HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT JUBILEE HALL ON 28 OCTOBER 2024 AT 6:00 PM

PRESENT: Cllr J Lay (Chairman), Cllr D Prosser, Cllr Attlee, Cllr S Freeman, Cllr A Redding.

IN ATTENDANCE: Carla Baverstock-Jones, Chief Officer (Minute Taker), Simon Ritson (RFO)

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE: None present

F&GP 012/24/25 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies received from Cllr Hodgson

F&GP 013/24/25 **TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

F&GP 014/24/25 **TO OPEN THE MEETING TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None in attendance.
A written submission from David Evans was considered and noted.

F&GP 015/24/25 **TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN TO THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

Cllr A Redding was duly elected – proposed by Cllr S Freeman and seconded by Cllr D Prosser.

F&GP 016/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 23 SEPTEMBER 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 23 September 2024, be signed as a true record of the meeting. All agreed.

F&GP 017/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE QUARTERLY MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2024**

A discussion took place, it was noted that with the submission of a further quotation the cost of the tree works had reduced to £27,500, and therefore the overspend reduced accordingly to £37,000. The Accounts were noted and agreed.

F&GP 018/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE DRAFT BUDGET 2025/2026**

A draft copy of the Budget was circulated and noted, to be discussed in detail at the Budget Workshop directly following this meeting.

F&GP 019/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE INTERIM STRATEGIC PLANNING PROPOSAL**

A report was circulated outlining the proposals, councillors provided feedback. The Plan is to involve staff, and members of the public at the Annual Parish Meeting, Facebook, website, local publication by way of public consultation.

All agreed and for further work to be undertaken, and to return to the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

F&GP 020/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING GRANT APPLICATION**

Item moved up the agenda.

Horndean Technology College Lunch Club submitted a grant application for £300. Members discussed the application; it was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the grant be approved.

F&GP 021/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND REVIEW THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:**

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (amended version)
- Data Retention Policy
- Data Breach Policy
- Member/Officer Protocol Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy (amended version)

Copies of the policies were circulated and discussed with minor amendments being agreed.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the policies be adopted, with the exception of the Member/Officer Protocol which will return to the next meeting of the Finance and General purposes Committee.

F&GP 022/24/25 **TO NOTE THE NEXT MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE ON THE 02 DECEMBER 2024**

Duly noted.

Item moved up the agenda.

F&GP 023/24/25 **TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS, IN THE VIEW THAT PUBLICITY WOULD PREJUDICE THE PUBLIC INTEREST BY REASON OF THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE BUSINESS OR ARISING OUT OF THE BUSINESS ABOUT TO BE TRANSACTED. (PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting. No members present.

F&GP 024/24/25 **TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURE WITH REGARD TO STAFF STRUCTURE, AND THE SUBSEQUENT REDUCED OPENING HOURS OF THE PARISH OFFICE**

A report by the Chief Officer was circulated and a discussion took place. There is currently a vacant administrative post with the option to recruit for less hours. The Parish Office could open for four days per week which would result in a predicted reduction in expenditure of £10,591 per annum.

It was **RESOLVED** to recommend to Council that the Parish Office closes on Fridays.

Public meeting concluded at 19:00PM

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Chairman

2.12.24
.....
Dated

HORNDEAN PARISH COUNCIL

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING **Date: 28 October 2024**

AGENDA ITEM:

SUBJECT OF REPORT: Staff Structure and reduced Parish Office Opening

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of the Council on the 07 October 2024, the move from the current salary assessment arrangements to the NJC grading, and salary structure was formally adopted.

The salary increases due to be implemented on the 01 April 2025 are significant **(£28k).** In order to mitigate the cost, any potential to reduce expenditure needs to be explored.

It is for this reason the proposal is presented to reduce the opening hours of the Parish Office to four days per week, with the office being closed on a Friday.

The current vacant post which historically has been recruited for three days could be reduced to two days per week, providing a saving of **£7,310** per annum.

Staff are not permitted to lone work, and therefore additional cover is required for periods of annual leave and sickness. This could also be reduced as the hours worked by staff would be compressed into four days which provides increased coverage.

In the past five months 64 hrs overtime claimed in the avoidance of lone working. On an annual basis this could potentially amount to **£3,281.**

Total predicted annual reduction in expenditure of **£10,591.**

There are of course disadvantages, not least the level of service provision to the residents. The community halls, and the Countryside Team remain fully operational, and to some extent will have less support if required.

