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Minutes of Full Council Meeting held on Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at Fairlight Village Hall at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors – Ms I Horsley (Chair), Miss C Sharpe, Mr D Greenup, Mr R Fellows-Turnbull, Ms L Cooke, Mr G Smith, Mr D Williams

County and District Councillors – Mr A Mier and Mr T Grohne

Proper Officer/RFO - Mrs P Collins

Members of the Public - 15

ACTION

2117 Apologies for absence (Including resolutions to accept reason for absence by
2224 Councillors)

001 Apologies received from Cllrs – Mr C Maynard

Resolved to accept the reasons for absence.

2300 Chairman's Report

0224 The Chair welcomed members of the Public and presented their report

002 (See in reports below)

2400 Code of Conduct and Disclosure of Interests

3 (a) To receive any disclosures by members, of personal or prejudicial interest in matters on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest

Cllr Cooke requested that item 21 Budget and Precept 2024/25 be moved to an earlier position on the agenda

Resolved to maintain the current order of the agenda

2400 Public questions in respect of items on the agenda

4 Standing orders were suspended

The Public wished to raise questions on agenda items –
Item 21 - Budget and Precept 2024/25

Standing orders were reinstated

ACTION

2400 Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 28th November 2023

5 The minutes were distributed to Councillors prior to the meeting and made available to the Public. The confidential item record was circulated at the meeting. Both items were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

2400 Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda

6 There were no matters arising

2400 County and District Councillors reports

7 Cllr Mier reported on the winter closure of Pett Level public toilets, RDC budget and possible future capping of local precepts.
Cllr Grohne reiterated the budget pressures.
Cllr Maynard sent a report (see in reports below).

2400 Financial Matters

8

(a) To consider and approve schedule of payments and receipts for December 2023 and January 2024

Resolved to approve the payments for December 2023 and January 2024

(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.

(d) To note the approval given by Chair/Vice Chair to the Proper Officer to reimburse Pump House £180 in respect of planning permission conditions.

Resolved to note this approval

(e) To note the approval given by Chair/Vice Chair to the Proper Officer to reimburse Curley Consultants £75 to number mark trees on survey.

Resolved to note this approval

(f) To note the approval given by Chair/Vice Chair to the Proper Officer to reimburse AB Security £105 in respect of CCTV call out.

Resolved to note this approval

(g) To note the winners of the Christmas lights competition

Resolved to note the winners (See in reports below)

2400 Planning Committee

9

(a) To receive the monthly report

Details of the planning applications, decisions and comments from the Planning Committee meetings were reported. (See in reports below)

2401 Land Management Group

0

(a) To receive the monthly report (Cllrs Smith, Horsley, and Fellows-Turnbull)
(see in reports below)

- Cllr Smith – Wood Field and Highways

Cllr Smith will continue to chase ESCC re the verge clearing on Battery Hill and the sinkhole near Shepherds Court.

- Cllr Horsley – Water and drainage issues including SW Pathfinder project.

Southern Water Pathfinder project meeting was held on 19th January. Reports will be placed on the Parish Council's website. HBC have been spoke to in respect of the Firehills run off

- Cllr Fellows-Turnbull – Tree survey has been carried out and quotation sought for the work on Knowle Wood.

ACTION

(b) To receive an update on the Southern Water Pathfinder Project (Cllr Cooke)

Cllr Cooke reported on this project to date in respect of water butt issues, lining of pipes, issues found by Southern Water and proposed open meetings to be held.

(c) To receive an update in respect of the CCTV power outage. (Cllr Williams)

Cllr Williams reported on the continuing difficulties in restoring the power to the CCTV. He will chase ESCC for a response and further details of requirements.

(d) To discuss and accept a quotation for tree work to be carried out in respect of the Knowle Wood tree survey. (See in reports below)

Cllr Fellows-Turnbull accompanied the tree surveyor and is aware of what actions are required. The volunteers have requested that the felled wood and chippings are dispersed around the Wood for them to utilise. Three quotations were considered.

Resolved to accept Company A's quotation – K McKay Tree Surgeons – subject to the proper equipment being available (Mobile chipper required due to limited access). If not, then a decision on who to contract is delegated to the Finance and Administration Committee.

