



Working for the Community in Rotherfield, Mark Cross,
Eridge Green, Boarshead and surrounding areas

**MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY APRIL 15TH AT 19:30**

**As permitted by the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392
this meeting was conducted online via "Zoom".**

PRESENT

Cllr L Henrick (Chair)
Cllr A Martin (Vice Chair)

Cllr L Buck
Cllr J Richardson

Cllr R Harris
Cllr J Kitchenham

COUNCILLORS ABSENT

Cllr D Hiles

ALSO PRESENT

Trevor Thorpe (Parish Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer) & Adam Hardy (Assistant Clerk)

1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (LGA 1972 s 85).

None

2. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Section 10 (2) c (vi) of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct provides dispensation regarding Councillors setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

3. PUBLIC FORUM.

None

4. TO RECEIVE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING OF 10TH DECEMBER 2020 & MATTERS ARISING.

It was **RESOLVED** that these be confirmed and adopted as a true record and they were signed by the Chair of the Committee.

5. TO CONSIDER INFORMATION AND MAKE DECISIONS ON ACTIONS AND EXPENDITURE AS REQUIRED REGARDING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

a) Approval of draft accounts for the Financial Year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

Documents relating to this agenda item had been circulated to Councillors ahead of the meeting.

The Chair of the committee felt that the committee would require more time to look at the accounts and supporting documentation before approval could take place. It was agreed that this item would be placed on the April Parish Council Meeting.

Clerk to add item to the 29th April Parish Council meeting agenda.

Clerk: Trevor Thorpe, 82 Fermor Way, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 3BJ

Tel: 01892 664245. **Email:** clerk@rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk

Parish Council Website: www.rotherfieldparishcouncil.co.uk **Twitter** [@rotherfieldpc](https://twitter.com/rotherfieldpc) and on Facebook

b) Agreement of adjustments required to the 2020/21 Budget.

It was noted that there were some discrepancies between the budget presented at this meeting and the one agreed at the 10th December Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting. The Chair agreed that there were lessons to be learned when undertaking this process next year.

Three changes were identified for the budget before final approval:

- Surgery Project Funds 4405 should have a budget of £4,000.00
- Remove £500.00 from 4210 cost centre SID Maintenance budget.
- Remove £20,000.00 from 4322 cost centre playground equipment.
- Minor alterations to the Recreation & Burial Committee identified by Cllr Buck in a circulated email.

It was **RESOLVED** that the budget be approved subject to these amendments being made.

c) Council cash balances and allocation of reserves.

The Chair informed the committee that the allocation of £2,425.61 to EM-Recreation & Burial Reserve had not been approved by a committee or full council and expressed concern that this had already taken place.

It was **RESOLVED** that any budget allocations to reserves must be approved by Full Council or the Finance & General Purposes Committee. A request must be made to the Clerk for an agenda item for a balance transfer.

Cllr Harris expressed concern that the EM Precept Contingency reserve was too low. It is considered good practice for Councils to hold a 50% contingency reserve minimum.

It was **RESOLVED** to transfer money from EM General Reserves to ensure that EM Precept Contingency had a budget of £60,000.00.

Clerk to make necessary transfers.

It was agreed that the council had too many reserve categories and that they should be reviewed for the next financial year.

Clerk, Cllr Henrick & Cllr Martin to review EM Reserves and recommend changes to full council.

d) Asset Register and any changes required to the Council's insurance policy cover.
Clerk has reviewed Asset register and considers that the total figure remains unchanged.

It was considered that the current Excel spreadsheet used (dating from pre 2008 and with numerous changes) is not fit for purpose and it was suggested that a software package such as the one provided by Rialtas be purchased.

It was **RESOLVED** to purchase Rialtas add on for the Asset Register at a cost of £340.25. It was also agreed that the Clerk should purchase training on the new add-on charged at £35.00 per hour.

- e) **Financial Regulations and this Committee's Terms of Reference.**
Copy of current regulations, adopted in January 2021, may be viewed in this meeting's team folder.

