

LINDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** (here in F&GP) held on **THURSDAY 9 JANUARY 2025** at King Edward Hall, Lindfield.

The meeting began at 20.00 hours.

Present:

Committee Members:	Mr. W. Blunden	Mr. R. Pickett*
	Mrs. A. Beecroft (Committee Chair)	Mrs. V. Upton
	Mrs. L. Grace	Mr. T. Webster

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

*Denotes absence.

The Chairman opened the meeting, welcomed those present and announced the emergency procedure for the King Edward Hall.

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

225.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Pickett and their reason was accepted.

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

226.1 There were no declarations of interest from members regarding any items on the agenda.

227. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

227.1 There were no members of the public present.

228. TO CONFIRM AND SIGN MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE F&GP COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2024.

228.1 The Chair called for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of the F&GP Committee held on Thursday 7 November 2024. These were **AGREED** and the Chair **SIGNED** the Minutes as being a true record of that meeting.

229. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

229.1 The Chair advised members that the Government's Devolution Priority Programme had indicated support for a Sussex Mayoral Strategic Authority, which could unlock new powers in the region. Discussions were taking place between East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove County Councils to consider the possibility of submitting a joint proposal to express interest for devolution of powers. If a decision were to be agreed to a Mayor of Sussex and fast-track devolution, this would merge the three councils into one authority and reorganised arrangements could follow as quickly as 2026. This might possibly impact ongoing discussions with West Sussex County Council in so far as the refurbishment of the village pond bollards was concerned.

The above was **NOTED**.

230. ACTION LIST.

230.1 The Chair referred to the Action List which had been circulated with the agenda, and this was **NOTED**.

231. GRANTS AND DONATIONS.

231.1 Grants budget. It was **NOTED** that funds of £1,370 were available to spend from a budget of £2,500.

231.2 To Consider Grant Requests. Members had been presented with a summary of Grants and Donations applied for, and awarded, for the current financial year, with details of the purpose for which funding had been requested. Councillor Upton reported on behalf of the Grants Panel and confirmed that consideration had been given towards the following grant request:

a. St Peter & St James Hospice. St Peter and St James Hospice was a registered charity who had applied for a grant of £500.00 dated 6 November 2024. The grant would support the running costs of the Hospice. Community Services were evolving, and their Supporter Care Services were continuing to be expanded to meet demand.

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Members were mindful of the additional financial burden that had been imposed on this sector in having to meet the cost of increased National Insurance contributions that had been announced by Government.

RESOLVED: in accordance with the recommendation of the Grants Panel and the Council's powers under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the following expenditure should be incurred which, in the opinion of the Council, is in the interests of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure: a grant of £500 be made towards the work of St Peter and St James Hospice.

231.3 To Note Letters of Thanks Received.

It was **NOTED** that letters of thanks had been received from 4Sight Vision Support and Air Ambulance Charity Kent Surrey Sussex (AAKSS).

232. BUDGET 2024/25: TO NOTE THE LATEST BUDGET PROGRESS REPORTS.

232.1 Members had been presented with copies of the RFO summary and detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading Report and Expenditure from Earmarked Reserves Report to 31 October 2024. These had been circulated with the agenda. Budget progress was **NOTED** as follows:

- i) F&GP Committee: A total of £102,365 had been spent from a budget of £192,390.
- ii) Overall Council Budget: A total of £135,940 had been spent from the budget of £262,215 of which £31,633 had been spent from the Environment & Amenities (E&A) Committee budget of £64,425. £848 had been spent from the Allotments budget of £2,500. £nil had been spent from the Planning & Traffic Committee budget of £2,900. A total of £10,069.37 had been spent to date from Earmarked Reserves.
- iii) General Reserves Expenditure: £1,095 had been spent from General Reserves in October 2024.
- iv) Income: Income of £266,058 had been received in total, represented mainly by full payment of the precept £257,000 and £5,656 CTH rental. Other income relating to bank and building society interest had been received totalling £2,422, Christmas Festival Night stallholder fees £645, CTH Service Charge £542, a photocopying service fee £9, and a License fee of £145.00. In addition, allotment rental income of £1,197 had been received. Payment of income totalling £360 remained outstanding for 2023/24.

233. FINANCIAL MONITORING: TO NOTE THE ACCOUNT RECORDS.

233.1 Members had been presented with account records to 31 October 2024 with the agenda.

i) Bank - Cash and Investment Reconciliation and To Note Deposits and Investments Held.

It was **NOTED** that the total bank cash and investment reconciliation to 31 October 2024 was £298,958.82.

ii) Payment Analysis.

It was **NOTED** that a total of £28,492.22 net of VAT had been paid from the Barclays Bank Current Account in October 2024. £5.40 representing a quarterly account fee had been paid from the Unity Trust Current Account to the end of October 2024 and an internal transfer of funds to the Unity Trust Savings account £33,250 had been approved.

iii) To Approve/Ratify any required Payments.

