



**Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross,
Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 5TH DECEMBER 2017 AT 19:30
IN THE PARISH COUNCIL ROOM, ROTHERFIELD VILLAGE HALL**

COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Cllr. L. Henrick (Chair)

Cllr. T. Gilbert

Cllr. D. Hiles

Cllr. R. Harris (Vice Chair)

Cllr. A. Hardy

Cllr. A. Martin

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

None.

ALSO PRESENT

Andrew Fermor, Chair of the Friends of Rotherfield Surgery

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (LGA 1972 s 85).

None.

2. TO RECEIVED DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

None. Clerk has reviewed the issue raised regarding all Councillors having an interest in the matter setting the Council's Precept as they are Council Tax Payers. It has been determined that section 10 (2) (c) vi of the Council's code of Conduct, as adopted at the 30th August 2012 Parish Council Meeting, covers the matter and it is therefore not necessary to pass a separate dispensation for Councillors to deal with Budget and Precept matters.

**3. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING 18TH APRIL 2017.
& MATTERS ARISING.**

It was **RESOLVED** that these be adopted as a true record and they were signed by the Chair.

4. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING AGENDA ITEMS: -

i. 2018/19 Budget and Precept.

a) Review budgets presented by Committees.

Cllr. Hiles arrived at this point in the meeting.

it was **RESOLVED** that a report and update be presented by Cllr. Henrick regarding recent developments with the Surgery issue as the matter could potentially have a significant effect on the Council's 2018-19 budget; key points of her report were as follows: -

- Cllr. Henrick had attended today's meeting of the High Weald Lewes Havens Care Commissioning Group (CCG) at Lewes, and was the only member of the public present.
- "Patient Engagement" was mentioned a great deal at the meeting and there was a request that consultation processes regarding Surgery changes be clear and streamlined as issues affecting Rotherfield may increasingly be faced by other surgeries.
- The lay member of the Committee highlighted the two challenges facing Rotherfield Surgery, those of capital and staffing; his view was that solving one of the issues would not automatically solve the other and he wished that the Parishioners be aware of this.
- Some Rotherfield patients had registered at other local surgeries who appealed for a quick resolution of the matter;

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- Cllr. Henrick was permitted to address the CCG meeting and made those present aware that there was much energy and will in the Community to retain a GP service in the Village.

Other developments reported by Cllr. Henrick were as follows :-

- The Surgery Steering Committee, comprising Cllr, Henrick, Andrew Fermor and Dr. Golton from the practice had held its first meeting. The East Sussex Healthcare Trust have expressed an interest in becoming involved with the Surgery. Next meeting of the Steering Committee is in mid-January.
- Some provision should be made in the forthcoming budget to support expenditure which may be required whilst keeping in mind that we do not wish to make an excessive increase for an uncertain requirement. Precept document must be at Wealden DC no later than 21st February.
- Working Group of Councillors, and a representative of Rotherfield St Martin, has been formed to come up with ideas and recommendations to support a continuing surgery presence in the Village.
- Processes and costs associated with capital borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) has been investigated. The Working Group are to study this in detail to see what may be needed for inclusion in the Budget/Precept.
- The Steering Committee were informed that a valuation of the Surgery is to take place this week; the District Valuer valued the premises two years ago based on it continuing as a doctors' surgery.
- Cost of running the premises, and any income it may generate, can only be estimated at this stage. Based on inclusion of repayments to service a £500K loan an estimated total figure for this of £3K per month was suggested.
- Clerk suggested that the February Parish Council meeting, currently scheduled for Thursday 22nd, could be brought forward in that week to enable final discussion and agreement of budget and precept as late as possible, thus taking into account any developments over the next two months.
- Andrew Fermor addressed the meeting. He suggested that there could be other funds available and that the Steering Committee should discuss this with him. Public interest should be kept "on the boil" by keeping them informed of what is happening. Two initiatives are currently being pursued, the approach from East Sussex Healthcare Trust being discussed with Dr. Golton and the purchase of the Surgery premises by the Parish Council. Focus should be on these two initiatives only.
- Chair is to speak to the Communications Committee to draw up an update for communicating with the Parishioners, with review by Andrew Fermor.

RESOLVED that the Surgery Working Group should commence drafting a feasibility report for finance/borrowing for possible purchase of the Surgery and for the Communications Committee to draft an update for the Community for review by Andrew Fermor of the steering group prior to publication.

Details of individual committee budgets had been agreed at those committees. The Communications budget had reallocated various costs such as website and IT to the Council's administration budget. The amalgamation of various budget headings to simplify monitoring and reporting will be undertaken after the year end.

b) Review combined Parish Council total budget.