The Financial Regulations have recently been reviewed at the 10th December Finance & General Purposes Committee. It was agreed that the Finance Regulations should be reviewed annually at the December meeting.

- f) **Accounting software, account headings and categories used.**
Please advise clerk of changes or additions to the current categories for consideration.

Committee Chairs agreed to let the Clerk know of any account headings and or categories that needed changing.

- g) **Review grant applications received; agree beneficiaries and sums to be recommended for payment at the April Council meeting.**

As per the updated Grants Policy Clerk has contacted our regular recipients requesting that they complete and return an application form for consideration at this meeting. These groups have submitted applications and the following grants were agreed:-

Rotherfield St Martins (RSM)	£2,000.00
Rotherfield Friendship Club	£200.00
Crowborough Community First Responders	£200.00
Kent & Sussex Air Ambulance	£300.00
Total	£2,700.00

It was agreed that the grant to Rotherfield St Martins should be paid in two instalments: £1,000.00 in April and £1,000.00 in October.

It was **RESOLVED** that these grant applications be approved.

The committee confirmed that other organisations could make a grant application at any time during the year, and it would be considered by Full Council.

Councillors discussed the fact that organisations may not be aware of the grant process and that the council should be pro-active in advertising it. It was agreed that the Assistant Clerk would advertise more widely in the Parish Magazine and on social media.

Assistant Clerk to advertise grant application process.

- h) **Receive the Smith & Fermor charity annual accounts and report.**

Documents related to this item had been circulated ahead of the meeting.

The committee noted the contents of the report and thanked the Smith & Fermor charity for their work in the parish.

- i) **Resolution to continue using "online" payments to suppliers.**

It was **RESOLVED** to continue using only payments to suppliers.

The Clerk reminded councillors that they should avoid authorising payments made to themselves when acting as contractors.

j) **Review process for authorisation of “online” payments from the Unity and Barclays bank accounts.**

The Clerk proposed that for Unity payments, Chair or Vice Chair of the Finance Committee or Council should always be one of the authorisers. Clerk plus Cllrs. Henrick, Martin and Buck are the current authorisers with the Chair in the process of set up.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the Clerk’s proposal from the April Parish Council Meeting forward.

The Clerk reminded councillors that payments should be authorised before the month end if the calendar allows as it aids the recollection process if the bank statement entries appear in the same month.

k) **Review any changes required to authorised signatories for the bank accounts.**

The Clerk reported that the bank required a formal resolution to remove Cllr. Rignall as a signatory as she has resigned from the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** to remove Cllr Rignall as a signatory on the Council bank accounts.

6. URGENT ISSUES FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON FUTURE AGENDA.

- Cllr Harris asked that the Co-Option for the Casual Vacancy on the council take place at the April Parish Council Meeting. The Assistant Clerk reported that this was possible but advertising of the vacancy would have to go out at once.

Assistant Clerk to update Co-Option poster and publicise online, the **Clerk** will put up posters in the parish.

- Cllr Harris asked for permission to purchase a gift for Andrew Fermor to say thank you for all the work he has undertaken in regard to the Rotherfield Surgery lease. This was agreed. The gift will be presented at the April Parish Council Meeting

Assistant Clerk to invite Andrew Fermor to attend the public forum part of the April Parish Council meeting to receive gift and record the council’s thanks.

- The Assistant Clerk reminded councillors that the 20th April Planning & Building Committee would include an opportunity to question our district councillors on how we can work more closely with Wealden District Council Planning.
- Cllr Martin reported that the rubbish bin on Rotherfield High Street had been moved from its usual location to outside another house. A councillor had returned the bin, but it has subsequently been moved again. The bin will be put back in its original location and the situation monitored. It was agreed that the Clerk should send a letter to the resident concerned.

Clerk to write to resident concerned.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 9th December 2021 at 19:30 to agree budget and precept for 2021-22. The location/venue is to be confirmed.

Signed: Chair..... Date.....

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