwood has produced a table which will be placed on the website next financial year.

She then reported that following last years Internal Audit, it was recommended that the Parish Council have a Business Plan. Cllr Shaw will be producing a draft. The Chairman mentioned the excellent Business Plan that he recently produced for the Henfield Haven. She also pointed out the benefit of him not being on this committee as a fresh pair of eyes on finance matters, and explained that Cllr Shaw may contact members of this committee for further information.

#### **6. ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – REVIEW**

The Chairman reported that she felt the three Bitesize events had been very successful and positive feedback had been received by the Parish Office. She confirmed the numbers attending as below and suggested that, despite a likely return to face to face meetings, further online events could be held in addition, as they had been so popular.

'Meet the Chairman'- 18 members of the public (MOP) in attendance, 32 viewing on Facebook and 165 further engagements.

'Henfield Outdoors'- 35 MOP in attendance, 64 viewing on Facebook and 912 further engagements.

'Henfield Village'- 32 MOP in attendance, 35 viewing on Facebook and 152 further engagements.

The Operations Manager then explained that the three short surveys have been 'boosted' on Facebook and the Parish Council currently have the following number of responses:

Henfield 2020/21- 164 responses.

Henfield Outdoors- 100 responses.

Henfield Village- 134 responses.

Results will be discussed and collated shortly once the boost period ends. There may be a small additional cost to access all of the individual comments in the surveys, as up until now only the free version of Survey Monkey has been used.

The Clerk confirmed that the cost of these Facebook boosts was £17 so far.

## 7. APPROVAL OF BIODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman confirmed that the group met for the first time last Friday and had agreed their Terms of Reference. The draft was circulated prior to the meeting. Cllr Donoghue asked for clarification on the number of members. The Chairman responded that there would be four in total, and that it is an oversight group to ensure that committees are working together with a common purpose and not duplicating work.

**It was agreed** by all to approve the Biodiversity Oversight Groups Terms of Reference.

Cllr Perry asked whether it would be possible to share the carbon calculator recently circulated by NALC to SH2030 and the Chairman responded that it would be fine.

The Chairman also suggested that the notes from the meetings are shared with this committee.

**Action Point: The Operations Manager to share the Biodiversity Oversight Group notes with this committee.**

## 8. FINANCE

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (February)

Confirmed by the Clerk, all reconciliations are now up to date and signed, apart from February.

b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – ACT Pest Control (£1,100.00)

Internal controls are now signed with the exception of this latest one. The Clerk requested that two volunteers attend the Parish Office to sign. There is no immediate rush to do this.

c) Progress Report 2020/21

The Clerk reported that income is almost exactly on budget, currently within 0.1%. He then reported that expenditure is currently looking slightly over budget, but that money will be offset from allocated reserves for the Leisure Centre car park and cemetery at year-end. The underlying expenditure is likely to be slightly under budget. This means that the general reserves are likely to increase. He reminded the committee that £10,000 has been allocated from general reserves towards the Scout building project.

d) Final Internal Audit 2020/21 – 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021

The Clerk confirmed that the date provided is quite early and some of the information will be needed from the External Audit report. However, the External Auditor has not yet been in touch to detail the information that he/she will require. The Internal Audit will take place online and the information that will need to be submitted is already known. He invited any questions.

e) Approval of Change to Sanlam Investment Mandate

Information was circulated to the committee prior to the meeting. Cllr Eastwood explained that he felt the risk profile was appropriate at level 4, and that the recommendation to move to a fund with lower charges is also sensible. The Clerk explained that the Kingsfield Trust is permanently endowed, so the Parish Council can only use the quarterly income which has only been £1,053 in the previous 12 months, down on previous figures. The rent from the Tennis Club is also included. The investment portfolio value is worth over £84,000. He also confirmed that all Councillors are trustees so any recommendation from this committee will need to be taken to Full Council. Cllr Perry asked whether in future, investment in ethical funds could be considered.

Following further brief discussion, **it was agreed** to recommend to Council approval of this change to the Sanlam Investment Mandate, but with a more detailed review and assessment of the fund performance to be conducted next year.

