

# DRAFT MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2025 AT 7.30 PM

**Present:** Cllrs Russell (Chair), Richards, Davis, Sheppard and Boon .

**In attendance:** Lucy Noakes (Clerk). No members of the public

**Declarations of Interest:** Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct were invited. Cllr Russell declared an interest as a member of the Village Hall committee in item 4250 Grants and Donations paid , as it is possible that the VH committee could request a grant during the financial year ahead. Cllr Russell left the room whilst this item was discussed and took no part in the discussion at that time.

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

## 2. PUBLIC SESSION (no decisions)

None.

## 3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FINANCE MEETING

The Minutes of the Parish Council Finance Committee Meeting 23.09.2025 had been previously circulated by the Clerk. These were proposed for acceptance by Cllr Richards, seconded Cllr Davis, unanimous.

## 4. PRECEPT 2026-27

The Clerk had circulated the attached [APPENDIX 1](#) The Receipts and Payments report, to councillors prior to the meeting, together with a draft Forward budget which she had prepared herself beforehand based on quoted and assumed costs

The Committee went through each budget head in turn, considering the amount spent in the current year and taking into account any known expenditure and increases for 2026/27.

Each item was adjusted accordingly and some of the more major cost items were discussed in some detail as below:

### 110 ADMINISTRATION

#### 4000 Staff Salary

The costs for staff salary included allowance for the recommendation made by the Personnel Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> November, for an additional two hours per week for each the Clerk and Deputy Clerk with effect from April together with an increase in one point on the NALC scale. This was yet to be ratified by Full Council but it was felt prudent to allow for this in the budget, assuming the Council may wish to agree this recommendation.

#### 4140 Professional /Legal Fees

This includes fees for Payroll, Accountancy support, Legal expenses, Planning Consultants, and any other consultancy or professional fees . The Committee considered recent information

provided by HDAG and the Clerks regarding Consultancy fees and bearing in mind the PC may wish to carry out some sort of village wide consultancy over the coming financial year to look at the future placement of the Village Hall and potentially consider other amenities in the village, they recommended an increase from £5000 to £10,000 under this heading .

#### **4200 Website**

The clerk had recently circulated some information and costs about a potential new website following discussions with the auditor and website providers, as the current website could be improved upon and would need alterations to meet expected accessibility standards. The Committee recommend £1000 in the budget which would enable a new website if the Council decided to take this option.

### **120 OUTSIDE SPACES**

#### **4330 Tree works**

It was felt that slightly more should be put into the budget for this item as the Council had overspent in the current year and many of the trees owned by the Council are mature and need regular maintenance. The Large Horse chestnut on the corner of the Green might benefit from a further in-depth ( Picus) investigation this year to ensure its safety for the public .

### **130 PLAY AREA**

#### **4350 Equipment Replacement**

The committee felt it was prudent to recommend an additional £10,000 in this budget to enable the Council to proceed with its possible plans to increase the size of the parish play area when the refurbishment takes place. Current Ear Marked Reserves and S106 funding would be likely to cover the costs of the refurbishment of the existing area, but as the Council were currently investigating an expansion of the play area on Locket Green, to cater for younger children in addition to 5-12 year olds already catered for, some additional funding would be required if this was to go ahead .

### **140 TOILETS**

#### **4500 Water and Sewage**

These costs had risen dramatically over the past year for domestic users as well as business users , hence an increased budget was recommended to cover costs .

### **150 STREET LIGHTING**

#### **4350 Equipment Replacement**

It was considered prudent for the Council add a further £5000 to EMR for street light replacement in 2026-27 as a fund would be required for replacement of street lights as this becomes necessary . Many of the Parish Council's 48 parish owned lights are now quite old and it may be that the first tranche of replacements will need to be considered in the next few years. Previous experience has shown this to be an expensive demand on finances.

### **170 ASSET MANAGEMENT**

#### **4700 War Memorial**

The Memorial had been thoroughly cleaned approximately one year ago hence further cleaning was not considered likely to be required during the coming year. Missing letters could be left until the next clean takes place as there are only two currently missing.

#### **4730 The Institute Building**

Recent gutter clearing had revealed that the flat roof on the side of the building adjacent to the Business Centre was not in very good shape and may need some repair or replacement in the next year or so . It was therefore felt prudent to start adding some additional funds into

the budget this coming year and next to allow for this work to hopefully take place in 2027-28.

The Finance Committee having considered all the options recommended a total precept of £136,610 for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027, for the parish Council's consideration and approval. This was proposed by Cllr Boon, seconded Cllr Sheppard, and voted for unanimously by the Committee .

The new Draft Forward Budget is attached as [APPENDIX 2](#)

**5. CONSIDER EMR'S FOR 2026-27**

The Committee reviewed the EMR's as [APPENDIX 3](#) noting that there is £5000 to be added to the Street Lighting reserve at the end of the year . Other than that the reserves were considered appropriate for future needs . Proposed Cllr Davis, seconded Cllr Richards and voted for unanimously .

**6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS ( DISCUSSION ONLY)**

None.

**There being no further matters to discuss the meeting ended at 9.17 pm.**