

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting of the **Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee** held on **Tuesday 20th June 2023 at 7:00pm** in the Committee Room at The Henfield Hall.

Present: Cllrs J Jones, E Goodyear, D Grossmith, M Morgan and N Farrell.

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

MINUTES

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

The Clerk explained that, as quoted in Standing Order 4f, where Council appoints a standing committee for Finance, Risk and Change Governance, the Vice Chairman of Council shall be appointed chairman of that committee. Therefore, Cllr Jones was duly elected as Chairman of this Committee.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

It was agreed by all to defer the appointment of a Vice Chair to the next meeting due to Cllrs Perry and Shaw not being in attendance.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

4. APOLOGIES

Cllrs G Perry and R Shaw. Also Cllr Kendall (as Vice Chair of Recreation and Open Spaces).

5. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2nd MAY 2023

Approved by all; signed and dated by the Chairman.

6. MATTERS ARISING

a) Henfield Community Awards.

It was all agreed to ask Cllr Shaw to put together a working party to discuss criteria and plans for a biennial recognition event for community volunteers, likely to take the form of a garden party at the Henfield Hall. There may need to be a limit of attendees and it was also suggested that a separate event could take place for young people. It was noted that plans for an event in 2024 would need to begin early in the new year.

Action Point: Cllr Shaw to arrange a working group meeting with the two members of the public that have agreed to assist.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

7. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that a further two co-option applications had been received for the two Councillor vacancies, bringing the total to four applications so far. It was agreed that it had been worth advertising the vacancies more widely. There was some discussion to clarify the voting process, as an absolute majority of votes is needed in order to elect a candidate, ie a minimum of seven votes, there being currently thirteen Councillors eligible to vote. Each Councillor will have two votes as there are two vacancies. It was agreed that if there needs to be a second round of voting the candidate with the lowest number of votes could be removed from the ballot. It was noted that it is not necessary for Council to vote in anyone and that Councillors can choose not to vote at any stage of the process. It will be a secret ballot and the only information supplied about candidates will be the details on their application form, which will be circulated to all Councillors with the Full Council meeting agenda.

Action Point: The Clerk will seek advice from WSALC as to the appropriate voting process for this situation.

It was noted that the performance review for the Clerk was nearly complete, and that reviews for the rest of the office staff will follow shortly.

8. **MOTION: TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE OF UP TO £600 FROM GENERAL RESERVES TOWARDS THE COST OF THE STRUCTURAL REPORT AT THE LEISURE CENTRE**

Cllr Goodyear commented that when this request was made, it did not seem unreasonable.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Grossmith and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve expenditure of up to £600 from General Reserves towards the cost of a structural report for the Leisure Centre.

Action Point: The Clerk to request an invoice from the Leisure Centre.

9. **S106 FUNDING FOR THE SKATE PARK – UPDATE**

The OM reported that Barratts had agreed to vary the terms of the S106 agreement, so as to release £30,000 of funding towards improving the skate park. The application is currently with the planning department at HDC, which appeared to be a change in the previous process. The required notice had been served to Barratts.

It was all agreed to discuss item 16 next as it potentially also concerned funding for the skate park improvement project.

10. **REVIEW OF THE BIODIVERSITY & COMMUNITY FACILITIES WORKING GROUPS**

The OM suggested that, as each of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) projects were being allocated to an appropriate committee, there may be no further need to have separate Community Facilities (CF) meetings. The organisations concerned could be invited to attend the relevant committee meeting to give an update, perhaps on a twice-yearly basis. It was noted that this was already taking place with the Football Club, who continue to keep Recreation and Open Spaces Committee informed of their progress and plans.

It was all agreed to defer discussion on the Biodiversity Working Group to the next meeting due to Cllr Perry not being in attendance. There may also be new Councillors elected on 4th July who would be interested in joining the group. It was noted that 2024 had been designated the Year of Biodiversity and planning for this needed to commence shortly.

11. **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF) – UPDATE**

Cllr Goodyear commented that despite receiving no direct communication from HDC on this Fund since November 2022, an email dated 2/6/23 from Horsham District Council (HDC) appears to have taken a unilateral decision to approve the 11- 13 after school Leisure Centre project, outside of any direct consultation with the Parish Office, the working group or Children and Young People committee (CYP). The working group (which includes 3 members of FRC) had until the last meeting (10/5/23) been considering three potential options. She also stated that the decision that has been taken by HDC will pass the financial burden of delivering the 13 – 16 year old options (as requoted in consultation with the young people of the village) back onto the Parish Council, rather than potentially being able to offset some of this funding via UKSPF. It was commented that it would be difficult to see how the CYP committee would be able to continue to manage the project going forward when they have been excluded from much of the discussion and all decision making. It was noted that there is a lot of support for the approach by CYP from other Councillors who have concerns about procedural issues. Concerns were also raised that the leisure centre do not appear to have carried out any feasibility study or proof of concept. It was noted that the project represents a very large spend to make provision for small age range, as primary aged children are already well catered for by the Kids Club. HDC's decision that the funding is available for capital works only seems contrary to the government prospectus for the Fund circulated by HDC in 2022.

Cllr Morgan commented that it appears that the Council have not been properly consulted and he would rather that the funding is not accepted rather than spent inappropriately. He suggested the funding would be better spent on the existing youth club to make it more appealing to the secondary age group and that a response from Full Council to HDC is needed to express the concerns and disappointment that decisions were made without consultation. Requesting a meeting with the Chief Executive of HDC is also an option. It was noted that there have also been communications from the Henfield Community Partnership (HCP) with HDC that CYP were

not party to. The Clerk summarised the most recent email from HDC regarding the project and the subsequent response sent by Cllr Eastwood sent straight after the Full Council meeting. It was felt that this response misrepresented the tone of the meeting as it implied Council support for the project.