**Action Point: The Clerk to raise this at the April Parish Council meeting to seek approval.**

f) Review of Financial Regulations

The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Eastwood has reviewed the Financial Regulations and included the agreed change to the provisioning and reserves process. She invited any questions. Cllr Stevens stated that he felt these guidelines were too restrictive and prevented contributions that may be needed to projects not on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). Cllr Eastwood confirmed that there were ranges of percentages and that the wording was taken from the document that the Council had already approved. The Chairman also commented that funds can also be taken from reserves, as was the case with the Scout building project, so she didn't feel that any flexibility has been lost.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Eastwood, **SECONDED** by Cllr Jones and **VOTED FIVE IN FAVOUR AND ONE AGAINST** to approve the Financial Regulations.

g) Approval of Henfield Hall Maintenance Charges

The Clerk explained that quarterly payments of £1,200 are made to the Hall and then a final invoice is usually received early in the new financial year. Due to Covid restrictions and the Hall closure it was available earlier this year. The estimate for the final bill had been £5,300 back in October, but the final total was £3,793.55, taking it £173 over budget, instead of an expected £1,700 approximately. The Clerk also explained that a lot of renovation work has taken place in the Hall this year and that the terms of the lease require the Parish Council to pay 16% of the total cost, as this is the proportion of the Hall taken up by the Parish Office. Cllr Donoghue asked whether there was no credit available for all of the renovation and redecoration work undertaken to the Parish Office by works officers recently. The Clerk confirmed that there is not. The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Morgan is checking on the finer detail of the lease, so the final invoice will be a maximum of £3,793.55.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Goodyear, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED FIVE IN FAVOUR WITH ONE ABSTENTION** to approve the Henfield Hall maintenance charges up to a maximum of £3,793.55

9. **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

a) Approval of the Draft Recruitment & Selection Policy, the Equality, Diversity & Inspection Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy.

The Chairman explained that two of these policies were produced by the HR company as agreed previously. Documents were circulated to the committee prior to the meeting. With regards to the Equality, Diversity and Inspection Policy and Dignity at Work policies, Cllr Perry asked whether training was going to be provided. The Chairman advised that she felt raising awareness instead would be sufficient although further training could be arranged. Cllr Donoghue advised referring to a Code of Conduct rather than a Code of Practice. The Chairman suggested referring to 'the Clerk' rather than line manager or manager. She also explained that these documents would need to be approved by this committee and can then be sent to all Councillors for information, they would be due for review after three years, although to be spread out and starting with those that are legally binding. Cllr Donoghue recommended asking for Councillors to confirm that they have read the most important documents.

**Action Point: The Chairman and Operations Manager to arrange how the personnel documents should be shared with staff and Councillors.**

**Action Point: The Clerk to send the list of documents to Cllr Donoghue for her to advise on which are vital for Councillors to read and confirm.**

With regards to the Recruitment and Selection Policy, the Chairman commented that pre-employment health questions are no longer permitted. Cllr Jones stated that she feels that some sort of check is important for the more physical roles such as for works officers who need to lift and operate heavy equipment. The Chairman recommended that any check is kept specific and relevant to the skills required for the job role. Cllr Donoghue asked whether ongoing fitness checks may be needed and Cllr Jones commented that employers may need to know about disabilities in order to be able to make reasonable adjustments. It was agreed to make further enquiries as to how the Parish Council can phrase their Recruitment Policy to ensure that they can check fitness for duty for manual roles both at the time of recruitment and on an ongoing basis. This can then also be reflected in the procedure document.

**Action Point: The Clerk to contact the HR Company to ask for advice and a suggested amendment to the Recruitment and Selection Policy to ensure that they can verify fitness for duty for manual roles both at the time of recruitment and on an ongoing basis.**

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Perry and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the Equality, Diversity & Inspection Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy subject to the amendments noted above.

*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 would be prejudicial in the public interest. Members agreed to close the meeting to the public.*

#### **The Operations Manager left the meeting**

b) Parish Office Staff Performance Review

This was discussed by the Committee members and the Clerk.

#### **The Clerk left the meeting**

c) Annual Review of Salaries of Council Staff

This was discussed by the Committee members.

### **10. ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Donoghue raised the issue of the proposal to extend the Museum. She had now obtained a quote to produce an initial design with costs. She intends to discuss this with the Hall Committee before bringing to Council. It was recommended that if agreed the Parish Council contribute 50% of the cost of the design report and the Museum pay the other 50%.

Cllr Stevens informed the Committee that the Government will be allowing elections including referendums on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The three main documents required for the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan were now updated and ready to be put on the website, once the HDC documents are completed. Documents need to be published by 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021 for the referendum to be able to go ahead on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** - Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

**Close of Meeting – 21.05.**