In mitigation of the negative aspects:

- The Grounds Manager will usually be working within the Countryside Office, on Fridays, therefore the building will be occupied
- Two caretakers are contactable, in respect of any hall related issues
- Napier and Jubilee Halls both fully booked on Fridays with regular hirers, and as such are self-sufficient
- Chief Officer contactable via telephone/email until 11.00am
- Parish Office answerphone available to take messages, website contact form
- Low number of visitors to the Parish Office seeking information/assistance

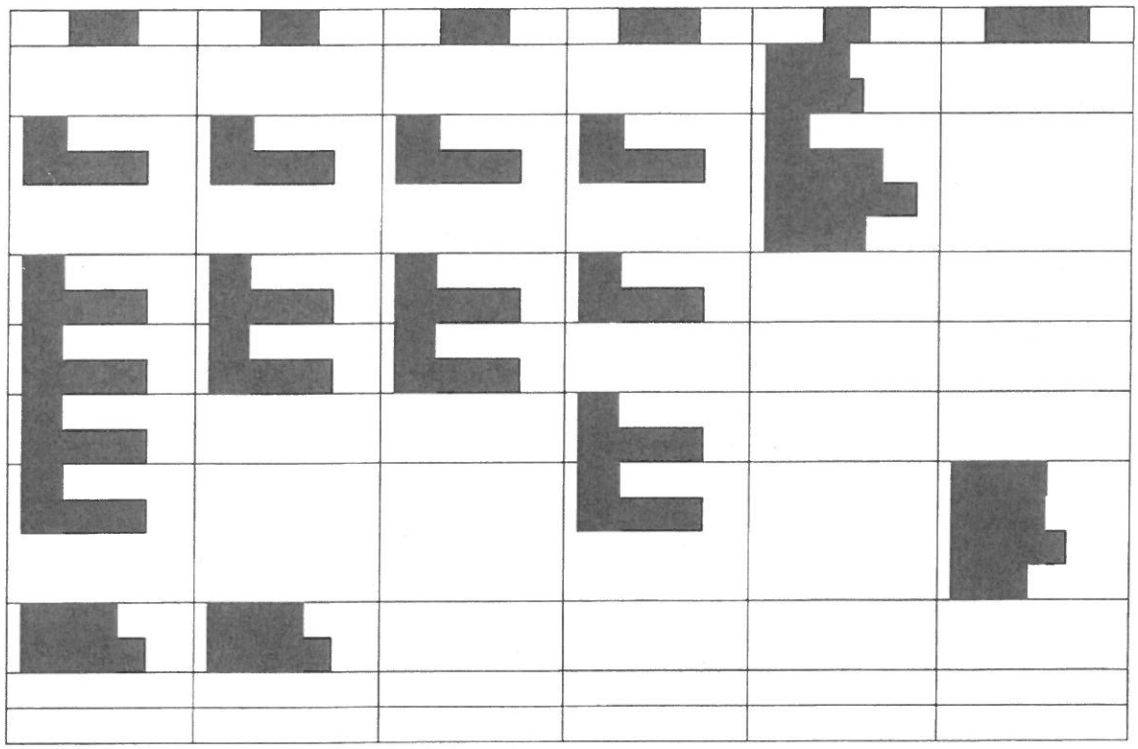
- Friday is overall the least busy day in respect of telephone enquiries and visitors.

It is evident that in recent times the world of work has changed greatly with working from home becoming the norm, and to this end the working practices within EHDC are without exception.

The EHDC Council Offices have limited numbers of staff in attendance, and are without public access. It is of note that employee numbers have been reduced as part of a cost saving strategy.

Local Authorities are under financial pressure with significant deficits to be addressed. It is therefore prudent to explore any potential areas whereby a reduction in expenditure can be achieved, particularly with the least detrimental impact on residents.

The proposed staffing schedule and operation of the Parish Office is as follows:



It is important to note that existing staff will not be subject to any reduction in their contractual hours, and are content with the proposed schedule.

RECOMMENDATION

Members may wish to give consideration to the closure of the Parish Office on Fridays in order to curtail the escalation of expenditure, and for this to commence on or before the 01 January 2025.

Report prepared by:

Carla Baverstock-Jones
Chief Officer