



Minutes of the Meeting of the Hurstpierpoint Village Centre Trustees held on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 9.30pm, at Hurstpierpoint Village Centre (Charity No 305265).

Trustees Present:	Malcolm Llewellyn (Chair)	David Evans	Duncan Ranger
	Michael Avery	Mark Froud	Bob Sampson
	Helen Bedford	Rodney Jackson	Annette Street
	Susan Dyke	Claire Majasai	Lindsay Thompson

Also present: Sarah Groom, Clerk to the Trustees

- 1. Apologies for Absence:** The Trustees received and accepted apologies for absence from Barry Forster and Julia Shorrocks.
- 2. Previous Minutes:** The Trustees agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2023.
- 3. Village Centre Budget Monitoring 2023/24:** The Trustees reviewed and assessed the Village Centre's financial position at the ten month stage (January 2024). It was noted that the electricity budget is still showing as unspent due to the large credit returned when changing over from the previous supplier; and it was:

AGREED: That the Trustees APPROVED the budget monitoring for the Village Centre at 31 January 2024.

- 4. Budget Setting 2024/25:** The Trustees reviewed and assessed the budget requirements for 2024/25. It was agreed to reduce the gas and electricity budgets to £6,000 for gas and £5,000 for electricity. These had been increased significantly for 2023/24 due to the uncertainties with forecasting prices in early 2023. An additional code for the independent inspection (audit) will be included at £250, and it was:

AGREED: That the Trustees APPROVED the 2024/2025 budget, as amended, for the Village Centre with an income of £48,691 and an expenditure of £59,382, resulting in a budget deficit of £10,691.

- 5. Future of Charity:** The Trustees considered the Action in Rural Sussex report that set out the advantages and disadvantages for making the decision whether to dissolve the Charity, including a cost benefit analysis for maintaining or otherwise the Village Centre charity. Trustees had previously agreed the cost of the report of £1,080.

A thorough debate covered a range of issues and views including the one-off costs and legal work required for any changes, the ongoing financial disadvantage to the Parish Council if managed directly of approx. £8,000pa; the costs associated with business rates being payable, potential VAT relief, the helpful advice about investigating TAX ambiguities further under the current set up, and a reminder of the current parish council office rental calculations in the Underlease.

There was concern about the lack of detailed content and any audit trail over assumptions made; inaccuracies within the report that hadn't been corrected regarding the former parish council office; a number of editing errors; a lack of challenges that most Trustees should rightly consider over issues such as a lack of willing volunteers and the charity building being at risk due to rising maintenance and energy costs.



In summary, it was felt that the report lacked little new information over and above that presented to the AGM in the briefing note in July 2023. This left Trustees with more work required due to unanswered questions and a feeling of disappointment in the value for money obtained from the report, and it was:

AGREED: That the Charity remains in existence in its current form and:

- i) The current parish council office rent payable is reviewed;**
- ii) Factual inaccuracies in the report are listed and attached to the report;**
- iii) A folder will be created with all the relevant background papers, leases and land titles to be easily accessed in future;**
- iv) A review will take place in five years, unless there are material changes to the charity's finances or the lease in the interim.**

- 6. Date of Next Meeting:** The date of the next meeting (the Annual General Meeting) is Thursday 25 July 2024 to follow the conclusion of the Parish Council meeting which starts at 7.30pm.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.16pm.

Chairman