

Parish Clerk
The Parish Office,
The Triangle
Willingdon
East Sussex
BN20 9PJ



Office Hours 9 am to 1 pm

Monday to Friday

Telephone: 01323 489603

www.willingdonandjevington.org.uk

The minutes of the **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**
held on **Monday 8th February 2021** at 7.30pm
Virtual meeting.

Present: Cllrs Andy Watkins (AW) (Chairman) Ben Clennell (BC), Martin Cooper (MC), Howard Coote (HC), Jim Gleeson (JG), John Martin (JM), Douglas Murray (DM), Ian Nisbet (IN), Fran Pritchett (FP), John Pritchett (Vice Chairman) (JP), Stephen Shing (SS).

In Attendance: Stephen Keogh – Parish Clerk (SK)

<u>Item</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Action By</u>
FGP21/001	<u>Apologies, Councillors not present and notification of substitutes</u> There were apologies received from Cllr Lynn who had a transport issue due to the snow. Cllr Clennell substituted for Cllr Lynn.	
FGP21/002	<u>To accept the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7th December 2021.</u> <u>RESOLVED:</u> The minutes of Monday 7 th December 2021 were accepted as an accurate record and would be signed by the Chairman.	
FGP21/003	<u>Declarations of interest</u> There were no declarations of Interest.	
FGP21/004	<u>Public Question Time</u> – to deal with any questions received from members of the public relating to items on this agenda. The public had been asked to submit questions before the meeting to the Parish Clerk. There were no questions received.	
FGP21/005	<u>To consider report on items and previous action points not on agenda</u> <u>Property Damage</u> The insurance claims for the gate at Jevington and bench at the Triangle had been submitted. The Clerk's report was NOTED . <u>Community Infrastructure Levy</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED . It was NOTED that a response had not been received to a letter that had been sent to the CCG and the Clerk was asked to chase a reply. Also, that a planning application had been received for a medical centre on Hindsland. <u>Hybrid Meetings</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED and the details of the regulations regarding the virtual and hybrid meetings were discussed.	<u>SK</u>

	Cllr J Pritchett asked whether the Council could draft their own regulations and the Chairman responded that the Clerk had reported that the current regulations expired on 7th May 2021 and the Government had no current plans to continue with remote and/or hybrid meetings despite many representations from Local Authorities. Unless the Government extended the period of the current arrangements, to hold a remote or hybrid meeting after the 7th May would not be legal. Clerk to keep Council advised and to ensure that Council may meet legally and safely after 7th May.	<u>SK</u>
FGP21/006	Administrative Matters (i) Meeting Attendance. The Clerk's report on what constituted attendance by Members was NOTED. The Clerk said that Members should keep up to date on the code of conduct and the good councillor guide regarding attendance. The reason for the use of the word "summoned" on agendas rather than invited or asked to attend is to emphasise Members commitment to being a councillor. It was AGREED that the Attendance Register should show if Members are substitutes (S) or "in attendance" (I). Meeting Protocol The Clerk's report was NOTED. The Clerk said that Members should read the Councils policy on virtual meetings and be aware of how to conduct themselves at a meeting. (ii) Covid -19 The Clerk's report was NOTED. Cllr Pritchett commented that at a recent virtual meeting with 3VA it was announced that Polegate Town Council were helping individuals in Willingdon. On investigation it was just the person indicated in the Clerks report. (iii) Property Matters The Clerk's report was NOTED. Parish Office The water heater had been replaced and the valve changed, however there could still be an issue with the water pressure valve causing a leak as it was not adjustable, it might be necessary to install an adjustable valve. <i>*Cllr Gleeson arrived at 7.49pm.</i> Tott Yew Recreation Ground The Clerk's reported that the gates would be locked from 1st April to end of October was NOTED. (ii) Website/Social Media The Clerk's report was NOTED. The Clerk commented that the amount of interest in the Website and Facebook had increased. Cllr F Pritchett commented that a resident who is the administrator of Willingdon Community News had included the Parish Councils contact details on the Facebook page. (iii) Newsletter and Publicity. The Clerk's report that the website was kept up to date was NOTED. It was noted that the e-news had been well received. Cllr Ian Nisbet asked how we knew that this was the case and the Clerk replied that the residents' comments on the telephone and social media implied that they were aware of items within the newsletter. (iv) Progress on a Loop System The Clerk's report that he would not be taking this further until face to face meetings resumed and the equipment had been trialled was NOTED. (v) SSALC	<u>SK</u>