After review by this Committee the final figures for the precept calculation were as follows :-

BUDGET HEADING	AGREED 2018/19 TOTAL BUDGET £	Less ESTIMATED UNDERSPEND 2017/18 £	ADJUSTED TOTAL FOR PRECEPT £
Council Administration (a)	40650	0	40650
Communications and Social Media (a)	3000	1800	1200
Capital Projects – Highways (c)	17500	17500	Nil
Lighting (b)	16500	4000	12500
Highways(b)	14400	3000	11400
Capital Projects - Recreation and Burial (c)	3500	3000	500
Recreation Ground and other open spaces (b)	15500	0	15500
Burial Grounds(b)	10300		10300
TOTALS	121350	29300	92050
Total Precept figure for consideration by the Full Council			92050

NOTES

Funding required from the 2017/18 precept for:

(a) Expenditure - Council administration	41850
(b) Expenditure - Parish overheads	49700
(c) Capital Projects - Improvements for the community.	500
Total	92050

c) Agree Precept for 2018/19 to be considered for final agreement by the Full Council.

- Based on the total figure above of £92050 for the Precept, and the provisional Council Tax Base Figure provided by Wealden DC of £1562.90, the annual sum for the Parish Council element of the 2018-19 Council Tax would be £58.90 for a "Band D" property.
- It was **RESOLVED** that this Committee recommend a provisional precept figure of £92050, subject to possible revision and approval by the Full Council at the February meeting to take account of any support required for the Surgery or other agreed adjustments, for presentation to Wealden District Council by the February 21st deadline.
- It was further **RESOLVED** that the reserve accounts be simplified by retaining the 50% Precept Contingency Reserve category, and amalgamating the remaining headings to an "Other Reserves" category; CLERK to arrange at year end once the final precept figure has been determined.

- ii. **Councillor Annual Allowances. Consider increasing level permitted so that Councillors who so require may draw on them in respect of carer costs.**
Item 2e) of the WDC 2017/18 report on this matter contains their view on this which also suggests that Councils set their expenses limit at a level that would enable these costs to be reclaimed by Councillors if necessary.
RESOLVED to redesignate account 4140 “Chairman Allowance” as “Councillor expenses” and set the total budget for this at £1250 for 2018/19. CLERK to note.
- iii. **National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) pension auto enrolment. Consider increasing employer contribution rate above the minimum figure.**
RESOLVED to increase Council’s contribution to 3% of Clerk’s salary from April 2018. This is when, under the conditions of the Auto Enrolment scheme, the contribution levels and total monthly contributions, including 2% from Clerk, will rise to 5%. From April 2019 contribution levels will rise to a total of 8% with a minimum employer contribution of 3%.
- iv. **Agree adjustments required to correct “netting off” income and expenditure in certain budget categories.**
Audit advice is that income and expenditure should be identified separately. Therefore, the following accounts require adjustment.
- Burial fee income 1300. £3199 cost of Old Burial Ground memorial work was debited to this account; this to be taken from General Maintenance 4380.
 - £434 Gravedigging costs recovered from Funeral Directors have been credited to 4393 – transfer of £434 to 4380 required to regularise the position.
- RESOLVED** that **CLERK** make the required adjustments.
- v. **Bank accounts – Clerk’s recommendations.**
- a) **Open account with another deposit holder to take full advantage of the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.**
This scheme covers up to £85K per financial organisation holding a deposit. For much of the year the Council’s total balances exceed this; it is recommended that an additional account is opened with another bank to maximise protection. Unity Bank is used by many local authorities and it was **RESOLVED** that **CLERK** arrange to open an account with them.
- b) **To utilise on line payments for settling invoices.**
Clerk reported that Unity Trust offer an online payments system to reduce the need to write cheques and this would feature “triple authorisation” like the current “three signatures” on cheques. Advised that: -
- This would save time for Clerk in writing cheques and addressing envelopes, simplify the bank reconciliation process and save Councillor time at the monthly meetings in cheque signing
 - The greater majority of our suppliers now include their bank details so that this facility may be utilised to pay them.

Councillor Hardy noted that Unity do levy a monthly service fee but that, based on the Clerk’s comments, the time and postage cost saved would more than offset this.
RESOLVED to introduce “on line” payments to suppliers as soon as possible.

5. URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA.

- Clerk reported that the fitness instructors holding sessions on Court Meadow Green had been in contact and had made a personal visit to him. Confusion has arisen as the address shown on their Facebook page is out of date, hence letters had not reached them. Paperwork has now been completed and evidence of £3m of Public Liability cover held. Although this is below the usual required level of £10m it was confirmed by the Councillors that this lower figure would be acceptable. **CLERK** is to write to the instructors who hold the classes advising that the Council wish future training sessions to take place on the Recreation ground, and suggest the old "tennis court" area as an ideal location.
- Reported that the Crowborough Scout Hut had suffered internal damage due to it being let for a teenage party which was apparently unsupervised with behaviour getting "out of hand". Clerk to advise the Village Hall and Rotherfield Scouts.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

April 10th 2018 at 19:30 in the Scout Hut.

Chair declared the formal business of the meeting closed at 21:35

7. PUBLIC FORUM.

None.

.....Chair.....Date