MINUTES of the Meeting of the FINANCE & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Thursday 15 October 2020 via Teams Video Conferencing.

Members present:

Malcolm Llewellyn (Chair)	Rodney Jackson
Julia Shorrocks (Vice-Chair)	Seth Jee
Allan Brown	John Lowman
Stephen Hand	Duncan Ranger
	Claire Majsai

Also present: Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council & Andy Beams Locum Finance Officer

F20/21.045 Apologies for absence: There were no apologies for absence.

F20/21.046 Declarations of interest: There were no declarations of interest.

F20/21.047 Minutes of the meeting of Finance & Governance Committee of 17 September 2020: The minutes were received and accepted and would be signed by the Chairman at the next available opportunity.

F20/21.048 Adjournment for questions from the public: There being no members of the public present the Committee was not required to adjourn the meeting in accordance with Standing Orders.

F20/21.049 Payments and receipts for month 6 (September 2020): The Committee noted the following:

i. Payments of £31,480.04 (excl. VAT). These included the costs of strimming the Holy Trinity Lower Churchyard (£600) which is the responsibility of the Parish Council; and the costs of improving the drainage and resurfacing at Court Bushes (£7,200).
ii. Receipts of £146,631.65 (VAT not applicable). The Locum Finance Officer explained the second half year precept payment had been received.

F20/21.050 Financial monitoring for month 6 (September 2020): The Committee considered the account records in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Council, as follows:

i. Members noted the Bank Reconciliations (where there has been activity). The other cashbook balances have not changed. These will be signed by the Vice-Chair.
ii. Members noted the Balance Sheet. The Locum Finance Officer explained the allotment deposit holding account and COVID-19 grant (Ear Marked Reserve) were now shown separately on the balance sheet.
iii. Members noted the Detailed Income and Expenditure by Budget Heading. Members reviewed each line of the budget. In response to questions the Chair explained the Wallgate agreement is paid annually for the service of the hand wash wall units in the public toilets, the Tennis Club income is due in December and the allotment water bills are estimates in advance. The Finance Officer explained that due to the recent water mains failure, refunds of £75 were being received for each water account.
iv. Members noted the Summary Income and Expenditure by Budget Heading for month 6 (Sept. 2020).
v. Members noted the second quarter VAT return presented for information. Cllr Jackson queried whether hirers pay VAT at Court Bushes and the Chair requested clarity on all VAT matters and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the following for Month 6 (September 2020):

i. Bank Reconciliations.
ii. Balance Sheet.
iii. Detailed Income and Expenditure by Budget Heading.
iv. Summary Income and Expenditure by Budget Heading.
v. Second quarter VAT return.

F20/21.051 Deposits and investments: The Committee noted the current funds held by the Council at 30 September 2020. The three new bank accounts are in the process of being created for additional S106 funds received in support of Hurst Meadows.

Financial Institution	Account Type		Amount
Unity Trust	Current account	n/a	£420,119.91
Nationwide	95 Day Savings Account	95 days' notice	£54,107.44
Nationwide	2 Year Fixed Term Bond	11/02/2021	£33,614.78
Cambridge & Counties BS	3 Year Fixed Term Bond	10/05/2021	£51,716.82
Cambridge & Counties BS	3 Year Fixed Term Bond	14/11/2021	£35,770.00

A further £46,373.99 is held with the CCLA in shares at 30 September 2020, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee NOTED the current funds held by the Council at 30 September 2020.

F20/21.052 Coronavirus Cancellation Policy: Members considered the Council Minute of 24 September 2020 (Minute C20/21.051.3) which noted the Coronavirus Cancellation Policy was still applicable but discussed adding an official revision/expiry date to the Policy. The Finance & Governance Committee was asked to consider this request and make a recommendation to Council on 22 October 2020. The Chair confirmed the policy had been applied to the Village Centre as well as the Parish Council's whole estate to give hirers the confidence to make new bookings. The wider point of the Parish Council's policies all being applied to the management of the Village Centre was discussed and would be added to a future Hurstpierpoint Village Centre Trustees meeting. The Chair agreed that a review of the policy would be considered by the Committee in March 2021 and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend to Council that the Coronavirus Cancellation Policy contains an official revision date of 31 March 2021.