	The Clerk reported that West Sussex Association of Local Councils had decided to break away from SSALC which meant that the only viable option was to form separate groups as had been in the past. Trevor Leggo would be the CEO of the East Sussex association. The Clerk's report was NOTED. The Clerk had attended a meeting hosted by ESALC, the hope being that there would be more details available regarding the new set up. It was unfortunate that the decision to form these new associations had been recent and therefore the details of the new set up were not fully known. The cost may not change. Trevor Leggo may only be available to the East Sussex area for two days a week. Details of the new association would become clearer soon.	
FGP21/007	<u>Policing Matters</u> (i) <u>Liaison with Police - CSAG</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED. The CSAG group had met on 29th January to discuss the main topics for the area. The details of crime were discussed and the areas to be added to the speed watch were forwarded to the PCSOs. (i) <u>Latest crime figures for Parish</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED. (ii) <u>Willingdon Neighbourhood Watch/Speed-watch</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED.	
FGP21/008	<u>Strengthening Local Relationships Sub Committee</u> (i) To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2020. The minutes of the meeting were NOTED. (ii) Report on outstanding or unresolved matters from previous meetings. Cllr Clennell asked that the street sweeper be requested to attend Jevington Road as the pull in areas seem to be built up again or the vehicle had missed the areas. He also mentioned that there were some issues with the soakaway at Cloth Farm which have not been attended to. Cllr Murray commented that there were some drain issues in Seven Sisters Road. Gullies to be chased up with WDC. Cllr Martin commented that the hedge at Church Street would not be such an issue of the planting was just hedge, it appears that tree saplings are now part of the hedge. Cllr F Pritchett asked if pathways edging was to be carried out. The Clerk would investigate. Cllr Pritchett asked if there was any news on the HPEMAC? The Clerk would investigate. The Clerk's Report was NOTED.	<u>SK</u> <u>SK</u> <u>SK</u>
FGP21/009	<u>Parish Governance Sub Committee</u> (i) <u>To note minutes of the sub-committee meeting of 11th January 2021.</u> The minutes of the Governance Sub Committee meetings were NOTED. (i) <u>To consider recommendations made and agree recommendations to Council.</u> The Chairman's report was NOTED. It was AGREED that the sub-committee engages with the District Electoral Services Manager to seek her advice on numbers and warding before Council is asked to agree recommendations and submit a formal request to District to review. <u>Future Committee Structure</u> The Chairman's report was NOTED. It was AGREED that the proposed "Future Committee Working Group" with three Members Cllrs J Pritchett, G Morgan and R Weedon be appointed with Terms of Reference "To examine the current	<u>SK</u>

	Committee structure of Council and to make recommendations for change based on the principle of openness and transparency for the business of Council to be conducted in the most effective manner possible in the interests of residents” and to report back to the Governance Sub Committee in time to consider the recommendations and draft a report for the next F & GP meeting on 12th April 2021. <u>Meeting and Location dates</u> The Committee considered two proposals put forward by the Clerk: one for the current frequency of committees’ meetings on five for the year and the other for four meetings a year. It was noted that the work of the Working Group just appointed might well affect the future committee structure. The Chairman said he was concerned that under the four-meeting proposal there would be no financial overview by the Committee from June until November. All Chairmen spoke of the needs of their committees and the variances were noted. Cllr Pritchett commented that his preference would be to have two meetings in an evening where practical. Cllr Cooper asked that there be scope for extra meetings such as Events Committee where there was the need. It was AGREED to defer the decision regarding the meeting dates until the Working Group had reported and all Committees had been consulted. It was NOTED that the frequency of the Planning Committee meetings is determined by the response period to the planning applications and consultations unless delegated arrangements were agreed. Cllr Murray also commented that the use of working groups could be included where necessary to complete small projects. It was AGREED that the preferred schedule was the one which included five meetings per committee. The Clerk would use that to consult with the committees.	<u>SK</u>
<u>FGP21/010</u>	<u>Liaison with Schools</u> (i) <u>Liaison with Primary School – Cllr Lynn</u> Cllr Lynn had asked the Clerk to forward some questions to the School regarding the effects of the lockdown and the pandemic in general on the school. Unfortunately, the school replied that they were unwilling to provide the answers. (i) <u>Liaison with Community School – Cllr J Pritchett</u> Cllr John Pritchett had been in contact with a teacher at the school, to arrange to meet the student council. Due to the lockdown this had proven to be difficult so would be revisited later in the year. It was NOTED that the School Travel Plan which the school had said at the time the school was extended they would consult the Parish Council was still outstanding. Also, the drop kerb on the corner of Oldfield Road and Tott Yew Road also promised at that time had not been provided. The Clerk to investigate.	<u>SK</u>
<u>FGP21/011</u>	<u>Review of Council Policies.</u> (i) <u>Environmental Policy</u> The Clerk’s report was NOTED. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that no changes were required at the current time. Cllr Martin commented that the Council had agreed to ensure that the environment policy was referenced when making decisions. Clerk to ensure that happens. (i) <u>Standing Orders</u> The Clerk’s report was NOTED.	<u>SK</u>