PO

2401 Finance and Administration Committee

1

(a) To receive a monthly report (Cllr Horsley)

(See report below)

2401 Policies and Practices

2 To discuss and adopt the revised policies

(a) Co-option Policy

F&A

Resolved to refer this policy back to the F&A Committee for review. Also, Policies and Practices agenda item to appear early on the February Parish Council agenda to enable possible co-option applications to be considered.

2401 Drop-In Social Hub Group

3 (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. Also, reported on the Christmas Cracker event.

2401 Parish Council Website and Facebook

4

(a) To receive a monthly report

Both website and Facebook pages continue to be updated. Cllr Sharpe is currently working on the website. However, the site is not currently fully supported and is unreliable. A new platform for the website is being investigated and re-building the site to improve customer service, security etc will be carried out. This will however take time.

2401 War Memorial Steering Group

5

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

The deposit has been paid and the order placed. A meeting with EB Sculpture has been arranged to discuss the final details in February.

WMSG

2401 Fairlight Pavilion Project (Cllr Smith)

6 (a) To receive an update on this project

Cllr Cooke provided a verbal report on the progress of this project to date. Applications have been submitted to the Charity Commission and preferred banks. Also, work is underway preparing a business plan, website, marketing materials and seeking estimates.

ACTION

2401 Hastings Country Park

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

A new communications mast has been installed behind the Visitors Centre. HBC high level stewardship agreement details are still not known. HBC will be contacted for details once the agreement has been signed.

- 2401 Co-option of Parish Councillors**
- 8 (a) To approve the promotion of a Co-opted Parish Councillor vacancy **PO**
Resolved to approve to promote the current vacancies.
- 2401 Additional Grant Application for 2023/24**
- 9 (a) To consider and resolve the additional grant application from Fairlight Players
 A grant application had been received from the Fairlight Players for a contribution towards new computer. This was considered by Cllrs Smith, Williams and Sharpe prior to the meeting. These Councillors recommended to award the full amount requested of £500. **PO**
Resolved to award the Fairlight Players a grant of £500.
- 2402 Unity Trust Instant Access Account**
- 0 (a) To consider and approve the initial deposit to the new account
Resolved to approve an initial deposit of £20000
 (b) To approve a cheque to be raised as an additional payment for January 2024 **PO**
Resolved to approve as an additional payment for January 2024
- 2402 Budget and Precept 2024/25**
- 1 (a) To consider/approve the draft 2024/25 budget
 Cllr Horsley explained the details of the budget process to date. The draft budget has also been posted on the website prior to this meeting. This budget was recommended by the Finance and Administration Committee for approval
 Public questions were answered
 Councillors were asked if they had any comments on or required further changes to the proposed budget.
Resolved to approve the draft budget for 2024/25 (Votes: 5 for, 2 against – GS/LC)
 (b) To consider/approve the precept for 2024/25
 Councillors discussed the draft budget (now approved), current EMRs, and unforeseen additional expenditure for 2024/25 to achieve a precept figure for 2024/25. It was also noted that if a cap on expenditure may be imposed, EMR/reserves require bolstering or if services are devolved from ESCC or RDC the precept will need to increase in future years. **PO**
Resolved to request from RDC a precept of £95,000. (Votes: 5 for, 2 against GS/LC)
- 2402 Internal Audit for 2023/24 Accounts**
- 2 (a) To discuss and approve the type of internal audit requirements for 2023/24 accounts. **PO**
Resolved to approve a face-to-face internal audit for 2023/24 accounts

2402 Parish Council Parish Assembly 2024

- 3 (a) To consider and approve a date and theme for the 2024 Parish Assembly
Resolved the date to be in March (Day to be confirmed). The theme to be the new War Memorial and the local British Legion branch 100th anniversary
- (b) To approve the launch of the John Lutman award
Resolved to launch the John Lutman award

2402 Fairlight Pantomime Group

- 4 (a) To consider and approve the request from the Fairlight Pantomime Group (FPG)
- The Parish Council to hold remaining funds if this Group ceased until a new organisation is formed
 - To ring fence these funds for this purpose only.