F20/21.053 Half yearly financial analysis: Members considered a briefing note to assist the Committee in reviewing and assessing the Council's financial position at the half-way point of the year and make recommendations to Council. The Chair explained the current underspends on salaries due to two vacant posts in the establishment and the postponement of certain expenditure such as the new decking at Court Bushes, any cycleway expenditure and also the Hurst Festival Super Sunday which did not take place this year. It may be possible to secure external funding for the decking e.g. from Section 106 funds. The under-recovery of income at Court Bushes is the greatest concern. It was agreed that the calculation of the fee charged to the Village Centre by the Parish Council for management, bookings and maintenance would stay the same for the next year to two whilst we gain a better understanding of the time spent on the work. Following the report by Police Sergeant Jon Crabtree at the Community Engagement Committee meeting on 8 October, the Community Engagement Committee may wish to offer funding to voluntary organisations that support domestic abuse victims. The Finance Officer was thanked for his excellent report and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED:

i. **That it is appropriate to invoice the Village Centre for the first half of the year at £6,097.50.**
ii. **To transfer the amount of £10,172 from the Hurst Meadows EMR to cover expenditure for quarter 2.**
iii. **That the transfer to the Court Bushes Sinking Fund EMR will be assessed at the conclusion of Quarter 3 (December 2020) based on the budget position at that time; and it was**

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend to Council that:

iv. The Community Engagement Committee may recommence activities within its agreed budget, although grant requests are to be limited to supporting local organisations.

v. Given the council's overall financial position at the end of quarter 2, all Committees may continue with budgeted expenditure items, except for the new decking at Court Bushes which would be reviewed again at the end of Quarter 3.

F20/21.054 Parish Action Plan: Members considered a revised Action Plan (version 11) following minor changes made by the Community Engagement Committee on 13 August and the Estates & Facilities Management Committee on 10 September. The Committee considered removing the dates from the Plan (2016-2021) and making it a rolling plan and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend to Council that:

i. Council ADOPTS the revised Action Plan (version 11); and

ii. The date 2016-2021 would be removed, and the plan would become a rolling action plan with six monthly updates and revisions.

F20/21.055 Budget and precept 2021/2022: Members considered a briefing note to assist the Committee prepare for the work required to assist the Council set a budget and fix the precept (Council Tax requirement) to be levied for the ensuing financial year, by no later than the end of January 2021. Cllr Jackson was concerned about any changes to the tax base i.e. the number of properties that will pay Council Tax. The Chair reassured the Committee that we would fully cost our agreed outputs, as we did last year, and once the tax base was known, the impact on a Band D Council Tax charge would established and Council would decide whether outputs need to be changed. A base-line assumption of a 2% inflationary increase will be applied unless actual costs are known. For example, the pay award this year was 2.75% and therefore this figure will be used for forecasting salary costs. The Finance Officer explained that last year's Parish Council increase in the precept meant that over a 5 year period it was still lower than the Mid Sussex average. In future, further work will be undertaken to analyse the true expense of the services we provide and whether they are covering their costs and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the principles and timescales of the budget and precept setting process for 2021/2022.

F20/21.056 West Sussex Pension Fund Pooling Agreement: Members considered signing the West Sussex Pension Fund Agreement letter of variation, which covers the arrangements of participating in the Small Scheduled Bodies Pool. The pooling agreement ensures that the smaller authorities pension fund is shared amongst smaller councils. WSCC have sent the Council a letter of variation to this Agreement, which we are asked to review, complete, sign and return by 30 October 2020. The changes to the regulations are a minor amendment to the wording in two clauses to include "Admission Body" as a further category of joiner. Due to the very minor amendment in the agreement which had no material implications on the content, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED that the Clerk could sign and return the letter from West Sussex County Council regarding the minor variation to the Pension Fund Pooling Agreement, by 30 October 2020.

The Committee is asked to note any information items, correspondence received or requests:
There were no additional items.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.38pm.

Chairman