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MINUTES of the Meeting of the FINANCE, GOVERNANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Thursday 19 October 2023 at the Hurstpierpoint Village Centre.

Members present: Duncan Ranger (Chair), Rodney Jackson (Vice-Chair), Mark Froud, Malcolm Llewellyn, Cllr Claire Majsai, Cllr Annette Street

Also present: Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council & Responsible Finance Officer and Stephen Witchell, Estates & Facilities Manager.

F23/24.054: Apologies for absence: Apologies for absence were received from Cllr David Evans, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee ACCEPTS the apologies for absence from Cllr David Evans.

F23/24.055: Declarations of interest: There were no declarations of interest.

F23/24.056: Previous Minutes: The minutes of the Finance, Governance & Estates Committee meeting on 19 September 2023 were received and accepted by the Committee and signed by the Chair, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the minutes of the Finance, Governance & Estates Committee meeting held on 19 September 2023.

F23/24.057 Adjournment for questions from the public: There were no members of the public present so the meeting was not adjourned.

F23/24.058 Parish Council Financial Monitoring for Month 6 (September 2023): The Committee noted:

(i) Payments of £35,564.06 (EX VAT).
(ii) Receipts of £169,615.69 (VAT N/A). This included receipt of the second half year precept of £151,819.
(iii) Bank Reconciliations. These were signed by Vice-Chair, Cllr Jackson.
(iv) Balance Sheet. The use to which the earmarked reserves were to be put were explained.
(v) Nominal Ledger.
(vi) Income and Expenditure. Explanations were given for the employer National Insurance contributions (5110-101) currently showing 55.6% spent. It was also explained that budget forecasting for the year end position was not undertaken at this time.
(vii) Q2 VAT Return.
(viii) The funds held in CCLA shares on 30 September 2023 of £103,271.78.
(ix) The deposits and investments accounts on 30 September 2023 were as follows.

Financial Institution	Account Type	Maturity Date
Unity Trust	Current Account	N/A
Unity Trust	Savings Account	N/A
Nationwide	95 Day Savings Account	95 Days notice
Cambridge & Counties BS	1 Year Fixed Term Bond	22/06/2024
Cambridge & Counties BS	1 Year Fixed Term Bond	28/11/2023
United Trust Bank	1 Year Fixed Term	19/12/2023
Redwood Bank	1 Year Fixed Term	17/02/2024

The Clerk explained the situation with the signatories for the United Trust Account and it was agreed the Clerk would co-sign the mandate to allow signatories to be added, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the Parish Council financial monitoring for Month 6 (September 2023) and that the Clerk would co-sign the change in signatories form for the Unity Trust Bank mandate.

F23/24.059 Village Centre Financial Monitoring for Month 6 (September 2023): The Committee noted:

(i) Payments of £7,555.94 (VAT N/A).
(ii) Receipts of £5,352.24 (VAT N/A).
(iii) Bank Reconciliations. These were signed by Vice-Chair, Cllr Jackson.
(iv) Balance Sheet.
(v) Income and Expenditure. The Clerk will consult the Internal Auditor regarding how the Shawbrook Bank error is shown in the accounts.
(vi) Bank accounts held were i) CAF Cash Current Account and ii) CAF Gold Savings Account. Maturity dates do not apply, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the Village Centre financial monitoring for Month 6 (September 2023) and for the Clerk to explore how the Shawbrook Bank error is shown in the accounts.

F23/24.060: Parish Action Plan: The Committee reviewed the:

i) **the Finance & Governance Action Plan:** The Committee considered the action plan and agreed that WSCC would be chased for a response to the letter regarding the future of the Village Centre. The Committee noted the benefits of the Village Centre joining Action in Rural Sussex for their support and advice and noted the £120 subscription. New councillors will be invited to complete the WSCC training courses. The Sharepoint project is progressing. A new draft Winter Plan will be presented to the November Committee for consideration. The visioning/business planning process will be developed with a project plan to agree the process.

ii) **the Estates & Facilities Action Plan:** The Committee noted the Watercourse Consent Form had been approved by WSCC for the drainage plans for Reeds Lane Recreation Ground. Two new benches were being organised with the Monday Group for Hurst Meadows which would be funded by Section 106 money. A meeting was held with Batchelor Monkhouse on countryside stewardship grants that might be available to help fund the maintenance of Hurst Meadows. The liaison meeting with the new Lost Woods Project Manager did not take place. Recommendations will be brought forward in due course following the bin audit, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the updated Action Plans for 2023/2024.

F23/24.061: Review of 2022/23 External Audit Report: The Committee noted the External Auditor's (Moore West Sussex) Certificate for the 31 March 2023 accounts which stated there were no matters that had come to their attention giving cause for concern, and agreed to recommend it to Council for adoption, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend to Council the adoption of the External Auditor's (Moore West Sussex) Certificate for the 31 March 2023 accounts.

F23/24.062: Parish Council Half Year Financial Analysis: The Committee reviewed the Parish Council's financial position at the half year stage and agreed the actions required including any changes to earmarked reserves, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED:

i) the billing arrangements for the electricity and water billing at each site are clarified;
ii) further transfers from Earmarked Reserves into Cost Centres, above those already agreed, were not recommended at this time;
iii) the £7,000 transfer from Court Bushes Cost Centre (211) to the Court Bushes Sinking Fund be recommended to Council for approval; and
iv) that a more detailed analysis is undertaken of the current year position and likely outturn for electricity costs at all sites.

F23/24.063: Village Centre Half Year Financial Analysis: The Committee reviewed the Village Centre's financial position at the half year stage and noted it will be reviewed by the Trustees at their next meeting, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee NOTED the Village Centre's financial position at the half year stage.

F23/24.064: Internal Audit: The Committee considered the report of the first internal audit of 2023/2024, which took place on 3 October 2023 and noted the recommendations, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend the report to Council for adoption, and

- **i) investigate training another member of staff to use the RBS accounting system;**
- **ii) ensure Councillors sign to agree to receive their summons to meetings by electronic means; and**
- **iii) that all future asset purchases are accompanied by a business case as required by Financial Regulation 14.**

F23/24.065: Budget and Precept Setting Timetable: The Committee reviewed the proposed timetable, principles and assumptions to commence the budget setting exercise for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 and agreed to amend the August 2023 Consumer Price Index (including Housing costs) figure to the September 2023 CPI (excluding Housing costs) figure which was used by the Government, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend the following to Council for adoption:

a) The proposed timetable to commence the budget setting exercise for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

b) The following principles and assumptions:

- **i) A balanced budget is required to be set.**
- **ii) There are no changes to service levels.**
- **iii) Charges will be reviewed and any increases agreed and applied to the budget.**
- **iv) The September 2023 CPI (excluding Housing costs) figure will be used therefore Inflation of +6.7% will be applied to expenditure forecasts, unless cost increases to contracts are known, then actuals will apply.**
- **v) Staff costs will initially be budgeted for at an increase of 7%. This percentage may be subject to change over the next few months.**
- **vi) Reserves should only be used for one-off expenditure or capital items.**

F23/24.066: Court Bushes Container Project: The Committee re-considered a briefing note setting out the proposals for the purchase of a storage container for Court Bushes Community Hub Car Park. The Committee favoured the purchase and installation of a new 20 foot ex-shipping container including the ground works and electrical connection at a cost of £11,225+VAT. Due to the value being over £10,000, it was agreed to recommend the purchase to Council noting that the costs have the potential to be covered by Section 106 funding, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to recommend to Council, the purchase, delivery and installation of a new (one-trip) 20 foot ex-shipping container including the ground works and electrical connection works, plus six cages to be used inside, as the total cost of the project is £11,225+VAT; and Section 106 funding would be applied for.

F23/24.067: Estates & Facilities Update: The Committee received an update report on Estates & Facilities Management. The Committee noted that the planting of the two memorial oaks trees and one walnut tree on 17 October 2023 had been postponed due to bad weather. The Hurstpierpoint Society has been kept informed as one of the oak trees is to commemorate the life of the founder Lady Barnes. Vandalism had been increasing at Court Bushes Community Hub and the details were reported to the Police and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer at MSDC. Images had been taken from the venues CCTV cameras. An insurance claim for repairs will be considered. The preparations for the festive lighting are now all in place with the structural test results received, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee NOTED the Estates & Facilities Management update report.

F23/24.068: To note any further information items, correspondence received or requests.

F23/24.068.1: The Committee noted a letter from the Boom Credit Union and agreed to consider credit unions in general at a later date. The full information received from Boom would be circulated to the Committee.

F23/24.068.2: The Committee considered adding assets of community value in the parish to the register kept by MSDC and agreed to make this a future agenda item.

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 10.30pm. Chair