

**The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2014 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.**

**Chairman: Mr P. Buckley**

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr G. Cole  
Mrs.J.Hutchings Mr.D.Nagy  
Mr M. Neale Mrs.J.Williamson  
Mrs.Vickers**

**County: Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE**

**District: Apologies provided by Cllrs I. Howard, Dr J. Chidlow**

**Clerk: Mrs C.Tobin**

**Press: Not present**

**Public: None**

**FG148/02/14 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and then highlighted the housekeeping rules and also the fact that mobile phones should be switched off during the meeting, members of the public not being permitted to tape or film meetings of the Council.

Mrs.Joy Hutchings indicated that works were underway at the junction of Church Lane, Southwater as reported previously.

Mrs.Vickers indicated that she would be holding a meeting in public the following Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014 providing the public an opportunity to place questions in relation to the Draft Strategic Plan. The Council could if it so wished ask for a question to be raised for consideration. Members thanked Mrs.Vickers for the information.

**FG149/02/14 APOLOGIES**

There were apologies received and noted from Dr.Cash, Mrs.Flores-Moore, Mr.Watkins.

Apologies were not received from Mr.Sunderland.

**Members noted this.**

**FG150/02/14      DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations at this point in the meeting.

**FG151/02/14      CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had no announcements..

**FG152/02/14      CORRESPONDENCE**

The Clerk referred members to general correspondence received and asked whether Members wished to comment on any particular item.

Elsden School of Dance

This local dance company have written advising the Council that their school is to be put on an event in June at the Hawth Theatre in Crawley and as such will be required to have more rehearsals and wonder whether the Council could consider providing rent free accommodation to help with this show which will show off the capabilities of not only the local dance school but its pupils predominately from Southwater.

Members whilst supportive of the Dance School were concerned about the long term implications of providing a commercial organisation albeit providing dance classes for young people being provided with rent free accommodation. The main concern was that if free accommodation were provided and the Council then turned away paid business, it could be construed by some as a failure in their duty to maximise revenue. Members also discussed at length partial fees being paid, but again there was concern that this too would set a precedent.

The Clerk suggested that perhaps the Council could in light of their discussions suggest to the dance school that individual children apply for a District Council grant, providing them with the link for applications to be considered. This would enable the School to then rent the necessary accommodation.

**It was with REGRET that the Council having considered the request from Elsdén School of Dance felt that it could not on this occasion accede to the request for free room hire. The Clerk to provide information on grants which may be available to the School.**

Friday Luncheon Club

The Clerk reported that an article had appeared in the February 2014, Challenger Magazine covering Horsham and the surrounding areas. As at the date of the meeting 24 had booked to attend the Friday Luncheon Club, with five enquiries from potential volunteers, all of whom would be have to be Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checked for insurance purposes. Interviews with the Clerk would take place in relation to all prospective volunteers.

**Members NOTED the information provided by the Clerk.**

**FG153/02/14**

**MINUTES**

**It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.**

**FG154/02/14**

**ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS**

The Clerk provided Members with information on the current financial position of the Council to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014 including Income and Expenditure and Bank Balances.

Mr.M.Neale questioned the petty cash to bank; the procedure for raising petty cash was explained by the Chairman of Council.

**It was RESOLVED by all present that the financial information provided was a true and correct position of the Council as at 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014 and should be APPROVED.**

Local Government Finance Statement

The Clerk drew Member's attention to the Finance Statement for 2014/15 issued by Local Government Minister Brandon Lewis MP, this stating:-

“We have not determined principles for precepting authorities in 2014 to 2015, but we are putting on notice that we are prepared if necessary to apply the referendum thresholds to larger town and parish councils from 2015 to 2016 onwards to provide protection for local tax payers and extend the principle of direct democracy.

We have also set out previously, that there is some £3.3 billion in the settlement this year for Council Tax support schemes. There is an element within this national pot that is there specifically to reflect reductions in the parish tax base. We have not separately identified the money because it is not ring-fenced and as caseloads change and schemes evolve, the amount that different parishes need will change. It would be wrong to try to manage that centrally, but we have been clear that we expect billing authorities to carry on passing on support to town councils and parishes to help mitigate any reduction in their tax base due to the local Council Tax support scheme.”