Standing orders were suspended for the Treasurer of the FPG to speak

Standing orders reinstated

Resolved to defer a decision until the FPG had drafted a possible new constitution with suggestions of what would be required of the Parish Council as a custodian of the funds

2402 ESCC Rural Grass Cutting Service - Environmental Enhancement Service Option

- 5 (a) To consider/approve the options in respect of the ESCC request
Resolved to select option 1- Standard Rural Grass Cutting Service

2402 Training/meetings attended

- 6 (a) ESALC meeting – See report below

2402 Correspondence

- 7 All correspondence had been circulated to Councillors and was available to the Public where appropriate.

2402 Information and/or Future Agenda Items

- 8 **Future Agenda Items**
- Battery Hill – Kerb stones

2402 Confidential Items

9 (a) To resolve that pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the following matters.

Resolved to accept this item and proceed to discuss the confidential item excluding public and press.

Resolved to suspend standing orders to hold the Open Forum prior to the Confidential item discussions

Standing Orders were suspended at this point for the public Open Forum to take place.

Standing Orders were reinstated and the Public left the room.

ACTION

(b) To discuss and approve the draft response to the external auditors in respect of objections raised.

Discussions took place and proposed additions to the response were raised. To note this item should not be discussed via email as it is confidential.

Resolved to refer this item back to the Finance and Administration Committee for further discussions and a confidential item to be included on the agenda for February's Full Parish Council meeting to conclude this item.

2403 Date of next meeting –

0 Tuesday 27th February 2024 at 7.00 pm

2403 Close of meeting

1 Meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Open Forum

Discussions were held and questions were asked from the members of the Public on financial transparency, Battery Hill kerb stone, DISH status

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: 27th February 2024

REPORTS FOR PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – 23RD JANUARY 2024

Agenda item 2 - Chair's Report

Welcome everyone to the meeting of Fairlight Parish Council. It is as you can see a full agenda.

New Village map unveiling – 24th January 2024 at 12 noon

Civility and Respect -There has been a lot of discussion at the East Sussex Association of Local Council meetings recently about the problem of behaviour towards Councillors and staff. The civility and respect initiatives are working to improve this at both a local and national level.

Councillors, we are all responsible for maintaining Civility and Respect so that we and our Proper officer can attend meetings and receive emails without feeling harassed, intimidated or bullied.

The advice I have been given is that unacceptable behaviour should be called out at the time it happens, especially in meetings. If you feel uncomfortable with any behaviour in this meeting that you feel is bullying, intimidatory or not acceptable then you should interrupt the meeting and call it out, and the Council will decide if anything further needs to be done. There is a zero tolerance of such behaviour,

Emails - Councillors can I draw your attention to the email policy (a copy of which is in front of you) and remind you that decisions can only be taken at official meetings unless delegated by the Council, and emails should not be used to try to change decisions made by those properly convened meetings. Also, please remember to change your Gmail access password and pass to the Proper Officer.

Public Participation - Questions from the Public will be taken at item 4. Please state which agenda item you are asking about. You will have up to 3 minutes to put your question and at the end of which I hope the

Parish Council will have a one sentence question to consider when that agenda items reached. Please note questions will be considered by the Councillors but may not be answered this evening.

Can I remind you that this is a meeting of the Parish Council and not a discussion between Councillors and residents. The Open Forum after the Parish Council meeting is closed allows for any subject to be raised and discussed.

Agenda item 7 – County and District Councillors Reports

Councillor Maynard

Cost of living payment set for February

Eight million people on means-tested benefits will receive a cost-of-living payment in February to help with high bills. Those on low incomes and receiving benefits such as universal credit are eligible but should be wary of scams – on legitimate payments, there will be a reference on a recipient's bank account of their national insurance number, followed by DWP COL, or the reference HMRC COLS for those who are eligible through tax credits.

The £299 payment will be made directly into bank accounts, without the need to make a claim, between 6 and 22 February.

This story was reported [nationally](#).

Funding boost to bolster green skills

Council bosses have welcomed funding that will help boost green skills and support the county's move to net zero. East Sussex County Council's Employability and Skills Team successfully bid for £240,000 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to launch the Retrofit Skills East Sussex project.

