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Minutes of Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 26th September 2023 at Fairlight Village Hall at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors – Ms I Horsley (Chair), Miss C Sharpe, Mr D Greenup, Mr R Fellows-Turnbull
County and District Councillors – Mr C Maynard and Mr A Mier, Mr T Grohne
Proper Officer/RFO - Mrs P Collins

ACTION

2117 Apologies for absence (Including resolutions to accept reason for absence by
2223 Councillors)

178 Apologies received from Cllr A Hohenkerk, Ms L Cooke, Mr G Smith
Resolved to accept the reasons for absence

2300 Chairman's Report

0223 The Chair welcomed members of the Public and presented their report. Cllr Horsley
179 also thanked all who attended the Facts and Finance event, delivered village surveys
and who had returned their survey to date.

2318 Code of Conduct and Disclosure of Interests

0 (a) To receive any disclosures by members, of personal or prejudicial interest in
matters on the agenda
Cllrs Horsley and Sharpe declared an interest in agenda item 10(e) – as members of
the Fairfest committee

2318 Public questions in respect of items on the agenda

1 The Public requested to raise questions on agenda items – 10(b), 11 and 19
Questions to be dealt with at the appropriate time on the agenda

2318 Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 25th July 2023

- 2 The minutes were distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting and made available to the Public at the meeting.

2318 Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda

- 3 None

2318 County and District Councillors reports

- 4 Cllr Maynard - current highways contract and increased budget pressure to provide care and foster carers for children.

Cllr Horsley raised the issues of the grit bin which had been removed from Peter James Lane/Friars Hill and needs to be replaced. Also, the current 101 bus service and Flexi-bus provisions. A letter is to be sent to Cllr Maynard and Cllr Skelton (Asst Director ESCC) in respect of concerns raised re the bus services.

Cllr Greenup re-iterated that the pavements on Battery Hill are overgrown and require attention. Cllrs Maynard and Mier to deal with this work.

Cllr Mier – Heather Way – The spring over the pavement is being dealt with by ESCC Highways. Current costs are increasing but Council Tax is capped. As Chair of the Planning Committee, one is automatically a member of the ANOB Advisory Committee. ANOB Management Plan is out for six weeks consultation. Cllr Horsley to poster the village. He attended the Southern Water (SW) meeting re Winchelsea and SW have lined the drains in the area. RDC support the preservation of the Fire Service in Rother and a possible consultation in December. He is also a trustee of the Rural Rother Trust – donations and applications gratefully received.

Cllr Grohne – RDC support the local Fire Services. Current finances are causing concern. The HR Committee concluded not to pay staff a home working allowance.

2318 Financial Matters

5

- (a) To consider and approve schedule of payments and receipts for August and September 2023

Resolved to approve the payments for August and September 2023.

- (b) To consider and sign the monthly bank reconciliations.

Resolved to note and sign the bank reconciliations as correct.

- (c) To consider monthly budget monitoring figures.

The budget monitoring figures were circulated to Councillors prior to this meeting. Current expenditure was as predicted. The invoice for Jan to June 2023 electricity for the Compressor House has been received - £3700. Concerns were raised in respect of future budget commitments for the compressor and cliff maintenance costs.

2318 Planning Committee

6

- (a) To receive the monthly report PO
Details of the planning applications, decisions and comments from the Planning Committee meetings were reported (see below).
Residents had also raised concerns in respect of the wildlife area and the height of the buildings.
- (b) To discuss and approve the RDC proposed name for the Market Garden development – “Market Gardens”
Resolved to approve the RDC proposed name for the site

2318 Land Management Group

7

- (a) To receive the monthly report
(See reports below)
Standing orders were suspended
- Residents asked questions in respect of the RDC Article 4 leaflet, materials to be used for driveways and the Southern Water’s Road Drainage Survey.
District and Parish Councillors responded to these questions.
- Standing orders were reinstated**
- Cllr Horsley informed the meeting about the Southern Water meeting to be held on 2nd October at DISH which residents can attend and raise items. Also, she raised concerns in respect of drainage excavations on Stream Lane which could affect neighbouring land, the stream and properties. This is being dealt with Mr N Powers, the National Trust and a local resident. PO
- (b) To discuss and approve a new booking form for the use of Wood Field
Resolved to adopt the new booking form. A copy to be sent to the Activate Youth Club.
- (c) To discuss the condition of the pavements/footpaths on Battery Hill PO
This item was previously discussed under County and District Councillors reports.
- (d) To approve the removal of the “meadow verge” status of the verge outside 41 Knowle Road PO
Resolved to remove the “meadow verge” status and notify ESCC accordingly
- (e) To approve the request from Fairfest to use Wood Field on 22nd/23rd June 2024
Resolved to approve the use of Wood Field for Fairfest on 22nd/23rd June 2024
- (f) To discuss local bus facilities including changes to current services and ESCC Flexi- bus.
This item was previously discussed under County and District Councillors reports.