	It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that the current Standing Orders might require changes soon. Cllr Cooper asked whether the Standing Orders needed to be changed to remove the references to the European Union. The Clerk explained that as the items in question were in bold, these were statutory and cannot be altered unless by Government. Therefore, these Orders would need to be altered by Government and NALC first. The use of substitutes was also a concern. The Clerk explained that if a Member gave three clear days' notice that they could not attend and therefore provided a substitute, that person could take a full part in the meeting, could speak and vote. If the substitute had less than the three days they could speak but could not vote. The reason for this was not clear but depending on the subject and the amount of notice given, the substitute member may not feel they have the information they need to decide on how they wish to vote. The Clerk would investigate whether this was a legal requirement or whether this could be altered. The Chairman asked that colour coding not be used as that was difficult for Members who were colour blind. Cllr Murray commented that the use of substitutes was usually to ensure that the meeting is quorate. Cllr J Pritchett asked if a Member, who was attending a meeting but not a Member of the committee, could speak at the meeting or could they only ask questions at the public question time. The Clerk explained that ideally the Member would speak only at the public question time, but this could depend on the reason why the Member was in attendance. Cllr Fran Pritchett commented that at meetings she chaired that standing orders were suspended to allow people to speak. The Clerk explained that in this case, it may be that at a suitable point of the meeting the standing orders were suspended and then allow the public/members to speak. It was AGREED that Members would forward their concerns regarding the Standing Orders to the Clerk and these would be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee. (i) <u>Financial Regulations</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED. It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that no changes were required at the current time.	<u>SK</u> <u>SK</u> <u>ALL SK</u>
<u>FGP21/012</u>	<u>Financial Matters</u> (i) <u>To Consider a report from the Responsible Finance Officer</u> RESOLVED: To NOTE the report of the RFO. (i) <u>Audit Reports</u> The Clerks Report was NOTED. Several issues had been raised which the RFO said he had dealt with. A particular concern which needed to be investigated urgently was regarding the investment of the Council monies to ensure that the Council did not fall foul of the FSCS. Some Members commented that the banks only support the amount up to £85,000 per bank, rather than per account. Cllr Gleeson also commented that umbrella banks need to be clarified as well. The RFO was asked to investigate and report urgently. (ii) <u>To Consider Banking Options</u>	<u>SK</u>

	RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report of the RFO. It was NOTED that it was understood that banks were preparing for negative interest rates. Cllr Gleeson commented that the best option for a good return might be the purchase of property; either a large property that the Council could manage or a commercial property that the Council could use to benefit the community. The Clerk explained that the CIL funds needed to be spent within 5 years, but the Council needed to ensure that they are aware of the risk and ensure that the funds are in safe financial companies. There were still large sums of money to come forward with CIL over the next few years. It was AGREED that members would forward proposals for the investment and saving of the Council funds and the Clerk would investigate options, to bring a report to the next meeting of the Committee. (iii) Precept 2021-2022 The Band 'D' equivalent figure would remain at £60.95. Wealden District Council has confirmed the total precept would be £185,435. RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report of the RFO. (iv) Payments List for agreement Cllr Murray asked what 'Yew Tree Stone' was and why was the item taken out and reinput. The Clerk explained that the amount had been input without the VAT. Cllr Coote explained that it was for the purchase of the Black Stone Tablets for the ashes area. RESOLVED: To APPROVE the list of payments totalling £39,782.33 (i) <u>Budgetary Controls – income and expenditure report</u> RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report of the RFO. Cllr Murray asked why the streetlights costs were so high? The Clerk explained that there was an Earmarked Reserve used for new equipment and that the columns had been painted during the year. (ii) Annual consideration of Councillors Remuneration and Allowances Scheme RESOLVED: Members NOTED the report of the RFO, and that the Council had complied with all the requirements of the Panel. (iii) Internet Banking Update The Clerk asked that cheque signatories visited the office to register to be able to carry out the task when it is safe to do so.	<u>ALL</u> <u>SK</u>
FGP21/013	Personnel Matters (i) <u>Consideration personnel issues</u> The Clerk's report was NOTED. Cllr J Pritchett asked that when Ewan Johnstone returns to work he also includes the task of litter picker for Tott Yew. The Clerk commented that he should be doing the task but as this was not a	

	busy period there may be less need. Cllr Pritchett commented that there was some litter build up in the hedges etc due to the wind.	
FGP21/014	<u>To consider nominations for Freedom of the Parish Award</u> It was AGREED to recommend to Full Council that the following names be put forward for the award: Raj from the Farmlands Way shop and Jitesh and Bumikah from the Co-Op in Coppice Avenue. The Clerk and Cllr J Pritchett to draft the citations.	<u>SK &</u> <u>JP</u>
FGP21/015	<u>Risk Management</u> – to consider the effects (if any) arising from items on the agenda. None.	
FGP21/016	<u>Urgent Matters</u> – for noting or referral to the next agenda for Full Council or appropriate committee/sub-committee. None.	
FGP20/117	<u>Date of next meeting</u> The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 12 th April 2021.	

Meeting closed at 9.07pm

Signed Committee Chair.....

Date.....