**Members NOTED the Minister's statement.**

Broadband/Fibre Optic/Telephone Costs

The Clerk reported that an evaluation had taken place in relation to the provision of the telephone costs, broadband providers and costs. She would report that the existing Council broadband supplier Talk Talk were

regrettably not responding to requests for a copy of their existing contract which they changed to a residential line without authorisation; the Clerk would intend to cancel this contract due to the company inability to respond to the variety of requests and comments provided. Fastnet the other provider was proving satisfactory, however the contract offered would now having further savings and could not be discounted.

It would be the Clerk's recommendation that the Council now consolidate all its telephone business with British Telecom to include the Broadband provision. Whilst there was a saving of £553.96 with normal broadband, there was a saving of £408.00 if the council were to convert to fibre optic lines which would give the Council four times the speed, with the option of converting to higher speeds as and when these come forward with no penalty.

Mr.Cole said that it was evident to him that with the increased volume of traffic coming down from the internet and emails, speeds would have to be significantly increased, and he would support therefore the fibre optic option.

Mr.Nagy pointed out to the Clerk that it was Talk Talk whom had changed the terms of the Council's contract. It was agreed that the Clerk cancel the relevant Talk Talk contract. Mr.Cole said that it was important that the Council kept the evidence of contact with the company; the Clerk stated that she believed her staff had done so, but that they had failed to obtain a suitable response to the request for the original contract nor the new contract.

**It was APPROVED by Council that the Clerk enter into a five year contract in relation to the telephone lines with a lesser period for the fibre optic option. The Clerk to transfer from Fastnet (Leisure Centre) and cancel the Talk Talk contract and take out the relevant contract with British Telecom.**

Electronic Notice Board

The Clerk indicated that the cost of a new notice board (more modern style) measuring 960mm by 960mm would be £1877 this would include installation fees of approximately the same amount giving an estimate cost of £3754. Having spoken with the District Council Officer involved, whilst it would appear that the District Council may be willing to purchase this board, it is not currently willing to pay for the reinstallation; the cost of which is very expensive. The Clerk believes, although she was not around at the time, that the District Council had agreed to have this installed previously.

Mr.Buckley felt that he had no problem with the Parish Council paying for the unit pending refund from the District Council, subject to having this in writing from the relevant officer. He did however, have a problem in regards to the installation, for it was the District Council who had

dismantled with the intention to reinstalling within the Square, once a building was identified. Mr.Nagy said that the Parish Council's administration costs in pursuing this matter should also be a factor in this, Mrs.Williamson agreed the matter had gone on long enough. Mr.Nagy stated that after all it was a District Council contractor who had lost the original notice board having taken this in for safe keeping, and then went into liquidation. Mrs.Vickers stated that the Clerk should inform her after the meeting as to whom she was dealing and she would take this matter up as a District Councillor.

**It was AGREED that the Clerk should inform the District Council that it was its responsibility to replace and reinstall the electronic notice board as previously agreed during the time of development. If agreement was not reached the Clerk should write to the Chief Executive Officer of the District Council copying in all District Councillors for Southwater.**

**FG155/02/14****ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

The Clerk presented a payment schedule to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014 in the sum of £6,878.98.

**It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedule dated 5<sup>th</sup> January 2014 be approved in the sum of £6,878.98**

**FG156/02/14****POLICE MATTERS**

The Clerk provided Members with an update position with regards to the crime figures for Southwater. This information being supplied via Councillors post.

Sussex Police – District News Update

Commander Hodges had forwarded his latest news update for note.

Crime Statistics

The information provided shows a 10% increase in crime within Southwater over the previous year. Mr.Neale stated that it was evident that much of this took place at a time when PCSO Cecil was elsewhere on secondment and during the recent redeployment of resources to deal with fracking issues at Balcombe, eg., July 2013. Mr.Buckley again pointed to the fact that whilst the community retained PCSO Cecil and had the services of Special Constable Neil Worth, it had overall lost the services of a full time PCSO; this post not being replaced.

Mr.Nagy stated that it would be interested to find out what the cost of the increased crimes were to Sussex Police in terms of investigation etc., as opposed to the cost of the second PCSO.

Members were concerned to note that a meeting was to take place with the

Chief Inspector and Inspector and hoped that this meeting was not to hear of further reductions in the overall policing of Southwater. It was suggested that if this resulted in the loss of the remaining PCSO or Special Constable, then the Council should write to the Cabinet Member for Community Safety at Horsham District Council and also put in writing to the Chief Constable the Parish Council's concerns. A letter should also be sent to Trevor Leggo, Director of the Surrey and Sussex Association of Local Council, for him to discuss with the Chief Constable for Sussex any resultant loss.