2318 Community Hub Committee (Faircomm.)

8

- (a) To receive the monthly report
(see below)
- (b) To consider and approve the quotations for energy rating calculation contractor
Resolved to accept the quotation from Achieve Green. **PO**
- (c) To discuss and consider the future governing body of the Community Hub
(Faircomm) project.
Cllr Smith had produced a report (see below).

Standing orders were suspended to allow an open discussion between Councillors and residents on this subject.

Questions and issues raised will be put to the Community Hub Committee on 12th October for a response to the Full Parish Council at the October meeting. These queries included existing contracts and outstanding expenditure, transition details to another body, type and details of future organisation – trustees, funding, budget, timelines, community involvement etc.

Standing orders were reinstated

Resolved to agree in principle to continue ahead with work towards charity status

2318 Finance and Administration Committee

9

- (a) To receive a monthly report (Cllr Horsley)
(see below)
- (b) To discuss and consider the necessity for an interim internal audit
Resolved not to have an interim audit this year. However, this could be considered **PO**
in future years if it was thought to be necessary.
- (c) To discuss and consider future banking options – CCLA, Unity Trust Bank, etc
Resolved to open a Unity Trust Instant Access Savings Account with current bank **PO**
authorised signatories – Cllrs Horsley, Sharpe, Smith, Fellow-Turnbull and Proper
Officer.
- (d) To approve the proposed EMRs for 2023/24
Resolved to approve the proposed EMRs for 2023/24 **PO**

2319 Drop-In Social Hub Group

0

- (a) To receive an update on the Drop-In Social Hub Group
Cllr Sharpe updated the meeting on current and future events/attendees to DISH,
purchases from a grant received of a new freezer, supplies and a proposed new
microwave and donations from attendees and local residents.
- (b) To note the receipt of a £1000 grant from Hastings Voluntary Action to purchase a
freezer, microwave and food supplies
Thank you to the Hastings and Rother Food Network for approving these funds.
- (c) To approve the proposed payments to Fairlight Village Hall for storage and
electricity for the freezer – £10 storage and £60 electricity per annum
Resolved to approve the annual payments to the Village Hall of £10 for storage and **PO**
£60 for electricity

2319 Parish Council Website and Facebook

1

(a) To receive a monthly report

Both website and Facebook pages continue to be updated.

2319 War Memorial Steering Group

2

(a) To receive an update on the project (Haydon Luke)

A further planning application is required for the minor changes – two stones and slightly larger base stone. The Church have agreed an extension to the current faculty.

Applications have been made to the Kowitz Foundation but no replies have been received.

2319 Hastings Country Park

3

(a) To receive a monthly update (Haydon Luke)

It was noted that changes have been made to the type of cattle grazing on the Country Park.

2319 Policies and Practices

4

To discuss and adopt the revised policies

(a) Email Policy

(b) Dignity at Work Policy

Resolved to approve and adopt these policies. The next policies/practices to be reviewed are Standing Orders and Complaints

2319 GDPR and Data Protection Officer

5

(a) To discuss and consider the appointment of an external DPO

Resolved to approve the Proper Officer investigate possible options

2319 Proposed New Parish Council Logo

6

(a) To discuss and approve the proposed new Parish Council logo

Cllr Sharpe presented several design options

Standing orders were suspended

Mr Smart, Chair of the Fairlight Residents Association spoke in respect of the use of the new village sign image. Permission has been given to the Parish Council to use the likeness of the sign within their logo. He stated that at the FRA's Annual General Meeting it was agreed that "any constituted group could include the sign image in their logo upon request"

Standing orders were reinstated

Resolved to adopt the new logo and add to all Parish Council documents. (see top of page 1).

2319 Training/meetings attended

7 None attended

2319 Correspondence

8 All correspondence had been circulated to Councillors and was available to the Public were appropriate.

(a)RDC Rural Capital Community Grant Scheme

To be discuss at a future meeting

2319 Information and/or Future Agenda Items

9 Future Agenda Items

- Use of Wood Field by a new cricket club
- Feedback from Facts and Finance event
- Village Survey results
- Co-option of new Councillors
- Appointment of a new Caretaker
-

2320 Date of next meeting –

0 Tuesday 24th October 2023 at 7.00 pm

2320 Close of meeting

1 Meeting closed at 8.55

2320 Open Forum

2 A resident informed the meeting that the new Sussex cattle for the Hastings Country Park were currently grazing behind the heli-pad site

Signed: _____
Chair

Date:

REPORTS FOR PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – 26TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Agenda item 8(a) To consider and approve the attached schedule of payments and receipts for August and September 2023

AUGUST 2023

Date Paid	Invoice	Payee	Gross	Net	VAT	Details
02/08/2023	01/08/2023	Tesco Mobile	21.99	18.33	3.66	Tesco - Mobile phone inv 134181203555
20/07/2023	17/08/2023	PWLB	1236.51	1236.51	0.00	PWLB loan repayment