It was **NOTED** that there were no payments to approve/ratify.

234. BUDGET 2025/26: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT.

234.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the Clerk dated 9 January 2025. Since the last Committee meeting Full Council had scrutinised the proposed draft budget at their meeting held on 21 November 2024. New suggestions had since been considered and proposed, which had included additional funding of up to £20,000 towards a new Rolling Asset Replacement earmarked reserve. Estimated funds in hand on 1 April 2025 had been reviewed taking into consideration allotment tenancy deposits held. Members had been asked to consider the Full Council report, including attached proposed draft budgets per Appendix 1.

Full and careful consideration had been given towards the updated and proposed Committee budgets, including the request to increase reserves. A total general reserve of £90,000 had been included.

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A total budget requirement of £354,245 would be required, which was represented by the following:

Expenditure:	£	£
Budget expenditure E&A Committee	77,505	
Budget Expenditure F&GP Committee	199,791	
Budget Expenditure P, T&T Committee	400	
New Earmarked Reserves	35,000	
Top-Up to Existing Earmarked Reserves	2,850	
Additional General Reserve funding	38,699	354,245
Less Income:		
Anticipated Balance of funds on 31 March 2025	48,557	
Anticipated income 2025/26	15,000	<u>-63,557</u>

Giving rise to a shortfall to be supported by a precept of: 290,668

The updated overall draft budget requirement for 2025/26 of £354,245 was **NOTED**, and it was **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council for approval at their meeting due 23 January 2025.

234.2 It had been further **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council at their meeting due 23 January 2025 that a precept request of £290,668 be made to Mid Sussex District Council for the financial year 2025/26. In addition, it had been **AGREED** that an article explaining the precept request would be published, prior to MSDC confirming Council Tax Bills for 2025/26 to residents.

235. **BANKING ARRANGEMENTS: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT AND MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION.**

235.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the Clerk and RFO dated 9 January 2025. Arrangements were in hand to switch the Parish Council's day-to-day banking to Unity Trust Bank, bearing in mind FSCS protection of funds and taking into consideration the newly adopted Financial Regulations. Members had been referred to an Action Plan and were asked to consider recommendations to assist with the transfer and smooth running of banking arrangements.

The report and Action Plan were **NOTED**, and the following **AGREED** to:

- Cllrs Beecroft and Blunden signed and approved the new Direct Debit Mandates to switch to Unity Trust Bank.
- A standing order would be set up in the name of Bryan Cleaning Services to meet the cost of cleaning the Denmans Lane public toilets on a four-week basis.
- To reduce the balance of funds held with Nationwide Building Society, to maintain full FSCS protection. Surplus funds would be transferred to the nominated bank current account.
- Whilst use of the debit card would continue for the interim period, reduced activity meant that this had reduced the need to continue with the automatic transfer facility of funds between the Barclays Bank Business current account and Business savings account. This facility would therefore be cancelled.
- When setting up online payments with Unity Trust Bank, it had been agreed to delegate authority to the RFO and Clerk, to transfer a sufficient level of funds from the Business savings account to the Business current account, to meet the total cost of expenditure. This would maximise the level of interest being paid into the savings account.

236. **TOILETS ON THE COMMON: TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS.**

236.1 The Clerk reported that that a meeting had been arranged between Mid Sussex District Council and the Council's architect. A report was currently awaited. Discussions were ongoing regarding the matter concerning land transfer. Timescales are such that the council may need to consider submitting a new planning application.

The above was **NOTED**.

237. **PLAN 23-27: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT AND ANY MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION.**

237.1 The Chair reported that arrangements were currently in hand for the Working Group to meet to review various items relating to the Plan 23-27.

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The above was **NOTED**.

238. CLERK AND RFO REPORT.

238.1 Clerk's Report.

The Clerk reported on the following items:

a) Clock Tower House – Alarm Service.

This had been carried out on 11 December 2024 without any matters arising.

b) Photocopier Rental Agreement.

This existing contact was due for renewal and options were currently being explored.

c) Mercendez-Benz – Vehicle Lease.

Apologies had been received regarding the recent problems that had occurred in respect of the registration of the vehicle.

d) Clock Tower House – Solar Panels.

The Company Management of the Lindfield Enterprise Park was being approached to receive agreement for Lindfield Parish Council to apply for Solar Panels to be fitted on Clock Tower House.

The above was **NOTED**.

238.2 RFO's Report.

The RFO reported on the following items:

a) Unity Trust Bank – Update on Bank Mandate Changes.

