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Village Centre
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MINUTES of the Meeting of the FINANCE, GOVERNANCE & ESTATES COMMITTEE held at 7.30pm on Thursday 18 January 2024 at the Hurstpierpoint Village Centre.

Members present:

Duncan Ranger (Chair)	Malcolm Llewellyn
Mark Froud	Claire Majsai
Rodney Jackson	Annette Street

Also present: Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Council & Responsible Finance Officer.

F23/24.096: 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.

F23/24.097: Declarations of interest: There were no declarations of interest.

F23/24.098: Previous Minutes: The Committee considered the minutes of the Finance, Governance & Estates Committee meeting on 7 December 2023, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee **AGREED** the minutes of the Finance, Governance & Estates Committee meeting held on 7 December 2023.

F23/24.099: Adjournment for questions from the public: There were no members of the public present.

F23/24.100: Parish Council Financial Monitoring for Month 9 (December 2023): The Committee noted:

- (i) Payments of £9,231.96 (EX VAT). The Committee noted this did not include the December 2023 salaries. The December salaries also included the back-dated pay award to 1 April 2023.
- (ii) Receipts of £9,224.46 (VAT N/A). The Committee asked that the re-coding of bank interest was added to the March 2024 agenda, as per the Savings and Investment Policy.
- (iii) Bank Reconciliations. These were signed by Vice-Chair Cllr Jackson.
- (iv) Balance Sheet.
- (v) Nominal Ledger.
- (vi) Income and Expenditure.
- (vii) Q3 VAT Claim. It was noted that payment had been received on 15 January 2024.
- (viii) The funds held in CCLA shares on 31 December 2023 of 104,619.32. The Committee asked that consideration of the balance was added to the March 2024 agenda, as it now exceeds £100,000 and to confirm if the account was covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.
- (ix) The deposits and investments accounts on 31 December 2023 were noted.
- (x) The Redwood Bank 1 Year Fixed Term Deposit was due to mature on 17 February 2024 but the Committee had not yet received the Bank's offer, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee **AGREED** the Parish Council financial monitoring for Month 9 (December 2023); and to delegate the decision to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and the Committee, whether to reinvestment the £100,000 in the Redwood Bank 1 Year Business Bond once the offer was known, and that the interest earned from the matured account would be transferred to the current account with Unity Trust Bank.

F23/24.101: Village Centre Financial Monitoring for Month 9 (December 2023): The Committee noted:

- (i) Payments of £4,403.80 (VAT N/A).

- (ii) Receipts of £4,693.35 (VAT N/A).
- (iii) Bank Reconciliations. These were signed by Vice-Chair Cllr Jackson.
- (iv) Balance Sheet.
- (v) Income and Expenditure.
- (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 9 (December 2023).

F23/24.102: Parish Action Plan: The Committee reviewed the:

- i) **the Finance & Governance Action Plan:** The Committee noted the action plan and updates were provided on i) the second draft of the Village Centre Charity Report was due next week and the final version will be presented to the Trustees on 29 February 2024, ii) the Business Plan had not been progressed as swiftly as planned but will be picked up again once the Reg 19 response had been agreed, and in the lead up to the Annual Parish Meeting on 21 May 2024, iii) it was agreed the Job Evaluation process would be added to the Action Plan and iv) it was agreed the District Plan Review would be added to the Action Plan.
- ii) **the Estates & Facilities Action Plan:** The Committee noted the action plan and updates were provided on i) the use of a consultant to progress the Reeds Lane Drainage Plans was being explored to be funded from the Section 106 fund as it would be enabling works, and ii) the quotes had been refreshed for the storage container project at Court Bushes now that the use of Section 106 funding had been secured, and it was:

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

F23/24.103: Estates & Facilities Update: The Committee received an update report on Estates & Facilities Management. The Committee requested an update on i) the actions arising from the Lost Woods Project meeting; ii) and the sourcing of funds by Batchelor Monkhouse. The Committee agreed to add the storage container project to the 'Court Bushes' upcoming items and to add the bin audit outcome actions to the 'Other Facilities' upcoming items, and it was:

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

F23/24.104: Telephony VOIP: The Committee considered a Microsoft Teams solution for the future of Telephony for phone and broadband services. It was noted the office team would also require 4 headsets. Alternative broadband providers could also be explored using the U-Switch comparison website. Court Bushes Community Hub services must be included due to the responses for Intruder, Fire, Pumping Station alarms and CCTV, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to proceed with the move to a VoIP Teams Phone system with a domestic calling plan at a cost of £570.24 per annum for the Licences, plus a one-off £200 for the costs of set-up by JB Computers.

F23/24.105: Grounds Maintenance Contract: The Committee considered the specifications and contracts for grounds maintenance services to be issued, seeking quotes for April 2024 to March 2029. A maximum of five contractors would be invited to quote. The inclusion of six pruning cuts on the Village Garden northern shrub border during the Summer period was queried, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED the specifications and contracts for grounds maintenance services to be issued to a minimum of three suitable contractors, seeking quotes for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029.

F23/24.106: Sonic Tomography Tree Surveys: The Committee considered quotes for carrying out tree works for one tree in the Wilderness, one in Tilley's Copse and two trees in Ladies Walk, following sonic tomography surveys as recommended in the last tree risk assessment surveys, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to proceed with appointing J Lee Trees to carry out the tree works on all four trees at a total cost of £3,750 plus VAT.

F23/24.107: South Avenue Tree Planting Proposal: The Committee considered the proposals to plant locally grown and donated trees on South Avenue Recreation Ground. The Committee felt the proposal to include a Horse Chestnut sapling in the Play Area and at the site closest to Pitt Lane were acceptable but that the line of Horse Chestnuts proposed adjacent to South Avenue should be Lime trees instead, placed in the gaps between the existing trees, as South Avenue has historically been a Lime tree avenue. A possible alternative for the three spare Horse Chestnut saplings was one near to the Bowling Club and two at Weald Close, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to proceed with the planting of five locally grown Horse Chestnut saplings, three in South Avenue Recreation Ground and two in Weald Close at a cost of £1,579.49 for the materials, using Section 106 funding if available, and to self-funding if not available from next years budget 2024/2025.

F23/24.108: Credit Unions: The Committee considered the advantages and disadvantages of credit unions in general, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to note the important role Credit Unions serve in the banking sector and will monitor what interest rates are available but AGREES not to invest in a Credit Union savings account at this time.

F23/24.109: Assets of Community Value: The Committee considered adding further assets of community value in the Parish to the register kept by Mid Sussex District Council. Whilst any threat to all local community assets would be kept under review, the only immediate concern was for privately owned allotment sites in the Parish, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Committee AGREED to note the of list potential assets of community value but not to proceed with applying to add any to the register kept by Mid Sussex District Council at this time; and that the location and ownership details of private allotment sites in the Parish would be confirmed and whether any formally designated protection for them exists.

F23/24.110: To note any further information items, correspondence received or requests.

There were no additional items to note.

There being no other business, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.16pm.

Chair