02/08/202	02/08/2023	Fasthosts	13.20	11.00	2.20	Web hosting inv
03/08/202 3	03/08/2023	Fasthosts	42.00	35.00	7.00	Web SSL certificate renewal inv73232631
06/08/202	06/08/2023	Fasthosts	6.94	5.78	1.16	Web hosting inv
10/08/202	10/08/2023	Viking Supplies	291.10	242.58	48.52	Stationery inv 2855466
22/08/202	22/08/2023	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Salary - August 2023
22/08/202	22/08/2023	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Mileage - August 2023
22/08/202	22/08/2023	Pauline Collins				Expenses - £107.51
	18/07/2023		8.99	8.99	0.00	Amazon - Meat thermometer - DISH
	22/07/2023		10.68	10.68	0.00	Aldi - DISH supplies
	22/07/2023		4.50	4.50	0.00	Good on Greens - DISH Supplies
	04/08/2023		59.26	59.26	0.00	Tesco - DISH supplies/ Finance event
	06/08/2023		6.14	6.14	0.00	Aldi - DISH supplies
	06/08/2023		6.00	6.00	0.00	Bookers - DISH Supplies
	09/08/2023		11.94	11.94	0.00	Bookers - DISH Supplies
22/08/202	25/07/2023	AB Fire & Security	103.83	86.53	17.30	CCTV inv 361343
22/08/202 3	27/07/2023	JDC Architects Ltd	312.6	260.5	52.10	War memorial architect fees inv 212/106/34
22/08/202	28/07/2023	AB Fire & Security	174.00	145.00	29.00	CCTV inv 361684
22/08/202 3	31/07/2023	Countrymans Contractors Ltd	438.00	365.00	73.00	Grass cutting inv SI-3980
22/08/202	02/08/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	160.00	160.00	0.00	DISH Hall Hire - July
22/08/202	08/08/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	54.00	54.00	0.00	PC Hall Hire - July 2023
22/08/202 3	22/08/2023	Fairlight Residents Association	685.00	685.00	0.00	Donation to village sign project
22/08/202 3	22/08/2023	Activate Fairlight Youth Centre	50.00	50.00	0.00	Use of hut by HFC for August 2023
28/08/202 3	03/08/2023	Pump House Designs Ltd	990.00	825.00	165.00	Faircomm final account inv 16738
28/08/202 3	17/08/2023	Waller Gray Consulting Ltd	2370.00	1975.00	385.00	Faircomm work inv INV-1305

SEPTEMBER 2023

Date Paid	Invoice	Payee	Gross	Net	VAT	Details
15/09/2023	01/09/2023	Tesco Mobile	21.99	18.33	3.66	Tesco - Mobile phone inv 134184105824
02/09/2023	02/09/2023	Fasthosts	13.20	11.00	2.20	Web hosting inv
06/09/2023	06/09/2023	Fasthosts	6.94	5.78	1.16	Web hosting inv
05/09/2023	05/09/2023	Viking Supplies	83.96	69.97	13.99	Stationery inv 2951320
11/09/2023	11/09/2023	Viking Supplies	183.79	153.16	30.63	Stationery inv 2979834
26/09/2023	26/09/2023	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Salary - September 2023
26/09/2023	26/09/2023	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Mileage - September
26/09/2023		Pauline Collins				Expenses - £1037.55
	27/08/2023		29.11	29.11	0.00	Aldi - DISH supplies
	06/09/2023		334.00	278.33	55.67	Currys - DISH Freezer
	09/09/2023		24.35	24.35	0.00	Aldi - DISH supplies
	10/09/2023		15.47	15.47	0.00	Aldi - DISH supplies
	13/09/2023		103.00	85.84	17.16	Dunelm - DISH supplies
	13/09/2023		241.37	237.98	3.39	Booker - DISH supplies
	14/09/2023		159.00	159.00	0.00	TV Licence - DISH
	14/09/2023		3.00	2.50	0.50	Car Parking
	17/09/2023		65.90	65.90	0.00	Tesco - Refreshments for event
	11/09/2023		11.91	11.91	0.00	Amazon - DISH
	12/09/2023		8.84	8.84	0.00	Amazon - DISH
	15/09/2023		15.99	15.99	0.00	Amazon - DISH
	15/09/2023		25.61	25.61	0.00	Amazon - DISH
26/09/2023	26/09/2023	HMRC	****	****	0.00	Tax & NI 06/07/23 - 05/10/23
26/09/2023	29/08/2023	AB Fire & Security	103.83	86.53	17.30	CCTV inv 362146
26/09/2023	01/09/2023	Countrymans Contractors Ltd	438.00	365.00	73.00	Grass cutting inv SI-4021
26/09/2023	26/08/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	128.00	128.00	0.00	DISH Hall Hire - August 2023

26/09/202	26/08/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	18.00	18.00	0.00	PC Hall Hire - August
26/09/202 3	11/09/2023	Rother District Council	315.00	315.00	0.00	Article 4 leaflets inv 86548781
26/09/202	19/09/2023	AB Fire & Security	103.83	86.53	17.30	CCTV inv 362348
26/09/202 3	26/09/2023	Activate Fairlight Youth Centre	50.00	50.00	0.00	Use of hut by HFC for September 2023

Agenda item 9 - Planning Committee

RR/2023/1682/P 35 Meadow Way, Igueldo, Fairlight TN35 4BN

- i) There were no objections to this planning application.
- ii) The use of Velux windows raised concerns in respect of the increasing light levels to be emitted from the property which would impact on the dark skies in the area. The installation of Velux blinds would assist this situation.
- iii) A construction plan is required, and all materials and vehicles will need to be stored on site to prevent obstruction on an access road.
- iv) Small vehicles to be used for deliveries due to the size of the access roads.
- v) Neighbour's comments should be considered.