Confirmation had now been received that the bank mandate had been amended to include the following:

- a. To provide the Clerk with online access to the accounts to view and submit payments.
- b. To include Cllr Webster as an authorised signatory.
- c. For online payments to be set up by either the RFO or Clerk and for Two Councillors to authorise payment.

b) Unity Trust Bank – Update on Authorised Signatories.

Cllrs Pickett and Upton were currently liaising with Unity Trust bank to update their online access as authorised signatories.

c) Application for Charge Card with Unity Trust Bank.

Arrangements were in hand to apply for a Charge Card in the name of the Clerk with Unity Trust Bank.

d) Rialtas Business Solutions.

Lindfield Parish Council had been provided with an opportunity to review the existing three-year contract for the Year-End Closedown of accounts. New schemes had been offered in return for small, discounted costs and extended terms of contract without incurring a penalty. Discussions had taken place between the RFO, Clerk and Committee Chair and on balance it had been decided that no further action would be taken at the current time. The existing contract provided the opportunity to review year-end arrangements and the supporting accounts software with this supplier next year.

e) Financial Monthly Reporting – November and December 2024.

Apologies were offered for the delay in sharing monthly financial reports for the months of November and December 2024. This was due to current workload and these would follow as soon as possible.

The above was **NOTED**.

239. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM AND OVERALL INTERNAL AUDIT 2024/2025: TO CONFIRM ARRANGEMENTS.

239.1 Members had been provided with copies of the annual review that had been carried out by Cllr Pickett for the financial year 2023/2024. The annual review was now due for the current financial year and members were

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invited to assist with this. The Chair was already assisting with internal control checks and in view of Cllr Pickett's experience and accounting knowledge, it was considered that Cllr Pickett would be better placed to help provide he agreed.

The above was **NOTED** and it was **AGREED** to ask Cllr Pickett if he would be willing and able to assist with carrying out the annual review for 2024/2025.

240. COMMUNITY EVENTS: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT.

240.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the Clerk dated 9 January 2025. Details of community events in 2025 had been provided which were either being attended by or being organised by Lindfield Parish Council, which included the annual Parish Meeting on behalf of the electorate.

It had been proposed that the Parish Meeting format be reviewed and updated to provide greater focus on the local community. Committee Chairs had confirmed their agreement to provide presentations, and a suggestion had been made towards offering the opportunity for members of the public to meet Council members at the end of the meeting. Local groups and organisations could perhaps be invited to participate. Members had been asked to consider recommendations made by the Clerk.

The above was **NOTED** and the following **AGREED** to:

- a. The annual Parish Meeting in 2025 to be arranged on the updated format as presented and the Clerk authorised to make the necessary arrangements.
- b. To authorise expenditure in respect of the Lindfield Village Day stall and towards participation in the Eastern Road Nature Reserve 30th Anniversary.
- c. To arrange a meeting of the Communications Working Group, together with other interested members, to consider ideas for the Council's stall when participating in external events.

241. COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT.

241.1 The Chair advised members that the Communications Working Group had provided a draft Community Engagement Statement for consideration. A copy had been attached to a report that had been prepared by the Clerk dated 9 January 2025, labelled appendix 1. Members had been invited to consider recommending that the Council implement the draft Community Engagement Statement and to approve a modification to the name of the Communications Working Group.

The above was **NOTED** and the following **AGREED** to:

- a) That the Community Engagement Statement be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council for approval.
- b) To amend the name of the Communications Working Group to Communications and Community Engagement Working Group.

242. CLOCK TOWER HOUSE: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT.

242.1 Members were advised by the Clerk that electrical queries relating to Clock Tower House were being investigated.

The above was **NOTED**.

243. ASSET MANAGEMENT: TO CONSIDER THE REPORT.

243.1 Members had been presented with a report that had been prepared by the Clerk dated 9 January 2025 and had been asked to consider the disposal of surplus assets. In addition, members had been asked to consider whether Lindfield Parish Council should seek ownership of a redundant BT phone box.

The above was **NOTED** and the following **AGREED** to:

- a) To dispose of the redundant assets and to update the Asset Register accordingly:
 - Avaya Telephone system
 - Pentax digital camera (2006)
 - CD player

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- Leaflet stands

b) To express an interest in applying for ownership of the BT phone box.

244. RISK MANAGEMENT: TO CONSIDER ANY RISK ASSESSMENTS.

244.1 There were no risk assessments to review.

245. TO CONFIRM ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING, CONFERENCE AND ASSOCIATION EVENTS, AND RECEIVE ANY ATTENDANCE REPORTS.

245.1 Members had been presented with a Summary of Training and Meeting Attendance for the period 2023 to 2027, which was **NOTED**.

246. 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.

246.1 There were no matters arising.

The meeting concluded at 20.53 hours.

DISCLAIMER

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, statements and decisions recorded in these minutes, their status will remain that of a draft until they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting.