

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL - FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting of the **Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee** held on
Tuesday 25th July 2023 at 7:00pm in the Garden Room at The Henfield Hall.

Present: Cllrs J Jones (Chairman), E Goodyear, G Perry, M Morgan and R Shaw.

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

MINUTES

1. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR**

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Goodyear, **SECONDED** by the Chairman and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to appoint Cllr Shaw as Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year.

2. **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

None.

3. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr N Farrell.

4. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20th JUNE 2023**

Approved, signed and dated by the Chairman.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Clerk confirmed that he has issued and now paid the invoice for the building survey work at the Leisure Centre. It was also noted that there had been no need to request advice on voting procedure and that all went well in the recent co-option process.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

6. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

7. **CONSIDER THE SKATE PARK FUNDING PROPOSALS PREPARED BY COUNCILLOR EASTWOOD**

A report containing funding options to make improvements to the skate park was circulated prior to the meeting. Indicative quotes suggest that improvements will cost in the region of £47,000 to £50,000 and a recent ROSPA report also indicates that there are also some repairs needed to the existing concrete surface. Cllr Eastwood commented that he is not convinced that the existing Children and Young People Committee budget will be spent by the end of this year, therefore a proportion of its budget should be repurposed in order to fund the skate park improvements which he believes would enable the work to take place sooner. Cllr Shaw commented that as a Kings Field Trustee as well as a Councillor, he feels that an alternative to using the money from the Kings Field Trust may be preferable. Cllr Morgan stated that he feels that as the King Field Trust money is restricted to spending on the Kings Field, it would be appropriate to use a proportion of this charity money as Council budgets and CIL can be spread around other projects and areas in the village. He added that although the application to the Charity Commission has been made, as agreed at Full Council earlier this month, the money does not need to be spent if it is approved. A final decision on the ability to use S106 funds is also awaited from Horsham District Council. Cllr Eastwood added that the income from the Trust contributes towards the upkeep of the Kings Field. Cllr Goodyear commented that the feedback on the application to the Charity Commission will be useful regardless of the final decision taken. The Chairman concluded and **it was agreed** that the options in the proposal should be considered by the Children and Young People Committee as part of their ongoing discussion.

Action Point: The OM to ensure that Cllr Eastwood's funding proposals are included for discussion at the next meeting of the Children and Young People Committee.

8. **APPROVE THE PROCEDURE FOR THE FORMATION & OPERATION OF WORKING GROUPS**

A proposal drawn up by Cllr Goodyear featuring examples used by other Parish Councils was circulated prior to the meeting along with Cllr Eastwood's comments in response, which followed his request for advice from the West Sussex Association of Local Councils. The Chairman commented that this was a useful starting point and suggested the Committee discuss each point of the proposal. With regards to terminology used, for example referring to 'task and finish groups' as opposed to 'working groups', **it was agreed** that as long as terms of reference are clear the terminology can be relaxed. **It was agreed** that points 1 and 2 (describing purpose and decision-making powers) were acceptable. With regards to point 3, communications outside of the Council, **it was agreed** that it is appropriate and best practice to ensure that the Clerk is copied in on any outside communications in order for him to have oversight on whether any potentially sensitive or confidential views or information might be being shared inappropriately. It was noted that the importance of confidentiality is clear in the standing orders and this can be emphasised with new Councillors as part of the induction process. Points 4 and 5 relating to terms of reference and termination of working groups **were agreed** to be acceptable. With regards to point 6, **it was agreed** that the terms of reference and membership of working groups could be published on the website, however notes taken should not, as these could be counterproductive or put constraints on any involved members of the public. **It was agreed** that all working group notes should be circulated to all Councillors as sometimes the short reports within Committee minutes do not contain enough background information. Point 7 suggests that there ought to be a minimum of two Councillors plus an officer present in all working groups. There was general agreement that it is preferable and usually helpful to have an officer present and that having more than one Councillor is likely to represent best practice, as a single Councillor's views are potentially vulnerable to misinterpretation or distortion. **It was agreed** that the sponsoring committee should make the decision on how the group is comprised, with an emphasis on flexibility. With regards to point 8, **it was agreed** that there is not always a need to take decisions to Full Council following a working group recommendation; the sponsoring Committee will take any decisions regarding next appropriate actions. There were no suggested alterations to points 9, 10 or 11.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Goodyear, **SECONDED** by the Chairman and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the procedure and operation of working groups subject to the amendments agreed above and following the circulation by email to the committee of an amended version.

Action Point: The Chairman and Cllr Goodyear to meet to finalise and then circulate the amended version of the working group operation and procedure document.

9. **APPROVE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BIODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP**

It was noted that this is a general oversight group responsible for monitoring the Council's progress and actions relating to the Climate Action Plan, rather than a working group with a target end point. Members in the past included the Chairman, Cllr Goodyear, Cllr Perry and Cllr Potts. It was noted that this is important work that must continue and report to Full Council, therefore **it was agreed** that notes from the oversight group will be circulated to all Councillors going forward and that the Chairman can highlight the work of the group and encourage questions in her regular reports to Full Council. It was acknowledged that there may be other Councillors interested in contributing to the group, therefore **it was agreed** to approve the current continuing membership with a view to inviting other Councillors in addition. **It was also agreed** that the current members would meet to discuss and ensure that the group's terms of reference are still appropriate and applicable, particularly in light of the planned Year of Biodiversity in 2024.

Action Point: The current members of the Biodiversity Oversight Group to meet and discuss terms of reference as above and then invite other Councillors to join the group as appropriate.

10. **COMMUNITY AWARDS WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**

Cllr Shaw is arranging a planning meeting with the two members of the public who have agreed to be members of a working group to implement a biennial Community Awards event. It was agreed that Full Council would act as sponsoring committee, as they had in the past with the Citizen of Henfield awards. It was also agreed that it would be appropriate to involve a second and possibly third Councillor in the group and that terms of reference would be needed.

Action Point: Cllr Shaw to invite Cllr Davey and one other to join the group and to draw up proposals for the terms of reference.

11. **COUNCILLOR TRAINING COVERING COUNCIL BUDGETS**

The Clerk offered to run a short training session on the budget reports and understanding the budget-setting and precept process, for Councillors who have recently joined as well as longer-term Councillors. It was all agreed that this is a good idea.

Action Point: The Clerk to invite Councillors to a budget training session and circulate some suggested dates.

12. **FINANCE**

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

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

c) Ethical Banking Update.
Set up of the Charity Bank and Unity Trust Bank accounts are now complete, although the Unity Bank set up two accounts instead of one in error, so the Clerk is arranging to have one of them closed.

13. **ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Morgan asked that Councillors are all reminded that any communications that take place outside of Council using a Parish Council email address should copy in the Parish Office, so that the Clerk is informed. It was all agreed that this would be best practice, particularly if a Councillor is speaking on behalf of Council. This can be mentioned as part of the induction for new Councillors.

Action Point: The Chairman will remind Councillors to copy in the Parish Office with any outside email communications as part of her report at the next Full Council meeting.

14. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

12th September 2023.

Meeting Closed at 8.20pm.