Agenda item 10(a) - Land Management

Cllr G Smith

Nothing much to report on this month. The Knowle Wood volunteers are continuing in their sterling work. I would like to arrange a volunteer day to try and address some of the weed growth around the edge of the field once it all dies back a little more.

Hopefully the missing and broken signs requested are on order and will be with us soon.

Agenda item 10(d) - To approve the removal of the "meadow verge" status of the verge outside 41 Knowle Road

Request from ESCC

"ESCC have been managing a Meadow Verge outside the above address. I believe that this was applied for by the resident who lives there. They have asked that it no longer be managed as a Meadow Verge and that is cut more regularly as per the rest of Fairlight's urban cut. If the PC are happy for this, I will remove it from the Meadow Verge cutting schedule for next year and add it to the urban cut schedule."

Agenda item 11(a) - To receive an update on this project (Cllr Smith)

In August the Community Hub Committee members who were available held an 'unofficial' meeting to brainstorm the best way forward for this project as a whole.

At the September Community Hub Committee meeting it was proposed that the Parish Council consider relinquishing this project and a charity be set up to take over the project. (Please refer to the full report which provide more details on this subject. – Agenda item 11(c)). Committee members voted on this proposal and unanimously agreed in favour to request the Parish Council to consider the future governing body of this project.

The Community Hub Committee are now in receipt of full plans and the structural engineer report. Once the future governance of the project is known, the tender process, business plan and financing of the build can

commence. The asbestos survey report has also been received, which as suspected shows negative, Cllr Smith is pleased to say.

One final report is pending in respect of the ‘civil’ engineer evaluation regarding surface water. A new and lower quotation for cost energy rating investigation and report has been received for consideration. (Agenda item 11 (b)).

Agenda item 11(c) - To discuss and consider the future governing body of the Community Hub (Faircomm) project (Cllr Smith)

This proposal has been raised by the Community Hub Committee for consideration by the Full Parish Council. Any questions or concerns will be passed back to the Community Hub Committee members at their October meeting. It is suggested that the Councillors discuss this item, raise any questions/concerns and defer any final resolutions to a future meeting. Councillor Smith has compiled a report on this subject which has been circulated.

Agenda item – 12(c) Finance and Administration

The F&A Committee discussed future banking options. There are two to consider - CCLA and Unity Trust Bank. There is a need to have a second account where reserves in excess of £85,000 can be placed as the Government support should there be a bank collapse will only compensate up to £85,000.

CCLA

This is an investment organisation that deals with charities, churches and local authorities. It has been established for 60 years and has many local authorities as clients including Rother District Council, Hastings Borough Council, ESALC and some local Parish councils.

The Parish Council are looking at their Public Sector Deposit Fund. This is a short-term investment fund not using the stock market but using bank investments. The investment would be spread over several banks. All the banks are A rated and reviewed regularly. The CCLA does not use Russian, Belarus or middle eastern banks. They provide instant access to the funds and fees are deducted before interest is paid. This accounts interest rate in early August was around 5%.

CCLA website with details of the Public Sector Deposit Fund

<https://www.ccla.co.uk/funds/public-sector-deposit-fund>

Unity Trust Bank

This bank is registered with the FCA and amounts up to £85000 would be guaranteed in the event of a bank collapse. The Parish Council could hold an instant access savings account with a current rate of interest just over 2.7%. Banking services are provided online.

Unity Trust Bank website with documents about Instant Savings account

https://assets.unity.co.uk/2023/08/U655_0823_Instant-Access_Key-Features-Documents.pdf

Agenda item 12(d) To approve the proposed EMRs for 2023/24

2023/24

EXPENDITURE	£
FRA Grant (Agreed Feb 2023)	800.00
Playground tiles/fitting	6547.00
Playground equipment installed	1875.00

Compressor bills 01/07/22 to 31/03/23	6057.13
Electricity to St Andrews Feb/Mar	109.00
Pump House planning charges remaining	860.00
Tree survey	1000.00

INCOME

Refund RDC for p/ground equipment	-1468.00
Refund RDC for p/ground matting	-3500.00
TOTAL	<u>12280.13</u>

Agenda item 16 – Hastings Country Park

The Belted Galloway cattle have been removed from the Country Park. The farmer will be grazing Sussex cattle on the park in the future. Any questions should be directed to Hastings Borough Council.

