

**MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**MONDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2014**  
**AFTER THE PLANNING MEETING IN**  
**THE VILLAGE HALL, HORSMONDEN.**

**Present:** Cllr Russell (Chair)  
Councillors Davis, Hughes and March.

**In attendance:** Lucy Noakes (Clerk)

**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.

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

Cllr March proposed that Cllr Russell be put forward as Committee Chair. Seconded by Cllr Davis, unanimous.

**3. PRECEPT FOR 2015/2016**

The Clerk had updated the spreadsheets showing budget spent so far, estimated total budget, and estimated end of year reserves; and circulated copies of these to all present.

The committee proceeded to discuss each item in the budget in detail, making adjustments to the sheet as attached. The following observations and decisions were made during the discussions:

After discussions about the clerk's salary, Cllr Russell proposed from the Chair that the Council implement the pay agreement for 2014/16, as instructed by NALC and increase the clerk's hours from 15 to 16 each week with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015; as the clerk was still carrying out a lot of overtime. It was also proposed by Cllr Russell that the clerk's salary should be adjusted in line with point 29 on the salary scale issued by NALC with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, resulting in the clerk's salary being £11,000 from this time onwards. These proposals were voted for unanimously.

It was noted that the clerk had omitted to claim the £200 bonus agreed by the Council, which was payable upon completion of the public toilet refurbishment. As this task was completed in May 2014 it was suggested that the clerk pay this amount in the next available salary.

The clerk had not yet been able to complete the lease for the Institute and correction of the play area lease through Land Registry, and hence had not been able to claim the bonuses of £150 each, pertaining to the completion of these tasks. It was suggested that these bonuses be carried forward to 2015/16 if necessary, although it was hoped that these tasks would be completed as soon as possible.

The clerk mentioned that she had commenced her studies for the CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and was about to register for the course, which would allow her two years for completion of the tasks set.

It was suggested that the clerk should arrange the professional valuation of each of the buildings owned by the Council; the Institute, the Village Hall and the Public conveniences, to ensure that the level of insurance obtained was still adequate.

It was noted that another soil sample should now be carried out on the Village Green to see if further minerals/fertilizers should be added to the soil in the spring.

The Council were concerned about the possible state of the rafters and roof at the Institute Building, as there have been a number of leaks over the past years. It was suggested that a full survey of the roof space should be carried out to assess the situation; however this could be a lengthy and costly exercise. This should be added to the agenda for January 2015 for the full council to decide upon.

Bearing in mind the age of the buildings and possibility of future large expense on either, or both, it was put forward that the budget amounts for both the Institute and Village Hall needed to be increased so that a larger reserve could be achieved for the maintenance of these two buildings. This was reflected in the amounts added to the budget for these buildings. It was suggested that the amounts precepted for one could be used for the other if a large maintenance issue suddenly arose.

The committee's discussions on churchyard donation touched on the issue of when the church yard would become full and closed; as the council would then need to take on responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance. It was requested that the clerk write to the PCC and ask them how many burial plots are left, when they estimated the church yard would be closed and whether they had made any provision for a new churchyard once the old one was full .

With regards to computer and iPad training, it was mentioned that there may perhaps be younger people in the parish who would benefit from some training to help them get back into work. The council could look into providing for this next year if possible.

The clerk mentioned that the notice board on the Green becomes wet inside sometimes, possibly due to condensation. It was suggested that she ask the manufacturer if they have anything to prevent this.

The Village celebration fund was looking healthy, however it was suggested that an amount of £1500 should still be added in for 2015/16, as if the weather was not good one year and profits were down, this would be needed as a buffer to pay for the following year's activities upfront.

Cllr March said that TWBC had agreed to budget £16,000 for the amenity vehicle next year, which was half the amount previously budgeted. This would mean a reduced service of some kind, yet to be decided upon. It was therefore suggested that the council budget £1500 towards costs of this service, as it may be required.

The council had been looking at the possibility of new street lighting and a youth shelter under Village Vision initiatives. There was already a fairly large sum in reserves for street lighting improvements, therefore the amount raised in 2015/16 under Village Vision would need to

cover the costs of printing an update about Village Vision for each household in the parish and be an adequate amount to put towards matched funding a youth shelter. It was therefore suggested that this figure should be set at £6000.

After discussing each item, it was proposed by Cllr Russell that the Finance Committee recommend to full council a figure of £67,915 for the 2015/16 precept; representing an increase of 6.9% for a Band 'D' council tax payer, equating to an increase of just under 9p per week. Unanimous.

**3. RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Risk Assessment (Appendix 2) as prepared by the Clerk was presented at the meeting. The Finance Committee members took a close look at this, and after discussions, made some amendments to the wording as appropriate.

It was suggested that the clerk write to the trustees of the Village Hall and users of the club to remind them of their duties to check for legionella, on a regular basis. The clerk should also check to see if there are any hot water storage tanks at the public conveniences.

The committee were concerned about the carpet in the parish office as they felt that it fell below health and safety standards. It was suggested that they look at replacing it in the coming year.

Cllr Russell proposed that the amended annual Risk Assessment 2015/16 be recommended to full Parish Council for their agreement. Unanimous.

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

None.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.10p.m.