As the project progresses, it is hoped that a range of activities, such as careers campaigns and subsidised training courses, will be offered to support the Retrofit Skills Plan. Updates on the project as it progresses can be found on the [council's website](#).

Read more about this story [here](#).

Winter events to take place in East Sussex libraries

A programme of free winter events for both children and adults is taking place in libraries across the festive season and beyond. The events will include author talks, festive crafts and activities, as well as storytelling experiences. On 27 January, Lewes Library and the Lewes Literary Society will host writer, illustrator and cartoonist Chris Riddell in a celebration of the well-loved illustrator Raymond Briggs.

Events are free, but booking may be required. For more information on the upcoming events, visit the Events section on eastsussex.spydus.co.uk. Read more about this story [here](#).

Winner of prestigious art prize announced in Eastbourne

Jesse Darling was announced as the winner of the Turner Prize at an event held at Eastbourne's Winter Garden, winning £25,000 in prize money. The four shortlisted nominees for the prize have had their work on display at the Towner Gallery since September 2023. The Turner Prize was established in 1984 and is one of the world's best-known prizes for the visual arts. It aims to promote public debate around new developments in contemporary British art.

Read more about this story [here](#).

Agenda item 8(a) Payment schedules for December 2023 and January 2024

Date Paid	Invoice Date	Payee	Gross	Net	VAT	Details
DIRECT DEBITS						
15/12/2023	01/12/2023	Tesco Mobile	21.99	18.33	3.66	Tesco - Mobile phone inv 134195872107
PAYPAL						
02/12/2023	02/12/2023	Fasthosts	13.20	11.00	2.20	Web hosting inv 74615990
06/12/2023	06/12/2023	Fasthosts	6.94	5.78	1.16	Web hosting inv 74654973
CHEQUE						
27/12/2023	27/12/2023	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Salary - December 2023
27/12/2023	27/12/2023	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Mileage - Nov/Dec 2023
27/12/2023		Pauline Collins	****	****		Expenses - £301.50
	16/11/2023		2.48	2.48	0.00	Aldi - DISH Supplies
	18/11/2023		4.23	4.23	0.00	Aldi - DISH Supplies
	26/11/2023		2.80	2.80	0.00	Tesco - DISH Supplies
	26/11/2023		5.72	5.72	0.00	Aldi - DISH Supplies
	01/12/2023		6.47	6.47	0.00	Mywheeliebin - Speed signs
	23/11/2023		11.47	9.56	1.91	Viking Signs - Pedestrian signs
	02/12/2023		20.56	20.56	0.00	Booker - DISH supplies
	15/12/2023		17.00	17.00	0.00	Tesco - Cracker supplies
	16/12/2023		70.33	58.61	11.72	Screwfix - Traffic cones/tape
	19/12/2023		31.53	31.53	0.00	Booker - DISH supplies
	19/12/2023		17.75	17.75	0.00	Sainsburys - Cracker supplies
	20/12/2023		79.16	79.16	0.00	The Old Butchers Shop Pett - Cracker supplies
	22/12/2023		32.00	32.00	0.00	Tesco - Cracker supplies
27/12/2023	27/12/2023	HMRC	2546.03	2546.03	0.00	Tax and NI 06/10/23-05/01/24
27/12/2023	15/12/2023	Rother DC	2509.58	2509.58	0.00	Compressor 01/07/23-30/11/23 inv 86561958
27/12/2023	12/12/2023	Pump House Designs Ltd	180.00	180.00	0.00	Planning fees inv 17125
27/12/2023	27/11/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	128.00	128.00	0.00	Hall Hire - November 2023 - DISH
27/12/2023	29/11/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	36.00	36.00	0.00	Hall Hire - November 2023 - PC
27/12/2023	29/11/2023	AB Fire & Security	126.00	105.00	21.00	CCTV call out inv 363849
27/12/2023	27/12/2023	Activate Fairlight Youth	50.00	50.00	0.00	Use of hut by HFC for December 2023

Date Paid	Invoice Date	Payee	Gross	Net	VAT	Details
DD						
15/01/2024	01/01/2024	Tesco Mobile	21.99	18.33	3.66	Tesco - Mobile phone inv 134195872107