Agenda item 17 – Policies and Practices

The F&A committee recommend the following amended policies to the Parish Council for approval and adoption.

Dignity at Work Policy

Email Policy

The next two policies to be reviewed are

Standing Orders

Complaints Policy

Agenda item 22 Information and/or Future Agenda Items

Facts and Finance event

The event was well attended. Robust and detailed questions were asked by many residents, most of these were done in a civil way with an interest in hearing factual answers. Several suggestions were made and noted.

The Parish Council was thanked by several residents for a pleasant and informative meeting. It is hoped that the genuine interest shown by attendees will continue and that Councillors will therefore be able to maintain this dialogue as the Parish Council starts to set next year's budget during the Autumn before voting on it in January.

Fairlight Household Survey

This has now been delivered to 850 households in the village. Many thanks to all those who helped with this. It was fortunate that the wind and rain held off until most had been delivered! Once the forms have been returned, the responses will be formatted and discussed by the Councillors. All the information received will contribute to the formulation of the new five-year plan and action plan. Items and projects will be costed and allocated a timeline for completion and inclusion in the appropriate year's budget.

FAIRCOMM

FAIRLIGHT COMMUNITY HUB

Report for Fairlight Parish Council September 2023 meeting

HISTORY AND PROJECT TO DATE.

Faircomm started back in November 2018. At first various members of FPC and other interested parties came together to discuss the possible replacement of the Activate Youth Hut with a new larger building that could also be used as a Community Hall.

The two main factors were the Activate Youth Hut was desperately in need of replacement and a growing need for secondary community premises.

The existing hut is now over 40 years old. It was a second-hand mobile classroom originally, when purchased 23 years ago. When new, its life expectancy was 15 years. It is now totally past its 'sell by date' and beyond viable financial repair or upgrade.

The reason for another community facility was borne out of the fact that regular bookings were becoming virtually impossible at the Village Hall and a growing need for a multi-purpose building at the playing field to accommodate a growing trend of groups interested or needing a base for outdoor activities. In the early days it was also hoped that some village storage could be addressed within a new building.

It has always been stated that this project was not to compete with the existing Fairlight Village Hall. That is still the case. It is perceived that current regular users of the Village Hall will not transfer over to the new building. It could not facilitate the needs of the Fairlight Nursery, MOPPs, the Fairlight Players and Panto group, the Table Tennis Club and most present users of the existing halls. It is also fair to say it was identified early in the project, that being on the far edge of the village would deter some usage especially in the winter months. It was and still is the case that a new larger building is required to address the requirements of the youth club and be a secondary village hall attracting new clubs, ventures and rental functions.

Things quickly progressed looking into the way forward for this venture. In April 2019 it was suggested that the Parish Council take over the project and form a committee.

As per the minutes of the meeting held on 28th March 2019 it was suggested that the initial build would be beneficial under the Parish Council as there would be VAT relief and access to public works loans. It was proposed by Issy Horsley that Faircomm becomes a sub-committee of the Parish Council and could become a charity later.

At the meeting on 28th April 2019, it was explained if the project became a sub-committee of the Parish Council. The Parish Council would not intend to run it once built and that it would be handed over to a charity and must be self-funding.

At the meeting of 23rd May 2019 it became a Fairlight Parish Council steering group. Terms of reference were agreed on, with a committee numbering eight people with the group name of Fairlight Community Hub.

The committee at that time consisted of Cllr Issy Horsley (Chair), Geoff Smith (Vice Chair), Cllr Steve Stewart, Martin Usher, George Hensher and Pauline Collins, leaving a vacancy which was quickly filled by Russell Dicker, a member of Parkhurst Cricket Club. Some months later, Wendy Hatch also joined. In July 2020 Cllr Steve Stewart took over as Chair.

The committee worked hard identifying needs, looking into basic funding, business plans and design requirements to suit the defined purposes. It was quickly identified that not all could be achieved such as 'village storage' nor could it be a full-blown sports pavilion. Design of the building was primarily led by planning restraints and projected costs of the build. Once these were identified the committee drew up basic designs and then sought an architect resulting in using Pump House Design in Battle after consideration of others. Prefab buildings were also considered but couldn't fulfil what was required.

The project took a lull during covid lockdown periods for obvious reasons. But covid and lockdowns also changed many funding avenues as grant funders tightened belts, resulting in local council funding becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

THE PRESENT SITUATION.

In July 2022 we eventually achieved planning permission with a three-year commencement date. Up to this period two committee members left being George Hensher and Russell Dicker from Parkhurst Cricket Club. Recently Steve Stewart also stepped down. The committee now consists of Cllr Geoff Smith (chair), Martin Usher (vice chair), Cllr Lyn Cooke, Wendy Hatch, Cllr Issy Horsley, Derek Lawrence (bowls club) and Pauline Collins.

Recently, since receiving planning permission, the committee has focused more on funding and what will be needed in a business plan. It was quickly identified that there could/would be vast advantages of the project becoming independent of the Parish Council. Meetings and reports back from Action in Rural Sussex. Rother Voluntary Association, independent funding streams and

many other sources, all concluded funding will be easier under a charity status, when many restraints that a Parish Council would be under could be lifted.