Cllr Goodyear commented that it appears that Council will need to reluctantly accept the HDC decision in order to move forward and bring investment into the village. However in order for the Parish Council to be involved in the project going forward it was agreed that HPC would need assurance from HDC that all future communications, questions and decisions come via the Clerk, otherwise the Council cannot be held responsible for running the project. It was also noted that it is important to record the CYP and Full Council concerns as if in future the facility is not used, it can be demonstrated that HPC and the CYP committee were not consulted and were not party to the decision making. It was also queried whether CYP should continue to be involved in the project as the funding appears to be for the purpose of promoting the prosperity and economic development of the village and is not in line with the research that the CYP have carried out.

As it currently appears that there is no opportunity to make an alternative proposal (as HDC has now also confirmed that they would not support loss of any retail or commercial property), different potential uses for the large new room to be created in the leisure centre were briefly discussed as CYP's view is that it is unlikely to be attended as an after school drop except by a few older siblings of children attending the downstairs Kids Club. Suggestions included space for roller skating or other sporting activities, at least therefore allowing the room to be used for a request that the young people had made.

12. APPROVE EXPENDITURE FOR ONGOING COMMUNITY PAYBACK WORK

The Clerk explained that the Community Payback team had done an excellent job so far in painting the play areas and street furniture on the High Street. Further projects were planned, including painting of the bus shelter and public conveniences as well as remaining benches in the village. It was all agreed that this is welcomed and represents very good value for the village. Feedback from the community has also been very positive. So far materials have been purchased using the general expenditure budgets of the Recreation and Opens Spaces and Village Amenities Committees, reducing them by approximately half so far this year. The Clerk requested that £500 from General Reserves be allocated for further purchase of paint, brushes and rollers and other sundries needed.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Morgan and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve expenditure for ongoing Community Payback work.

The group have also been recommended to other organisations in the village such as the Haven. It was noted that they have all their own equipment with the exception of chainsaws, and they would be very happy to undertake some clearance and conservation work on the Commons.

13. REVIEW THE INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN

A draft was circulated prior to the meeting. Further to the discussion under item 10, Cllr Goodyear recommended reinstating the priority ordering of the items on the IDP, using criteria which already exist. This could be considered in the autumn, perhaps through a working group; it was noted that each committee would need to invite the relevant organisations to a meeting in July or September in order to ensure that the information held on the IDP projects is up to date. It was also noted that it may be possible to remove some items from the IDP, such as those for the school, library, and medical centre, as a recent change in CIL regulations suggests that these larger infrastructure projects will have funding allocated separately. This committee would also consider in the autumn whether projects should continue to be included on the basis of whether they are realistic and achievable. An updated IDP can then go to Full Council to consider approval.

Action Point: The OM to ensure that each committee is aware of the IDP items that they need to review, and to ensure that this item is included for discussion on committee agendas.

14. HENFIELD SCOUT COMMUNITY CENTRE – UPDATE

It was noted that the Rampion grant has now been reinstated but that there is still no clarification on the position with the Garfield Weston grant, or confirmation on the approval of the loan note scheme. The doors and windows have not yet been installed and work is currently taking place on the cladding. The Clerk confirmed that Council is not yet in a position to release their contribution. Cllr Farrell asked whether the Scout Community Centre could benefit from UKSP funding. Cllr Goodyear replied that she understood that this project was too far along the process to be considered by HDC as a new project.

15. COUNCILLOR TRAINING

Cllr Goodyear recommended that it would be appropriate to be able to demonstrate a general level of competence, particular with regards to public trust and the handling of finances. It is also a factor for consideration on the Risk Register. She is working on a matrix of training attended by Councillors, with a view to ensuring that each committee have a sufficient and up to date knowledge base; this would hopefully also identify any areas where training is lacking. This was not to suggest that all Councillors needed to attend all training, rather to encourage knowledge sharing and an appropriate level of expertise in order to advise and assist others. It was also noted that it may be possible to arrange some in-house training.

16. KINGS FIELD CHARITY – POTENTIAL EXPENDITURE FROM FUNDS HELD AS A PERMANENT ENDOWMENT

A report was circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that an application to the Charity Commission could take several months. The skate park improvement project is likely to cost up to £50,000, leaving a shortfall of £20,000 even if the S106 application is successful. It was agreed to put a motion to the Kings Field Trustees, following the next Full Council meeting, requesting that an application be made to release £15,000 of funds. The Clerk commented that there is £23,000 available in CIL funds that has a spending deadline of five years; this could be used for any remaining shortfall.

17. FINANCE

a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (April & May).
Each signed and dated by two Councillors.

b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – April & May.
Each signed and dated by two Councillors.

c) Ethical Banking Update.
The Clerk confirmed that £75,000 had been transferred into a new Charity Bank account. The Unity Bank application was still ongoing as the Council Chairman's details were also now required. He also confirmed that funds have been transferred from one Natwest Account to a new 95 day notice account with a much better interest rate.

18. ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS

Cllr Morgan stated that he appreciates the work of the Parish Office staff who do an excellent job and have been working in particularly difficult circumstances recently.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

18th July 2023.

Meeting Closed at 8.33pm.