

# WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL

## THE MINUTES OF WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER AT 7.30PM

Present: Cllr C Moore (Chair), Cllr P Moore, Cllr Crawford, Cllr Murphy, Cllr Morris, Cllr Smith, Cllr Griffin and Cllr Gadd.

Also, in attendance: Claudine Feltham (CF) (RFO/acting Clerk). There were no members of public present.

### MINUTES

1. To receive apologies and reasons for absence.  
Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr Tincombe (a key worker).
2. To receive declarations of personal, prejudicial and disclosable pecuniary interests on items on the agenda and updates to members' register of interests.  
There were no declarations of interest.
3. Public Forum – time limit 15 minutes.  
No members of public present.
4. To consider, and approve if appropriate, which agenda items are sufficiently confidential as to warrant exclusion of members of the press and public under the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to meetings) Act 1960.

None.

5. To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and resources Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 as a true record.

The minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 were approved as a true record.

6. To determine matters arising from previous minutes for updating and noting.

WDC advised that they had still not received the CIL payment from the Bellerbys College development, but they were still in negotiation with the receivers.

Agenda item 9 of the Finance and Resources Committee held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 was for the bank statements and reconciliations to be signed by Cllr C Moore – this was completed at the Pavilion.

7. Items for decision and allocation of resources if necessary

#### 7.1 Budget setting for 2021-2022

Cllr C Moore referred to the finance report circulated by the RFO and advised that WDC required for the completed precept request forms by 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021, which is earlier than usual. This would mean that the budget and precept must be agreed by full council on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Cllr Gadd advised that the current contract between WPC and Wealden District Council (WDC) for the community toilet scheme is due to end on 30<sup>th</sup> December so a new contract may need to be issued.

**Action: Cllr Gadd to review the current contract and liaise with Cllr C Moore and CF.**

## WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL

Cllr Gadd advised that she had located a more up to date contract with the Tennis Club, and this was not the one given in the welcome packs to the new Cllrs when they joined. The parish council need to update records on this. CF had requested the subscription figures from the tennis club but had not yet received them. **Action: Cllr Crawford to obtain current subscription figures.**

Cllr Gadd asked if there was a sinking fund for the tennis club. She was advised yes; this was on the finance system (RBS) under code 4201.

**The Finance and Resources Committee agreed to discuss the budget and figures, Cllr C Moore to update the Excel Spreadsheet and highlight the changes and additions. This would be circulated to all members of the Finance and Resources Committee for agreement prior to the full council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 where it would need to be ratified and the precept figure formally agreed.**

### Amenities

Cllr Griffin: queried whether some of the Section 106 funds from Waters Reach could be used towards maintenance costs for the tennis courts. It was unclear whether this was ok. **Action: RFO to seek a copy of the Section 106 agreement to ascertain if this would be allowed.**

Cllr Griffin asked members to consider setting some funds aside for the Washwell Lane play area. Cllr C Moore explained that funds could be taken from general reserves and an Ear Marked Reserve (EMR) could be created for this. Members agreed a starting figure of £25,000 for this project.

At the recent Amenities Committee meeting a scheme of work to improve Jardin d'Aubers was considered, and funds would be required for this project. Whilst the amenities committee planned to apply to the Lund Fund for financial assistance, their deadline meant that this would not be in place by the time they hoped for work to start. Members agreed for £10,000 to be allocated for the project.

### Highways Lighting and Transport

Members discussed the dark skies friendly project, which was set over a 5-year period, and the works required. **Action: Cllr P Moore to speak with Eric Ware at East Sussex Highways (ESH) to establish the current position.**

There are various projects in the pipeline under the Highways Lighting and Transport committee remit, many are one off projects that would require expenditure from general reserves, or EMR to be set up for these projects. The projects could be split between High Street improvements and road safety. They include street furniture, village gateways, speed reductions (x4), bus shelters, cycle racks, noticeboards, phone box refurbishments. Match funding from ESH would also be applied for 50% of the costs.

Cllr Murphy queried this years' current expenditure on the flower tubs and hanging baskets. It was advised that usually volunteers' water them, however, due to COVID restrictions this has not been possible so Europlants Ltd had been contracted to deal with this on a weekly basis.

The increased costs of grass cutting were also discussed, and this was because the parish council had to undertake a lot more grass cutting due to the changes with ESH, and the Highways Committee had decided to allow ESH to deal with the cutting next year as this would be far more cost effective.

Cllr Griffin advised that the wooden planter troughs on the High Street need to be replaced and a budget would need to be set for this.

Cllr Griffin has recently learnt that there were reservoirs in the bottom of the planters and a wick fed the water to the compost, however after three years the wicks would need replacing. **Action: Amenities committee to consider the emptying of the planters and replacing the wicks before the planting in the Spring.**

## WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL

The costs of litter clearance had actually gone down this year. This was due to the Contractor not working so many hours, and because of COVID19 there were not so many people out and about and littering.

**Action: CF to create an RBS code under income for Community Match funds.**

### Communications and Community Liaison Committee

Cllr Smith advised that additional budget for digital storage and a new website would be needed for the 2021-2022 budget. Also, the parish council may need to purchase a new safe that is fireproof for at least 1 hour. It was suggested that certain legal documents may need to be kept at the bank or with a solicitor.

The parish magazine will have two editions next year, in Spring and Christmas so the budget needs to be increased.

**Action: CF to update RBS so there is only one code for Focus.** (Currently there are two codes 4045 and 4052)

Cllrs C & P Moore recently attended a meeting with Trevor Leggo of SSALC and the Police, where the benefits of having a Community Warden were discussed. Members discussed this idea but decided not to proceed as they felt it was not be a good idea at this time, considering the Community Warden did not have any powers. CF suggested maybe more interaction with the Community Safety Action Group.

Members considered that the parish council may receive more grant applications next year, given the current financial climate, and so this should be considered when setting the budget.

#### 7.2 Precept request for 2021-2022

Members discussed how COVID19 had caused financial difficulty to many and given the current healthy financial position of the council that maybe no increase in precept would be suitable for 2021-2022 period.

**Action: Cllr C Moore to update the budget spreadsheet, highlight all changes and circulate to members of the Finance and Resources Committee for consideration and agreement by email, prior to the full council meeting which will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021.**

#### 7.3 Legal advisory service

Cllr C Moore referred to the previously circulated paper for having a retained lawyer for the small amount of legal advice that the parish council required, on occasions. They could also maybe deal with the storing of essential documents for the council. **Resolved: This was proposed by Cllr C Moore, seconded by Cllr S Gadd and reached unanimous approval. Action: Cllr C Moore to look into a suitable lawyer for this purpose.**

#### 7.4 Clerks recruitment arrangements

Cllr Murphy thanked Cllr Gadd for all of her hard work and time on this. The purpose of the paper submitted by Cllr Murphy purely as a formality to ensure the parish council were following all the correct processes in line with recruitment policy. **Resolved: Cllr Murphy proposed that the Finance and Resources Committee agree to delegate all matters relating to the recruitment of the new Clerk to the Chair, Vice Chair, Chair of Finance and the RFO. This was seconded by Cllr C Moore and all members approved.**

### 8. Items for noting

#### 8.1 To note spend to date against budget

Noted, no questions raised.

#### 9. Urgent issues at the discretion of the Chair for noting or inclusion on future agenda.

# WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL

No urgent issues raised.

Meeting closed 2040 hours.

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