DRAFT MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL ON TUESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2026 AT 2.45 PM

Present: Cllrs Russell (Chair), Davis & Sheppard
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. None were provided.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
   Cllr Boon . The reason for absence was proposed for acceptance by Cllr Sheppard and seconded Cllr Davis . Unanimous.
   Cllr Richards- non attendance .

2. **PUBLIC SESSION (no decisions)**
   None.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS FINANCE MEETING**
   The Minutes of the Parish Council Finance Committee Meetings 24.02.2026, 28.07.2026 and 22.09.2026 had been previously circulated by the Clerk.

   Cllr Davis proposed acceptance of the minutes dated 24.02.2026, seconded Cllr Sheppard, unanimous.
   Unfortunately, there were not enough members present within the quorum to verify the minutes of 28.07.26 or 22.09.2026 as only two of the members present had attended those meetings . The minutes would therefore have to be considered again for approval at the next quarterly Finance Committee meeting.

4. **PRECEPT 27-28**
   The Clerk had circulated Appendix 1 Detailed Receipts & Payments & and Appendix 2 Forward Budget Detail, beforehand for Cllrs to consider.

   The Committee looked at each budget head in turn and recommended a figure based on estimates and known costs taking the current years expenditure into account.
   The following observations were made :

   110 ADMINISTRATION

   4000 Staff Salary
   The costs for staff salary included allowance for the recommendation made by the Personnel Committee on 16th November, for an incremental increase in one point on the NALC salary

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.

4040 pension

Th committee discussed employer pension provision which was currently 7% . It was suggested that this may be something full council might wish to consider in the future .

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 need to contract professionals over the coming financial year to carry out further consultancy work or assist in preparation for response to the new TWBC Local Plan, they recommended keeping the budget at £10,000 under this heading .

4230 Publicity

This budget heading normally includes the Councils contribution to parish news at £300 plus a £50 buffer for other advertising throughout the year. However, discussions had recently commenced with St Margarets church about the future of Horsmonden Parish News, with the request being made for further financial contribution or assistance with production of the magazine . Bearing this in mind the committee recommended budgeting £1000 under this heading to allow some flexibility.

4290 Neighbourhood Planning

Some provision for consultants fees had already been made under professional /legal above, however it was considered that the NH plan was nearing a stage where an update could be required especially with the upcoming new TWBC Local Plan, so the committee recommended a further £3000 to be added to the EMR under this heading (or spent during the new financial year as necessary.)

120 OUTSIDE SPACES

4300 Landscaping and Groundworks

With the addition of regular mows again at Fromandez Drive the group felt it necessary to increase this provision to £7000.

4320 Christmas lights

It has been suggested that the Council may wish to add some additional Christmas lights to trees around the green and quotations were being obtained for this by the Clerks, but had not yet arrived. Bearing in mind the cost increase and previous prices for dressing an additional tree the committee recommended an increased budget of £2500 although they recognised that this may only be enough to cover one additional tree.

4330 Tree works

It was felt that this budget head would have to remain substantial as further works to the large beech tree near the social club may be required and provision should be made for updated investigations (Picus report) to the large Horse chestnut on the corner of the Green to ensure its safety for the public .

130 PLAY AREA

4350 Equipment Replacement

The committee considered that no further provision was required for play area as EMRs were now at a good level and a substantial amount was held by TWBC in S106 for renewal of play area equipment . The council would need to remain vigilant on the time frame during which these funds could be accessed.

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 in2027-28 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 two years ago and still had a couple of missing letters, so it was considered that this may need provision for the coming year. Some work may also be necessary to the Milestone which was located near Milestone Cottage, once the hedge had been cut back and it was once again exposed and possible to examine . The clerk had written to the owner of the hedge asking them to cut it back.

4710 Clock and Clock Tower

This budget head includes the annual servicing of the clock and any repairs to the mechanism or bell. It was already known that repairs would be required to the bell which had suffered a crack at the top and to the hinge which held the bell in place. The cost of these repairs was as yet largely unknown. It was considered that whilst a repair may be carried out to replace the hinge and make safe the bell, this will not enhance the sound of the bell which has in recent years become dull in sound. It was therefore suggested that investigation may be required to find out if in the longer term the bell may need to be recast . The committee recommended provision of £1000 towards an EMR to provide for this longer term. Any repairs to the hinge and crack in the bell could in the meantime be made from General Reserves as they were unlikely to be covered by the 2026 -27 provision.

4730 The Institute Building

The committee felt it prudent to add further funds towards possible roof repairs as well as make provision for painting of the soffit boards which would need to be programmed in for next Spring, hence a budget of £5000 was suggested for this .

Cllr Davis proposed that having considered the above, the final outcome for estimated overall expenditure for 2027-2028 was £142,320 and the Finance Committee recommend this amount to Full Council as the precept for that year . Seconded Cllr Sheppard, Unanimous.

The new Draft Forward Budget is attached as Appendix 2

5. **CONSIDER EMR'S 27-28**

The Committee reviewed the EMR's as Appendix 3 noting that there is £5000 to be added to the Street Lighting reserve and £10,000 for Play area reserves at the end of the year .

The Committee agreed to keep watch on expenditure for the Institute Building and if any budget is remaining in the current financial year to add this to an EMR for potential roof repairs.

Recognising that the EMR for Neighbourhood Plan Review currently stands at £1000 the Committee have recommended further provision of £3000 towards this in the budget for 2027-28.
Other than that, the reserves were considered appropriate for future needs . Proposed Cllr Davis, seconded Cllr Sheppard and voted for unanimously.

The meeting ended at 4.45pm