Funding streams have been investigated, admittedly not to any great lengths at present, and it must be said that these change and goal posts are moved by many funding streams on a regular basis. But it was evidently clear that there are now no major organisations funding local/ Parish Councils that had been found originally. Other than from higher government sources.

It was also identified that if established on a Charitable basis VAT is not chargeable on the build costs and any other VAT could be reclaimed along with gift aid from donations.

There is also the very large consideration that a project under the Parish Council would probably be a large financial millstone for the residents of Fairlight for years to come. Due to the very high interest rates of 'borrowed money' at this moment in time and probable for next few years.

We now have full building plans from Pump House and the time has come for the vast amount of work to seek tenders for the build, produce a business plan and get funding.

To say this will be time consuming, very involved and requires dedication is an understatement.

As it was stated back in April 2019; it could convert to charity status on completion. But through advice received, it would seem beneficial for it to do so from this present time on.

With the discovery that there is no VAT at source on a charity build product; the PWL interest rate rising sharply and very few funding/grant opportunities now open to Parish Councils it is now imperative the question is resolved.

Some of the biggest differences would be 'red tape' legislation, costs to Parish Council and funding. If the projects stay under the Parish Council; because it is a public body, means that funding, going to tender and a business plan will be far more challenging, fraught, time consuming and difficult than under a charity status, which will not have the same restraints.

This was recently discussed at some length at an unofficial committee meeting requested by Cllr Issy Horsley on 3/08/2023 to brainstorm the idea of the project becoming a charity. After a lot of discussion and looking at the facts offered by professional bodies, it was agreed by all present that the way forward would be best under a charity status. The whole committee was present except for Cllr Issy Horsley and Pauline Collins who could not attend at the time. This then became a motion to become an agenda item for the September meeting.

At the steering groups September meeting it was proposed that a vote be taken for those wishing for the committee to be dissolved by FPC and a charity set up to take over the project. The result was unanimous. All voting members were in favour of requesting a charity route from the Parish Council.

The following are the reasons for this decision, gained from advice from various independent concerns and a committee 'brainstorm' session at the unofficial August meeting.

Which leads to the questions:

- What is the best way forward for the project to have the maximum chance of succeeding?
- Does the project/committee stay under the Parish Council, or does it get relinquished from the Parish Council and set up under a charity status?

Professional advice, research and logic dictate that funding for such a large project is only realistically achievable by being a charity as opposed to a Parish Council, within any reasonable timescale.

MAIN FACTORS

Recent advice from Action in Rural Sussex, Rother Voluntary Action and independent sources all state that success of the project would be more likely under a charity status. The main reasons being less legislation and more funding streams.

There is also the following:

- The fact that under a charity status VAT isn't charged on a build project and any further is reclaimable.
- Costs to the Parish Council and residents of Fairlight leading to a significant increase in the precept.
- Gift aid is reclaimable which will help fund raising.
- Present users represent existing charities within youth and sports movements which will be a great aid to charitable funding.
- Consideration was also given to the overall community perception of the project and the future running/management of the build.

Pros as a Charity	Cons as a Charity
Vastly more funding streams	Keeping Trustees
Greater flexibility of control	Finding chair and treasurer (long term)
Greater community involvement	Lot of work initially for trustees
Less 'red tape' and legislation	Opposition from PC (if any)
Greater individual protection as Trustees	Future management and upkeep responsibilities.
Higher likelihood of charitable donations	Can we keep the money funded by PC so far, if not how to fund it?
Gift aided donations	
No VAT on charity build projects	
Likelihood of cheaper costs	
Greater acceptance of project locally	
Far easier tender processes	
No long-term cost to residents (Public Works Loan cost)	
No admin and salary costs FPC	
Greater overall speed of project	
Possible low interest charity loan	
Independent Trustees	
Easier to co-opt helpers/advise	
Independent control of build process	
Independent control of running new build	
Crowdfunding	
Rother Lottery funding	

Pros for Parish Council	Cons for Parish Council
Possibility of a PWL for build costs	Excessive admin and salary costs
Control of build process	Unclear future management
Possible funding from one off excessive precept rise	Detrimental views from parishioners if borrowing money either PWL or precept
VAT reclaim	Lack of community involvement
Future income stream from renting	High likelihood of project failure
	Mixed local feelings towards Council
	Red Tape and legislation
	Long term ownership and costs of building

FACTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is without doubt that funding streams under a charity set up will be easier to obtain and more numerous in avenues.

Without a PWL loan or huge one-off or long-term precept rise (both highly unlikely to be accepted after public consultation) it is almost certain that the parish Council will not be able to raise the build costs. This has also been pointed out by Action in Rural

Sussex. Which has also stated the fund raise would take several years even if achievable. Meanwhile the existing building is getting further dilapidated.

