

**MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**MONDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2015**  
**AT 1.00 PM,**  
**HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL.**

**Present:** Cllr Russell (Chair)  
Councillors, Davis, Hughes and March (Cllr March arrived at 1.25pm and offered her apologies for the late arrival).

**In attendance:** Lucy Noakes (Clerk)  
2 members of the public (first part of the meeting only).

**Declarations of Interest:** Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct were invited. None were recorded.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None (Cllr March arrived at 1.25pm).

**2. ELECTION OF FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR.**

Cllr Hughes proposed that Cllr Russell should be Chair of the Finance committee, seconded Cllr Davis, unanimous. This position was accepted by Cllr Russell.

**3. PRECEPT FOR 2015/2016**

The Clerk circulated Appendix 1, the draft Proposed Precept for 2015/16 upon which she had made some estimated figures.

The Clerks salary was the first item on the sheet. The Clerk did ask at this point that the Council give some consideration to having an appraisal prior to discussing the precept at future meetings as she felt that the Council should look at training and appraisal of the clerk in her job as a separate issue to budget setting. There was some agreement on this point from those Councillors present.

Cllr Russell had carried out some calculations of the amount of overtime carried out over the past year, as there was still a considerable amount. It was suggested that if the Clerk's basic hours were to increase to 18 per week with the understanding of flexibility in how these were carried out, then this would help to eradicate the majority of overtime. It was proposed by Cllr Davis and seconded by Cllr Russell, unanimous that the clerk's basic hours increase to 18 per week resulting in an annual salary of £12,400. This was based on current situation of the clerk being paid at 29 points on the NALC salary scale.

The Clerk said that she had almost completed the CiLCA training and hoped to have this assessed and passed by end of March. Taking this into account the Councillors then suggested a rise to 31 points on the scale once CiLCA was achieved (whenever this was throughout the financial year). This would have the effect of increasing the clerk's salary to £13,200 per annum from the time it was achieved.

Cllr March suggested that the clerk should also have bonus related incentives for certain jobs, payable as they were completed, these being:

- Play area lease review
- Completion of Institute lease

- Handover of Village Festival to appointed group
- Village Vision updates and review

It was suggested that an amount of £800 be budgeted for this, payable at an amount of £200 upon completion of each job. Proposed Cllr Davis, seconded Cllr March, unanimous.

The Councillors went on to discuss each item of the proposed budget in some detail. It was suggested that Legal expenses be kept at £4000 for the forthcoming year as the council was currently seeking advice on the Institute lease and Festival Group handover.

It was suggested that Landscaping /Maintenance and Fromandez Drive be combined as these were all grass cutting and maintenance under the Dukes contract. This was increased slightly to a combined amount of £6000 for 2016/17.

It was suggested that the Village Hall painting did not need any further funds at present as there was already sufficient in reserves for this and that the council should perhaps look to replace the soffit boarding with a material which did not need any further maintenance when the boards were next needing maintenance.

It was thought that the War memorial reserve did not require any more funds at present as the memorial had only just been cleaned and was in good repair, and sufficient funds were held for unforeseen eventualities.

Electricity and water/sewage costs for the public conveniences were higher than had been anticipated and so it was suggested that a large amount be put into these categories for 2016/17. Electricity was raised to £800 and water/sewage was increased to £1600.

It was felt that the Council did not need to precept for the Remembrance Day wreath as this amount could easily come out of Reserves each year, as needed.

Churchyard maintenance was discussed in some detail, and it was emphasised that this money was being offered for churchyard maintenance in order to ensure that when the Churchyard becomes closed and the council are obliged to take on its maintenance, the churchyard should be in a reasonable state of repair. In light of this, it was agreed that it should remain at £600 for the year.

It was felt that office equipment costs should cover the expense of a new printer which was needed and a new carpet for the office as the current one needed replacement. This figure was therefore set at £500.

An amount of £1000 was added to the precept in respect of the costs of keeping the Civic amenities vehicle, although this figure may not be accurate as the Council are still undergoing negotiations with TWBC and other parishes regarding this matter.

The Councillors felt that £5000 should be budgeted for Village Vision initiatives as this included the cost of updating and printing the village vision review as well as paying a traffic consultant and potentially carrying out suggested highways alterations from any traffic action plan agreed upon.

£2000 was added to the precept in respect of anticipated election costs in May 2016, as the parish election could take place then in there were more nominees than vacancies.

Councillor Russell proposed from the Chair, that the Finance Committee should recommend a total precept of £70,480 to the full council at the January 2016 meeting, as outlined on Appendix 1, which would result in a 2.1% increase in real terms for the next year's band 'D' council tax payer, based on the figures provided by TWBC. Seconded by Cllr March Unanimous.

#### **4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

It was proposed by Cllr Russell and seconded by Cllr Davis , unanimous that the Risk Assessment be left to the end of the meeting as time was running short and this could be moved to a future meeting if need be.

**5. RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A SECTOR LED BODY FOR AUDITING**

Following an explanation on this matter, it was proposed by Cllr Russell that the Finance committee recommend to full council that Horsmonden Parish should not opt out of the arrangements for the Sector Led Body auditing arrangements. Seconded Cllr Hughes, unanimous.

**6. DISCUSS/AGREE AUDITORS RECOMMENDATION ON CLARIFYING FUTURE CONTRACTOR ARRANGMENTS.**

The Council's internal auditor had made some recommendations to Mr Couchman's checklist and invoice, which would clarify the arrangement with the council as a contractor. The Councillors made a few further small amendments and it was then proposed by Councillor Russell to amend the play area checklist/invoice in line with the recommendations of the internal auditor. Seconded Cllr Hughes, unanimous.

**4. RISK ASSESSMENT**

There was insufficient time left in the meeting to discuss the document in full, but it was considered that some addition should be made to take into account Contractors who were asked to carry out work for the council. It was suggested that Cllr Russell and the Clerk look at this document and re-circulate once a suitable addition had been made. If the committee were then in agreement, it could be circulated to full council for their agreement at the meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

**7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Discussion only)**

**None.**

The meeting closed at 3.55p.m.