

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2021** at King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 20.00 hours.

Parish Councillors:	Mr. S. Henton (Chairman)	Mr. M. Leach*
	Mr. W. Blunden	Mr. R. Pickett
	Mrs. L. Grace	Mrs. V. Upton*
	Mrs. M. Hersey*	

(*) Denotes absence

In attendance:	Mr. A. Funnell (Parish Clerk)
	Mrs T. Ely (RFO)

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

259. TO RECEIVE AND ACCEPT APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE.

259.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs. M. Hersey, Councillor Mr. M. Leach and Councillor Mrs. V. Upton and their reasons were accepted.

260. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA.

260.1 There were no declarations of interest from members in respect of any items on the Agenda.

261. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

261.1 There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

262. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 4 MARCH 2021.

262.1 The Chairman called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday, 4 March 2021.

These were **AGREED** and the Chairman **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

263. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

263.1 The Chairman made no announcements.

264. ACTION LIST.

264.1 The Chairman referred to the Action List, which had been circulated with the Agenda and this was **NOTED**.

265. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

265.1 i) To Note Available Funds. It was **NOTED** that £1,500 had been spent from a budget of £2,500.

ii) To Review The Draft Grants Policy.

Members had been presented with a draft Grant Awarding Policy to seek approval. The existing policy had been reviewed and amended by the Grants Panel and Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes committee. This was **NOTED** and considered to be concise, clear and comprehensive.

It was **AGREED** to implement the draft Grant Awarding Policy as presented with immediate effect.

iii) To Agree Purchase of Wreath to Mark Remembrance Sunday.

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Members were invited to support the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal 2021 and asked to consider making a donation towards the cost of a wreath on behalf of Lindfield Parish Council.

It was **AGREED** to make a donation of £75.00 and that this would be met from the Chairman's Fund.

266. BUDGET 2020/21.

266.1 A detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading Report and Expenditure from Earmarked Reserves Report to 31 August 2021 had been circulated by the RFO prior to the meeting. Budget progress was **NOTED** as follows:

266.1 i) Finance and General Purposes Committee: a total of £48,415 had been spent from the budget of £163,900.
ii) Analysis of Administration Budget: expenditure from the Administration Budget had been merged under the general heading of the Finance & General Purposes committee heading.

ii) Overall Council Budget 2020/21: a total of £62,580 had been spent from the budget of £226,300 of which £9,559 had been spent from the Environment and Amenities Committee's budget of £49,400. £442 had been spent from the Allotments budget of £2,500. There had been expenditure of £125 from the Planning & Traffic Committee budget of £10,500. There had been no expenditure from Earmarked Reserves.

It was **NOTED** that payments totalling £16,066.22 had been made from the Barclays Bank Current Account between 1 and 31 August 2021.

It was **NOTED** that total income of £90,454 had been received to the year ending 31 August 2021. In addition allotment income totalling £880.

It was **NOTED** that the total bank cash and investment reconciliation to 31 August 2021 was £224,365.33 represented by the following:

	£
Bank Statement Balances:	
Barclays Bank Business Current Account	14,855.79
Barclays Bank Business Premium Account	116,366.62
Nationwide Building Society	93,000.03
Petty Cash	142.89
Less unrepresented debit card payments	-36.81
Plus interest receipt not on bank statement	3.95
	224,365.33

iii) General Reserve Expenditure: a total of £4,039 had been spent from General Reserves. £3,978 to refurbish toilets on the first floor of Clock Tower House, £41 in relation to costs supporting COVID safe reopening of the parish office to staff and £20 to hold a stall on Lindfield Village Day 9 September 2021. Members were mindful that expenditure to end August was historically 40% of Budget on average compared to 27.7% in the current financial year.

iv) To Authorise the Use of the Debit Card for Expenditure: it had been drawn to members' attention that a vehicle had been recklessly driven onto the Wilderness Field, parked underneath the pylon and set alight. This was having to be considered by the police as an abandoned vehicle given that identification was impossible. As such, Lindfield Parish Council were responsible for meeting the cost of removing the vehicle, clearing away the debris and making the area safe. Fulling Mill farm had kindly assisted moving the vehicle to the edge of the field in advance of a contractor removing this from the land. This was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to authorise the Clerk to use the debit card to meet costs incurred in relation to managing this incident. Purchase of protective clothing for future use would be included.

vi) To Note Unspent Balances as at 31 March 2021.

A review of surplus funds available as at 1 April 2021 had been undertaken by the RFO and details circulated to members. This had taken into consideration year end income and expenditure adjustments to 31 March 2021.