POSSIBLE COSTS UNDER PARISH COUNCIL INVOLVING A PUBLIC WORKS LOAN

Because under the Parish Council a public works loan is highly possible the following is real term costs at present rate of 5% (and climbing) over 25 years. Even if the public agreed to it after consultation?

Amount borrowed	Total repayment	Annual repayment for 25 years from additional precept annually
£100,000	£173,000	£6,936
£200,000	£347,000	£13,872
£300,000	£520,200	£20,808
£400,000	£693,766	£27,750

As mentioned, it is also conceivable that monies could be raised by one off increase in precept. Again, that would necessitate public consultation with highly unlikely success or acceptance.

Implications and backlash from parishioners against the Parish Council and the project should not be underestimated if a public consultation is held to raise funds through a public works loan and/or precept rise.

It is without doubt, that admin and salary costs from this point of the project on, will be huge during the build process, if under the Parish Council. At a great cost to the whole population of Fairlight with possible repercussions to the project and Council from non-supporters.

The Activate Committee owns the present build and would be one of the biggest future users and wish for a large say in the future running of the building. There are plans to be much more involved in running D of E award programmes, local art clubs for young people and a continuing rental programme for children’s parties. To this end they have discussed issues, with a unanimous decision that they would prefer the build and future to be under a charity set up with a fair representation.

A great fear is public perception and participation of the project. It is felt that if the project is kept under the parish Council, public perception could become detrimental to the project especially if a loan at cost to the parishioners is utilised. It is also fair to say that community participation would be far greater on a charity basis than if left with the parish Council.

Community support, local business support and co-opted assistance will be far greater and easier under an independent charity.

THE PROPOSED SET UP

If relinquished from Fairlight Parish Council, there would need to be a short transition period. It is perceived that the existing committee would hold meetings to set up the charity, agree initial trustees and start working on a constitution and business plan.

Once agreements are in place the following would happen:

- The constitution will be carefully written and possibly overseen by a professional body if needed.
- The group would apply for Charity Status. This would be a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Initially starting with up to eight Trustees (agreed as an ideal number in principle by present steering group).
- Possible future set up on completion could be Trustees and wider membership (representing all user groups).

The benefits of being a CIO are numerous.

- The main being limited liability of the trustees,
- less red tape,
- freedom to act in its own name like any individual or a private company, but with all the benefits of being a charity.

Application has been investigated and is relatively easy. All this can be done through the Gov.UK website.

The initial Trustees would ideally be from involved present parties being Activate, the Parish Council, Fairlight Bowls Club, Hastings Athletic Football Club, FRA and independent members with some acumen in fundraising and or business planning.

The logic behind the initial trustees is based on user groups and essential community representatives.

- The Parish Council and FRA are of course essential community representatives.
- Activate are the main present users and hope to expand youth work,
- The Bowls Club are users, neighbouring and future winter users as the new build will accommodate indoor bowls.
- Hastings Athletic Football Club are present users and a funding stream.
- Independents will come with specific skills.

The committee meetings during a transition period will need to decide and agree on the exact personnel at a future date. Once set up, a chair, vice chair, treasurer and secretary will be agreed and appointed.

The following are people that have agreed in principle to stand and have given their permission to be named. Most of whom are present or past committee members therefore 'au fait' with the project and fill some of the skills/acumen needed.

- Cllr Geoffrey Smith,
- Wendy Hatch,
- Cllr Lyn Cooke,
- Chris Smart,
- Steve Stewart
- Martin Usher.

The Trustees would co-opt assistance when and where possible for help with funding and writing up a business plan. A community bank account will be opened most likely with Lloyds but discussions will be held regarding the high possibility of funds in excess of £85,000 during the funding and build process. So, it is feasible that two accounts will be needed.

Commencement would start as soon as funds are available most likely on the sewer run through Wood Field. It is proposed that the build could be looked at in four stages. These would be the sewer run, the main build, the overflow car park and the remaking of the existing drive and parking. But this may/could change after consultation from tender companies.

It is hoped that with surplus project funds from Fairlight Parish Council and monies from the Bowls Club, Activate and future community fund raising, the sewer run can be financed quickly. This will be a great aid and relieve the building commencement deadline of 3 years.

Talks will take place once the build process nears commencement with Fairlight Parish Council and continued dialogue held during the build process. This will be to agree/facilitate full or part usage of the field and access to the site.

Monthly reports will be made to Fairlight Parish Council throughout the whole process.

Talks will take place with Fairlight Parish Council to agree terms of a lease once the build is nearly completed.

TIMELINES TO AIM FOR

Become independent from Fairlight Parish Council (Sept/Oct 2023)

Transition period and become a Charity. (Oct/Nov/Dec 2023)

Open a community bank account. (Oct/Nov 2023)

Publicity and commence community involvement (Nov/Dec 2023 and ongoing)

Seek tenders. (Nov/Dec 2023 onwards)

Formulate a business plan. (Nov/Dec 2023)

Seek funding. (Dec 2023 and ongoing)

Commence sewer works (Possibly spring 2024)

Commence main build (Possibly from Autumn 2024)

Commence new fencing and parking and drive relay. (Possibly spring 2025)

Commence overflow car park (Possibly spring/summer 2025)

INITIAL/CONTINUATION OF SEED FUNDING.