**Members noted the information provided by the Clerk, instructing the Clerk to take any action necessary in writing to appropriate persons to ensure that the existing resources to Southwater was retained by Sussex Police.**

**FG157/02/14**

**SOUTHWATER LEISURE CENTRE**

Leisure Centre Main Footpath Bridge

The Clerk advised Members that repairs were necessary to the main bridge connecting the leisure centre to Lintot Square. The cost of the repairs being £450+VAT. Should the bridge/thorough have to be closed for Health and Safety reasons then appropriate signage would be put in place.

**It was APPROVED by all present that the Clerk should place the relevant order for the repairs to the bridge in the sum of £450+VAT with Countrywide Grounds Maintenance.**

**FG158/02/14**

**COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND\*\***

Skatepark – Lighting

As instructed the Clerk has held meetings to discuss the possibility of having electricity brought into the skatepark. UK Power Networks are unable to bring electricity from the sub-station due to the voltage at the site, and therefore electricity has to be brought down Benn's Field (subject to the landowners agreement) to the site. The estimated cost of doing so without any columns/voltaic cells is £35k.

Members were astonished that the power supply could not be provided from the sub-station but from Cripplegate Lane, but understood that this had been evaluated and discounted.

**Members thanked the Clerk for investigating this matter, but felt that there were no financial resources available for such expenditure at this point in time.**

Solar Panels, Southwater Leisure Centre

The Clerk informed Members that as requested she had acquired two differing quotations for solar panels for both Easteds Barn and the Leisure Centre. Planning permission would have to be sought, but Members asked

the Clerk to check this point prior to any order or otherwise being placed.

The Clerk stated that she was somewhat concerned that one of the companies had quoted by using the internet to look at the buildings, the other she believed had visited the site. The Clerk stated that she had no experience in the provision of such solar panels, and was attempting to access information on the Government grants available as the timescales for such applications was fast approaching.

The Clerk stated that she would very much appreciate the assistance of Members who may have the relevant experience in this area, with both Mr.Cole and Mr.Neale both volunteering to provide assistance, this being gratefully received by the Clerk.

**It was RESOLVED that the Clerk should work with Mr.Cole and Mr.Neale in order to progress the proposal for solar panels for both the Leisure Centre and Easteds Barn to include the planning application and grant application.**

Woodlands Way – Insurance Claim Litter Bin and Notice Board

The Clerk confirmed that the cost of replacement of these units would be £1134.00 for which an insurance claim had been submitted. The Committee are however required to authorise this expenditure, pending the claim being settled.

**It was APPROVED by all present that the Clerk should place the relevant orders for both the replacement notice board and waste bin.**

**At this point in the meeting the Chairman proposed that the Members of Public present and press be excluded from the Chamber, due to the confidential nature of the following item.**

“Confidential Minute”

**Standing Orders reinstated.**

Trees & Bushes/Public Open Space/Dog Fouling and Fly Tipping Management

The Clerk referred Members to a letter which she would propose being issued to various areas around which the Council had land management issues. This letter addressed many issues not only on the Council’s owned land but also in the community in general, for example the following week she was to attend a meeting of Southwater Locals Opposing Poo (SLOP), which would look at the issues encountered by parents at the local schools with inconsiderate dog owners allowing their dogs to foul the public pavements. There was also an issue about individual cutting back trees/hedges and fly tipping by residents generally.

Mr.Cole felt that the letter was rather pointed, the Clerk stated that it was not the case the letter being similar to others used by the Parish Council to inform the community of issues in the past. It was direct and dealt with legislative matters in providing advice and point of contact, but took the Member's point and would look at the letter again to see if this could be toned down a little without losing the main thread.

Members felt that the Clerk should therefore taking on board Mr.Cole's point take out the draft heading and make this more generic. Mr.Diamond felt that a final paragraph about the potential of volunteering on such open space etc., would not go amiss. The Clerk thanked Members for their comments and would make the necessary amendments.

**The Committee APPROVED subject to alterations discussed the issue of the letter to residents, this to include this being posted on the Parish Council's website and Facebook page.**

**FG159/02/14**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday **5<sup>th</sup> March 2014.**

**The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.**