

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

**Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee
held on Tuesday 27th April 2021 at 6:00 pm via Zoom Conferencing.**

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

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

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16th MARCH 2021

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

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Personnel Documents – Update

The Chairman confirmed that all the documents are now ready. The Operations Manager explained that there are three options for sharing them with staff and Councillors. File sharing such as Dropbox, emailing links from Office 365 or creating a Council documents page on the website. This could potentially be password protected.

Action Point: The Operations Manager to contact PMW to ask whether creating a password protected page is possible.

Action Point: The Clerk to send a list of the documents to Cllr Donoghue who will determine which are vital for Councillors to read.

b) Change to the Sanlam Investment Mandate

The Clerk confirmed the process is almost complete as investments are moved gradually. He also commented that the investment has increased in value by 22% since last year.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

None

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

a) Community Resilience Plan

The Chairman explained that this is progressing, slowed somewhat by various lockdowns. It has been developed as a framework with other key groups in the village who are in the process of providing input and will have different responsibilities. For example, details of vulnerable people in the community are being held by the Haven and the Helpline.

b) Parish Council Business Plan

Cllr Shaw is in the process of drawing up a draft and has discussed with the Clerk. He will also be contacting the other members of the committee for their input. Once discussed and refined the draft can then be recommended to Council. The auditor recently shared some good examples of other parishes' business plans for Cllr Shaw to consider.

6. COMMITTEE STRUCTURES AND FREQUENCY

The Chairman explained that the outcome of a High Court case is expected this week in order to determine whether remote meetings can continue to be held and be lawful. If not successful, Full Council and this committee's meetings will need to be held face to face. Other committees may be able to continue on a remote basis depending on their agendas and whether any financial decisions need to be made, such as drawing down money from reserves or tenders from contractors. Allocated spending already agreed by Council would be acceptable without a face to face meeting. Cllr Stevens commented that the Local Government Association website states that all meetings must be face to face from the 7th May. The Clerk clarified that the court case is attempting to show that existing legislation already permits remote meetings, but that the final ruling from the Judge will determine how Parish Councils proceed.

With regards to frequency, the Chairman asked members for their views on whether Recreation and Open Spaces (ROS) and Village Amenities (VAC) committees should continue bi-monthly or return to monthly. Cllr's Perry and Jones both agreed that the committees are operating without any particular problems bi-monthly and that more discussion tends to be held via email and decisions are finalised in meetings, although it was felt this perhaps wasn't as democratic. The Clerk commented that in order to return to monthly meetings, resources would need to be increased in the Parish Office, as the Parish Administrator already appears to be working more than her allotted 20 hours per week. Cllr Stevens suggested that the Plans Advisory Committee could free up some of her time by taking their own minutes. The Chairman and Cllr Eastwood also recommended making more use of working groups which also don't require a member of parish office staff to be present. **It was agreed** to continue bi-monthly for the time being.

The Chairman then suggested that Rampion 2 is added to the current list as an official outside body with Cllr Donoghue formally appointed as the representative. This will be taken as a proposal to Full Council.

7. FINANCE

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (March).

The Clerk asked for two members of this committee to attend the Parish Office in order to sign the reconciliations. The Chairman and Cllr Eastwood agreed.

b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – Stonepit Nurseries (£945.00).

As above, the Clerk confirmed that the paperwork is ready to check and sign.

Action Point: The Clerk to leave the paperwork in the outer office.

c) Year End Reports 2020/21

The Clerk confirmed that all of these are completed apart from the annual accounting statement and annual governance statement which are waiting to be signed off at the AGM next week. All of the paperwork will then be ready for the external audit, including the form from the internal auditor. He invited any questions on the reports.

d) WSALC and NALC Annual Subscriptions

The Chairman explained that it had been proposed to wait until there was a clear outcome from the reorganisation of WSALC. Cllr Eastwood explained that the HALC AGM is on the 29th April, where he expects to take over as Chairman. The first board meeting of the newly formed WSALC will then take place on the 30th April. He commented that Trevor Leggo is the new CEO of WSALC and Mulberry & Co will be providing services to Parish Councils. There is also more involvement with Clerks planned in future and it will be proposed that two Clerks take places on the board. He suggested and **it was agreed** to wait until these meetings take place before paying the annual subscriptions. The Chairman also commented that the situation was looking much more promising. The Clerk confirmed that the NALC subscription had not changed and that the WSALC subscription had been reduced by 10%.

It was agreed to discuss item 9 next in order for the Clerk and Operations Manager to be present.

Cllr Jones expressed her concern that there could be some reputational damage to the Parish Council and the Clarkes Mead Trust (for which she is a Trustee) due to the current dispute regarding the new Scout Hut building project and the wildlife on site. She confirmed that there is no risk of financial damage as the £10,000 grant would not be paid to the Scouts until the situation was resolved and final planning permission was granted. She explained that a meeting was planned for next week to also include Rev Paul Doick (as another of the Clarkes Mead Trustees) and they are hoping to be able to reach an amicable way forward. The Chairman recommended taking advice from the Planning department at Horsham District Council and speaking to Cllr Morgan. Cllr Jones confirmed that Cllr Morgan would be attending the meeting next week. Cllr Eastwood clarified that although we have an interest this would not be a Parish Council decision. The Chairman offered this committee's help and advice if needed.

8. PERSONNEL MATTERS

The Clerk and Operations Manager left the meeting

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.

- a) Annual Performance Review for the Clerk.
The Clerk's Performance Review for 2020/21 was discussed and agreed.

9. ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

Please see above as this discussion took place directly after item 7.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 18th May 2021, location to be agreed.

Meeting Closed at 7:00pm.