To date all monies spent has been that of the Fairlight Parish Councils, mostly from ring fenced EMR, Precept and small expenditure from budget during 2021/22 with the exception of £3,255.60 from Fairlight open Gardens in 2020.

The following is monies put aside/allocated to date by the Parish Council.

Budget for Airs subscription	£264.00	2021/2022
Initial ring fenced for seed funding	£10,000	April 2021
Open Garden	£3,255.60	April 2021
EMR transfer from village hall	£5,000	April 2022
Precept	£3,000	April 2022
Precept	£3,000	April 2023
Total	£24,519.60	

It is appreciated that not all expenditure has used the precept amounts and that the difference has now gone back to general reserves. But all monies mentioned had at some point been allocated for this project. A community project using public money from the community.

Total expenditure to date is £12,143.63 with another known £5790.26 to pay on agreed quotes giving a total of £17933.89. This leaves a possible theoretical surplus of £6585.71.

These costs have/will cover all that has been needed to achieve the present situation of getting building permission, and full designs to commence the build process and beyond as it includes the principal designer who will oversee some of the works.

There is the consideration that some agreed 'still to pay' invoices are possibly contracted with the Parish Council. This is already noted and allocated against the £15,000 ring fenced in EMR.

It is hoped that the Parish Council will fund these known costs and transfer to the new charity any surplus. It is recognised that any amount will take negotiations and need passing/agreeing by the Parish Council during the transition period. After bank account(s) are opened and the charity set up.

It is however without doubt that the financial commitment to date and any other monies the council may award will show the FPC's generous support to the project which will be vital for future fund raising, as a financial commitment to the project from the Parish Council.

Needless to say, this project money to date is only a fraction of what will need to be found if the project remains under the Parish Council.

Further seed funding will be sought as soon as the future is known initially and mainly through community/local fundraising, crowd fund raising, Rother Lottery etc.

Future seed funding and funding for specific interior items will be through community involvement such as fund raises, crowd funding and possibly ongoing small funding from Activate Youth Club.

COSTS

It must be fully appreciated that total costs are completely unknown at this point in time.

This is a chicken and egg scenario, until a decision is made as to the future of the project, tenders cannot be sourced.

Before Covid lockdowns, we had ballpark figures of the build, the sewer run and more recently the overflow car park. These varied enormously as from a builder's point of view there was scant information. But I think it was fair to say one was generous and one erred on the side of caution. At this point in time and looking at the finished plans and requirements I would estimate complete costs to be anywhere between £300,000 to £400,000. Possibly more. However, it is strongly believed with consent from the appointed principal designer a degree of the internal fittings and décor can be achieved by the community therefore cutting some costs. The project will also explore donated supplies and materials from national and local suppliers. Gift aid will also play a major part in some of the funding.

CONCLUSION

As a project, it is now at a vital crossroads as the plans are passed, and the project is ready to go to tender, funding and build processes.

On the face of it and taking independent and professional advice into consideration, it is fair to say that this project at this point onwards would be better under an independent charity setup than staying with the Parish Council.

It is fair to say that Covid and lockdowns have hindered progress of the project in many ways. It has also changed the landscape, at least as far as the funding is involved. Before Covid and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, PWL interest rates were incredibly low and there were more funding streams for projects such as this under Parish Councils. But it is now very different. PWL's interest rates have leapt up, funding streams for council projects all but vanished. Therefore, if fruition of the project under the Parish Council is achieved, it will very likely take several years. Time the present building just doesn't have.

Monies spent to date and agreed costs to come in contract have been a cost for the Parish Council, in reality therefore public money, which needs a level of protection. But as a project it now seems, from professional advice that to succeed to completion, it is more likely to do so, as a charity based independent project.

It is feasibly possible that a fair chunk of money may come from CIL monies from the Fairlight Garden development. A gamble that could sway an argument to keep the project under the Parish Council. But as said this is a gamble. Without any known timelines. It is also equally possible that if CIL money is forthcoming, it could still be donated over the project under Charity status. As even if under a charity it will still be one of the biggest projects this village has had for years and worthy of the CIL money.

At the end of the day, it must be appreciated that there is no 100% certainty that the project will succeed either way. There never was a certainty that it would even four years ago when the council took it on.

- But the best way forward indicates the charity route.
- Either way the money to date and some still to pay has now been used.
- The question is what is the safest and best route forward for this project.

It is requested by the Community Hub Committee that the Parish Council after discussions and any further questions are answered, vote on a proposal to relinquish responsibility for this project at the October full Council meeting. To transfer the governing body status and future control for all works from the Parish Council to an independent charity - CIO. During an additional transitional period, possible financial assistance from the Parish Council may be agreed if this proposal is agreeable to Councillors.

Author: Cllr Geoffrey Smith

Date reviewed by the Parish Council – 26th September 2023