PAYPAL						
02/01/202	02/01/2024	Fasthosts	13.20	11.00	2.20	Web hosting inv 74948912
06/01/202	06/01/2024	Fasthosts	6.94	5.78	1.16	Web hosting inv 74991420
03/01/202	03/01/2024	Viking Office UK Ltd	75.41	62.84	12.57	Stationery inv 3541684
CHEQUE						
23/01/202	23/01/2024	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Salary - January 2024
23/01/202	23/01/2024	Pauline Collins	****	****	0.00	Mileage claim - January 2024
23/01/202		Pauline Collins				Expenses claim - January 2024 -
	14/12/2023		1764.00	1470.00	294.00	Icklesham Joinery - Map - 2nd
	15/12/2023		2.90	2.90	0.00	Aldi - Cracker supplies
	16/12/2023		3.15	3.15	0.00	Go on Greens - Cracker supplies
	20/12/2023		30.70	30.70	0.00	Aldi - Cracker supplies
	07/01/2024		6.27	6.27	0.00	Aldi - DISH supplies
	10/01/2024		22.00	22.00	0.00	Jempsons - supplies
	13/01/2024		17.32	17.32	0.00	Bookers - DISH supplies
23/01/202	31/12/2023	Fairlight Village Hall	96.00	96.00	0.00	Hall Hire - December 2023 - DISH
23/01/202	02/01/2024	Fairlight Village Hall	54.00	54.00	0.00	Hall Hire - December 2023 - PC/
23/01/202	02/01/2024	Autela Payroll Services	54.58	45.48	9.10	Payroll Oct - Dec inv 13089
23/01/202	03/01/2024	Curley Consultants	70.00	70.00	0.00	Tree numbering inv 240696
23/01/202	08/01/2024	M Taylor Contractors	280.00	280.00	0.00	Verge Cutting inv 856
23/01/202	08/01/2024	EB Sculpture Ltd	12072.0	10060.0	2012.0	Deposit War Memorial inv 1607
23/01/202	11/01/2024	Wicksteed Leisure Ltd	158.40	132.00	26.40	Playground inspection inv 824141
23/01/202	11/01/2024	Energytest (Commercial)	390.00	325.00	65.00	SBEM for Faircomm inv 1010606
23/01/202 4	23/01/2024	Activate Fairlight Youth Centre	50.00	50.00	0.00	Use of hut by HFC for January 2024
23/01/202 4	23/01/2024	Marsham Older Peoples' Project	75.00	75.00	0.00	Christmas light donations - Harlo/20 Waites Ln
23/01/202	18/01/2024	Mrs J Marshall	250.00	250.00	0.00	New village map

INCOME	Nov-23	Dec-23	YTD
Precept	0.00	0.00	90000.00
Bank Interest	148.59	139.17	1164.45
Rents/leases Received	0.00	50.00	125.00
Insurance income	0.00	0.00	0.00
Contribution from other PC	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fees for use of assets (Wfield, BBQ etc)	150.00	150.00	1350.00
Other	0.00	0.00	73.78
Grants & donations received	0.00	0.00	5060.00
Drop In Social Hub receipts	0.00	239.00	4032.00

Christmas Cracker	0.00	0.00	0.00
CIL	2664.75	0.00	2664.75
Salaries & Wages Income	0.00	0.00	0.00
Faircomm receipts	0.00	0.00	55.60
War memorial receipts	0.00	200.00	4595.60
RDC lottery receipts	84.00	66.00	764.00
Community Loan Sch Receipts	0.00	0.00	0.00
VAT receipts from previous year	0.00	0.00	3577.17
TOTAL INCOME	3047.34	844.17	113462.35

Agenda item 8 (g) – Winners of Christmas Lights Competition

The winners of the Christmas Light Competition are

First - 20 Waites Lane

Runner up - Harlo Hill Road

Agenda item 9 – Planning Committee

Planning applications received and discussed

(a) RR/2023/2405/P 35 Meadow Way, Igueldo, Fairlight TN35 4BN

Proposed internal reconfiguration with a loft extension (resubmission of RR/2023/1682/P)

Following discussions, the Fairlight Parish Council Planning Committee agreed the following comments:

- 1) There were no objections to this planning application.
- 2) The use of roof light 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 blinds would assist this situation.
- 3) A construction plan is required, and all materials and vehicles will need to be stored on site to prevent obstruction on an access road.
- 4) Small vehicles to be used for deliveries due to the size of the access roads.
- 5) Neighbour's comments should be considered.