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A negative surplus balance of funds £8,410 was held on 1 April 2021. This had reflected a cash in hand balance of £197,020.11 held as at 31 March 2021, anticipated income for 2021/2022 of £183,807 and Budget expenditure for 2021/2022 of £226,300. A capital reserve of £84,170 was being held and an agreed General Reserve of £50,000 for 2021/2022. Earmarked Reserves expenditure for 2021/2022 was anticipated to total £28,767.58.

It was **NOTED** that unspent balances totalling £197,020.11 were held as at 31 March 2021. Year end adjustments and taking into consideration 2021/2022 budgeting, this had resulted in a negative surplus balance being held on 1 April 2021 of £8,410.

267. BUDGET 2022/2023: TO CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS.

267.1 The Parish Clerk had presented a timetable for committees to follow with a view to considering their draft budget proposals for 2022/2023. This had included dates to finalise and seek Full Council approval in addition to the precept request. To assist in project management and proposed budget projects, members were invited to submit ideas using the project proposal template in conjunction with officers. Members had been asked to confirm these arrangements.

The arrangements were **NOTED** and **AGREED**.

268. TO CONSIDER A REPORT ON FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPENSATION SCHEME.

268.1 The RFO had presented a report explaining the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) and the advantage to be gained maximising use of the current compensation limit of £85,000. Lindfield Parish Council presently held funds with Barclays Bank and the Nationwide Building Society, providing a combined total compensation limit of £170,000. A maximum of £200 was held in Petty Cash. Funds of £54,367 were held without FSCS protection as at 31 August 2021, which would increase when the second precept payment of £86,000 was received. Possible options were outlined to increase the level of protection, which had included holding an additional bank account, instant access saving account or considering a new long term investment plan. In addition to noting the FSCS protection limit and potential risk of holding exposed public funds, members had been asked to consider options to manage risk of Council funds. Consideration was given by members towards charges, ease of access to funds, ethical savings opportunities, future spend of the capital reserve currently held, seeking professional financial advice for long term investment and the strength and stability of Barclays Bank.

A. It was **NOTED** that an FSCS protection limit of £85,000 was currently provided by both Barclays Bank and the Nationwide Building Society and that there was a potential overall risk to Council funds of £54,367 as at 31 August 2021.

B. It was **AGREED** to recommend to Full Council that no further action be taken at present towards increasing the level of protection of funds held. It was further **AGREED** to review the risk of holding unprotected funds on a regular basis.

269. TO NOTE VAT REFUNDS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2021 AND APRIL TO JUNE 2021.

269.1 Members **NOTED** that the following claims for VAT refund had been paid:

£732.95 for the period January to March 2021

£2,747.21 for the period April to June 2021

270. TO CONSIDER THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2021/2022.

270.1 The RFO had presented a report regarding internal auditor arrangements for 2021/2022. This had provided an explanation of the historical reasons for appointing the current internal auditor Peter J Consultants and gave an outline of the current legislation and best practice guidance. Cllr Pickett on behalf of F&GP had carried out an annual review of the effectiveness of the overall internal audit arrangements on 25 February 2021, which had concluded that the Council's internal auditor arrangements were adequate and met the needs of the Council. A check list covering the areas of review had been provided by Peter J Consultants, as detailed in appendices A

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and B. Fees for the current financial year remained unchanged at £65.00 per hour per review, report and any associated emails. An interim and year end report would be required by Lindfield Parish Council.

It was **AGREED** to appoint Peter J Consultants as internal auditor for the financial year 2021/2022.

271. PROPOSED PUBLIC TOILETS ON LINDFIELD COMMON – TO CONSIDER ANY RELEVANT MATTERS.

271.1 The Clerk informed members that correspondence has been received from the solicitor. The Clerk in conjunction with Councillor Pickett were looking to approach Goulds and Company, to confirm progress to date.

The above was **NOTED**.

272.1 PARISH DIRECTORY AND YEARBOOK – TO CONSIDER THE FUTURE OF THE PRODUCT.

272.1 The Chairman referred to a report that had been prepared by the Clerk, which had been circulated with the Agenda. Full Council had agreed on 11 March 2021 to pursue an alternative product in the form of a directory of local information, that could be circulated to all households in the village. Budget restraints and timescales required for completion had not been achievable and as such, with regret, it was not possible to produce a product ready for distribution by December 2021. It had been suggested that a small working group be formed to identify what information residents considered to be of importance that they would like to receive and what effective means of communication were available for the Council to use to assist in presenting this information. Members were asked to consider various formats such as print, email newsletter, social media, website and in person events. Concern was raised during discussion regarding those members of the public not having access to the internet.

The above was **NOTED**. It was **AGREED** to set up a Communications Working Group to consider the future of the product and to appoint the following members: Councillors Blunden, Plass, Grace and Upton.

273. ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS – TO CONSIDER DELEGATING AUTHORITY TO NEGOTIATE NEW CONTRACTS TO THE CLERK AND RFO IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIR AND COUNCILLOR GRACE.

273.1 The Chairman referred to a report that had been prepared by the Clerk, which had explained that three of the Council's electricity supply contracts were due to expire shortly – Denmans Lane Public Toilets, Clock Tower House and Streetlighting. Members were reminded that one of the aims of Council's Climate Action Plan was to consider carbon neutral energy suppliers and to identify three green electric suppliers. Brokers had previously been instructed to secure competitively priced suppliers.

It was **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Clerk and RFO, in conjunction with the Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Cllr Grace authority to renegotiate the three electricity contracts that were due to expire shortly.

274. WELCOME BACK FUND: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTER RELATING TO CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL.

274.1 MSDC had approached the Council in July 2021 asking for proposals to be submitted for funding towards an activity to support the safe reopening of high streets. The total funding available was £151k, which had to be spent by 31 March 2022. A summary of activities that MSDC would like to offer to Lindfield Parish Council to assist in delivering these had been shared, which had included £4,000 for a Village Action Plan. This funding would help to identify a future programme of action to support the long-term viability of the centre. On consideration it was felt that this was the most suitable and relevant activity.

After consideration it was **AGREED** that the Clerk would write to MSDC to confirm initial interest in implementing the Village Action Plan.

275. BUSINESS PLAN: UPDATE.

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275.1 It was **NOTED** that a draft document had been circulated to the working group, with a view to presenting a final draft to Full Council.

276.1 CLERK AND RFO REPORT.

276.1 Clerk's Report.

The Clerk confirmed the following:

- a. A six month service of the fire alarm had been carried out on 15 September 2021. This had identified replacement of the smoke detector as being necessary and a quotation was currently awaited.
- b. Problems were being experienced with unauthorised use of the Lindfield Parish Council parking bays in the Lindfield Enterprise Industrial Estate. These had been reported to the secretary of the management company. Consideration was given towards remedial action that could possibly be taken.

The above was **NOTED**.

276.2 RFO's Report.

The RFO was pleased to confirm that the External Auditor Report and Certificate had been received from Moore in relation to the AGAR to the year ended 31 March 2021. There were no matters arising.

The above was **NOTED**.

277. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING AND CONFERENCE EVENT AND RECEIVE ANY ATTENDANCE REPORTS..

277.1 The Clerk confirmed attendance at the following training and conference events:

11 August 2021	Creating Accessible Council Documents	Parish Clerk
26 August 2021	Dealing with a Crisis	Parish Clerk
8 September 2021	Building a Two-Way Conversation with Your Community	Deputy Parish Clerk Councillor Mrs. L. Grace

277.2 Councillor Grace provided useful feedback following attendance to her training event. The importance of having a communications strategy was emphasized using different types of engagement such as print, high visibility and digital technology.

The above was **NOTED**.

278. RISK MANAGEMENT: TO CONSIDER AUTUMN CLEAN RISK ASSESSMENT.

278.1 Members were presented with a draft Autumn Clean Risk Assessment to review and consider. The Autumn Clean was due to take place on Saturday 2 October 2021. This was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to be adopted with immediate effect.

279. RECRUITMENT OF VILLAGE ORDERLY: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS RELATING TO THE RECRUITMENT.

279.1 The Clerk advised members that a meeting was in the process of being arranged between the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, Environment & Amenities Committee and Planning & Traffic Committee. This was **NOTED**.

It was **PROPOSED** by Councillor Blunden that Councillor Pickett be invited to join this meeting in his capacity as Vice-Chair in respect of both the Finance & General Purposes Committee and Environment & Amenities

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Committee. It was considered that his broad understanding of the work and responsibilities of these two committees would help contribute towards evaluating and reviewing the job specification for the Village Orderly position. This was **AGREED**.

280. MATTERS ARISING AFTER THE PREPARATION OF THIS AGENDA, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN AGREES TO TAKE AS URGENT. SUCH MATTERS WILL BE FOR NOTING OR DEFERRAL TO A FUTURE MEETING ONLY.

280.1 There were no matters arising.

The public part of the meeting ended at 21.00 hours.

281. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [AND PRESS].

281.1 It was **RESOLVED** in accordance with the Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960 Section 1(2) and the Parish Council's Standing Order 3 (d) that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it as desirable in the public interest that the public [and press] be excluded.

282. STAFFING MATTERS.

282.1 Councillor Blunden wished to recognise the contribution and additional workload that was required of the Clerk in managing the abandoned vehicle on Wilderness Field on 28 September 2021. Any loss or damage to personal belongings should be met by the Council.

This was **NOTED** and **AGREED**.

The meeting concluded at 21.02 hours.