(b) RR/2023/2535/P Halladale, Commanders Walk, Fairlight TN35 4BE

Demolition of existing dwelling. Replacement with new and detached garage and art studio.

Following discussions, the Committee agreed the following comments:

- 1) The Parish Council have no objections to this planning application
- 2) A construction plan is required, and all materials and vehicles will need to be stored on site. Small vehicles to be used for waste removal and deliveries due to the size of the roads within the village.
- 3) Commanders Walk and Gorsethorn Way roads must not be compromised with parked vehicles or materials as these routes provide the only points of access to the Air Ambulance landing site, Wood Field Recreation Ground amenities (Bowls Club, Playground etc) and one of the village's defibrillators
- 4) Working hours requested to be between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday and Saturday 9am to 12 noon. No work to be carried out on Sundays. This is due to the close proximity of the site to other residents and buildings and to reduce the disturbance to the residents.
- 5) Roof lights should be fitted with blinds to reduce the light pollution to the area.
- 6) To note the bathroom on the first floor adjacent to the 2nd bedroom has no external light source.
- 7) Comments from owners of neighbouring properties should be considered.

Agenda item 10(a) – Land Management Group

Highways

Councillor Andrew Miers and I have reported the lack of full verge clearance along the top end of Battery Hill. A small section was cleared but not all requested by any means.

I have enquired about the 101, bus service for the road closure of Shepherds Way from the Cove to the roundabout.

Just to note that the water that runs down Battery Hill and freezes nearing the old Post Office, is from a natural spring and not a pipe leak. Nothing can actually be done about this other than council gritting to alleviate some of the problem. So, driver caution is required.

Wood Field Recreation Ground

The field has been incredibly wet and saturated with all the recent heavy rain fall. I have inspected the French drain pipe which indicates the drain is working due to the flow rate.

Project Pathfinder have indicated a wish to try and aid the water run-off from the field. They have been informed that there is a strong possibility of a sewer run for the new build project and would like to take this opportunity to offer a surface water catchment and attenuation plan. I will enquire further once I have received estimates for the sewer run.

Wood Field Playground

I believe the new swings and slide have been ordered but unaware of any instalment dates. It is perceivably possible that the swing park may need to be closed during these works.

The annual inspection has just taken place and we await the report.

Knowle Wood

Once any felling commences following the tree survey report, we will need to address some of the brash and wood. The volunteers are rightfully concerned that there will be too much leading to the covering and then dieback of some of the sensitive areas now rejuvenating. They are also experiencing similar problems with the waste from coppicing.

Once we have the estimates in, and a plan of action. I think it is vital that we address the existing problem and future problems that will occur unless some clearance action is sorted and agreed.

Agenda item 10(d) - Quotations for Knowle Wood Tree Work

Six companies were contacted. However, only three provided quotations. Please note the wording and figures has been provided by the contractor on their quotation. All companies have provided evidence of appropriate insurance.

Company A - All trees listed in the tree report. All arisings left stacked/chipped on site

Total cost £3,850.00 + £770.00 vat

Company B - To fell and make safe all the windblown and dangerous trees within Knowle wood that have been marked for works following a recent site safety survey.

All Arisings are to be chipped and log wood is to be stacked neatly in a suitable location leaving the work site clean and tidy. All discussed tree works will be carried out by fully insured NPTC trained professionals and in accordance with BS3998 British Standards for tree works.

Total cost for works: £8,500.00 + £1700 vat

Company C - To supply a tree surgery team to undertake the works underlined in the tree survey supplied by Curley Consultants for tree works within Knowle Wood & Fairlight Recreation Ground. Ref: SC/PCFC/11/2023. All waste will be left on site in the form of woodchip and stacked timber.

Total cost £9,585.00 + £1,917.00

Agenda item 11 – Finance and Administration Committee

The Finance Committee met in December and January. The December minutes are available. In January the proposed budget was again discussed in detail, some alterations were requested, approved and subject to that the budget is to be recommended to the full Parish Council for approval. However, when the RFO inserted these changes, the balance would have brought in a higher precept than had been discussed. By removing the allocation towards the next election costs and reducing the amount for the 5-year plan amount the budget balances, to give a proposed precept of £95,000. This is recommended to the full Parish Council.

The main unforeseen increases are the cost of the compressor house electricity and the potential costs of the external auditor's investigation.

The Finance Committee also discussed the proposed response to the external auditor's request for information. It was agreed that the Proper Officer, the Chair and the Vice Chair would meet to draft the response which will be circulated to all Councillors for discussion and final approval before being sent with the other documents requested. The Proper Officer has obtained a two-week extension to the deadline date which is now the second week of March.

A member of the public asked a question about the minutes. This matter was dealt with in 2021 (see October 2021 minutes), by email from Stephen Leadbetter to the Parish Council (27/10/21) and also Arnold Baker on Local Government Administration 7.39. This clearly advises on how the minutes should be recorded.

Agenda item 21 - Budget Setting

Councillors have been looking at the budget since September 2023 and have tried to balance the needs of the various aspects of our community

I understand why there is a lot of interest in how the precept is spent, it is your money. When the figures are looked at some do seem large, and looking at percentages, whilst it can be useful, is also give a skewed impression. Let me briefly put some context on this. What is important to people is the amount they pay for services.

These figures are from the Rother DC website which I am sure some of you will be familiar with them.

These figures relate to the current year.

Band D total council tax for Fairlight - £2337.62. This is made up of £2236.68 for Rother, ESCC, Police, Fire, and Social Care. The remaining £101 is the Parish Council precept. Or £2 per week.

In developing the budget Councillors have looked at areas where savings can be made, but also at areas where the funding needs to be maintained. There are a few areas where due to circumstances the spending planned has had to be increased. We have been mindful of the needs and requirements of the diverse population of Fairlight in our deliberations

Agenda item 25 – ESCC Rural Grass Cutting Service - Environmental Enhancement Service Option

Option 1 - Standard Rural Grass Cutting Service – No change

Two cuts per annum of a 1-metre-wide swathe along the verge plus visibility areas cut for visibility at junctions and for safety on the inside of bends where sight lines between road users may be obscured by vegetation.

Option 2 - Environmental Enhancement Service (reduced rural service)

Excluding single track lanes, the first cut at start of season to be only visibility cuts for safety at junctions and on the inside of bends where sight lines between road users may be obscured by vegetation. The second cut later in the season will be visibility plus a 1-metre-wide swathe along the verge.

Agenda item 26 - Training/meetings attended

ESALC Chairs Forum

The ESALC Chairs forum was informative as usual. A long time was spent discussing conflict within Councils and at meetings. ESALC will provide support to councils that are having problems and work with them to try to resolve the issues. It was emphasised that some behaviour in meetings by Councillors or members of the public or if bullying occurs, it is unacceptable. This should be called out there and then and action taken. This is a responsibility of all Councillors. The Civility and Respect pledge is a way of showing central government that this is a problem in many Parish Councils.

Parish councils are urged to send a representative to the local twice yearly Police forum as there is a possibility this could be withdrawn by the police.

Budgets were discussed it was advised that any increases should be looked at in terms of cash increases per band D house rather than as percentages as that gave residents a better feel for what it would mean to them. It would also make it clearer in terms of actual increase, for example, an expense could increase by 50% but may actually only be an increase from £10 to £15.

On finance in general, local government is in a dire financial position with some County Councils having to dip into their reserves in order to balance the budget

The difficulty of attracting people to put themselves forward as Councillors was discussed. It was reiterated that dispute within the Parish Council does not serve the community well.

As usual we were reminded of the need to keep hold of a good clerk. They are running out of locums.

Rother Housing Development event

This was an event attended by Parish Councils, Rother and Hastings Planners and Councillors, housing associations and groups that aid community land trusts and local development.

There were a lot of presentations and discussions. The problems that planners and developers face due to the disconnect between national and local policies was discussed. The advantages of a robust local plan were considered, as was the need to involve local communities early in the development process. The need to get the utilities companies to be realistic in their assessment of provision was also mentioned.