

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 2nd December 2015 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Mr P. Buckley

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr G. Cole
Mr K. Diamond Mr A. Green
Mr M. Neale Mr S. Tresadern
Mr N. Whitear**

County: Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE

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

Clerk: Mrs J. Nagy

Press: Not present

Public: One

FG136/12/15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and then highlighted the housekeeping rules and indicated that should anyone wish to film/record the proceedings could they make themselves known.

Mr Whitear reported that a deep pothole had appeared at the junction of the new development at the northern end of Worthing Rd. The Deputy Clerk responded that this had already been reported.

Mr Apted said that the contractors' parking outside this development was an issue. The Deputy Clerk responded that the Clerk has contacted the site manager on the issue, but as the vehicles were taxed and as there are no parking restrictions in the area, there is nothing that the police nor parking enforcement can do.

Mr Green reported that two litter bins keep falling over, as they are not secured at the base, these being on the corner of the Shipley Rd by the bus stop, and outside the Cock Inn.

Mr Diamond said that the Clerk and her hard working team did a splendid job in organising last Saturday's Christmas Festival. Mr Buckley agreed.

Mr Vincent, member of public and Council employee, said that he needed to report a couple of matters, but would do so through the office. He was pleased to note that the litter bins falling over had been reported, as he did this through the office some time ago.

FG137/12/15 APOLOGIES

There were apologies received and noted from Mrs Flores-Moore, Mr Greening, Mrs Vickers and Mr Watkins.

Members NOTED AND APPROVED the apologies received.

FG138/12/15 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Deputy Clerk referred Members of Council to information issued in relation to the Member's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. This information contained a flow chart previously issued should assist Members in reaching their decision this not being overly complicated.

Members NOTED the Deputy Clerk's comments.

Mr Green declared a pecuniary interest in FG/142/12 as he operates a water sports business within the Country Park.

FG139/12/15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements.

FG140/12/15 CORRESPONDENCE

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

Members NOTED the correspondence received.

Memorial Plaque

The Council have been approached in relation to the possibility of providing a memorial plaque for a young person who had sadly died recently. This young person had used and enjoyed the skate park along with his friends during the summer months and therefore a group of friends would like to place the plaque on the ramp.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the young person was not a resident of Southwater.

Mr Neale had concerns in relation to the lack of permanency of the site; it being a wooden structure, with no guarantee it will be in situ in perpetuity.

It was AGREED that the Deputy Clerk would write to the friends and explain that the Parish Council would not agree to a memorial plaque due to the lack of permanency of the structure. They might like to consider placing a metal bench at the site instead.

NHS – Stay Well this Winter Campaign

Mr Diamond declared an interest in this item as he is a member of the CCG.

The Deputy Clerk referred Members to the NHS Crawley Clinical Commissioning Group and Horsham and Mid Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group's campaign which aims to help those with long term conditions and people over 65 to stay well and warm this winter.

Commonwealth Flag

NALC are promoting the flying of the Commonwealth Flag on 14th March. The Deputy Clerk however would need authorisation to purchase such a flag and to fly this.

It was RESOLVED that the Council purchase a Commonwealth Flag and that this be flown on the flagpole in Southwater on 14th March 2016.

Domain Name

The owner of southwater.com has written to enquire as to whether the Parish Council would like to acquire the domain name of Southwater.com. If the Council are interested the Clerk will take the necessary steps to contact the individual.

Mr Diamond said that .com sites were mainly US commercial sites, and it was difficult to see how ownership of this domain name could be of benefit to a local authority.

It was AGREED that the Clerk would ascertain the cost of acquiring southwater.com and the matter would be considered once this information was received.

FG141/12/15 MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2015 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG142/12/15 PRESENTATION BY THE HEAD WARDEN OF SOUTHWATER COUNTRY PARK IN RELATION TO THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS TO BE UNDERTAKEN AT THE COUNTRY PARK REGARDING WATERSPORTS**

At this point in the meeting Mr Green declared an interest in the matter to be discussed and left the room as he had a pecuniary and personal interest in the matter having the current Watersports franchise at Southwater Country Park.

The Head Warden of Southwater Country Park Steve Delahunt informed Members that he had been invited to attend the meeting by the Clerk.

In the New Year, the District Council would be looking to secure a new concession agreement with regard to the provision of water sports within the Country Park. The current agreement expires at the end of 2015, although a one year extension has been agreed.

EU regulations state that any procurement procedure must conform to a competitive tendering process. A tender would be prepared which would encapsulate a lease agreement which would provide a reasonable level of income for the franchisee, plus the ethos of service provision to ensure that local people can continue to enjoy the lake.

The existing water sports concession is valued with excellent service provision and the aim is to keep this maintained.

Mr Delahunt is reassured by his procurement colleagues that the tender process will offer a level playing field. To that end, a Suppliers' Day will be held in mid-January at the Country Park. Potential service providers will be invited for a fact finding session.

Mr Diamond queried that suppliers were to be "invited" when he thought EU regulations required a tender to be advertised, rather than to issue invitations.

Mr Delahunt said that it was not essential for a potential supplier to attend on the day. It was being held on the advice of the District Council procurement team to demonstrate a fair process.

Mr Apted asked if the existing franchisee could tender for the new agreement, and Mr Delahunt said that he could.

Mr Buckley asked how the District Council would measure the potential service level. Mr Delahunt said that the procurement team would ensure that this is taken into consideration.

Mr Diamond asked if the tender documents would tell potential franchisees what is being currently offered. Mr Delahunt replied that no, this would not be the case; instead a list would be made of requirements and expectations with which the potential companies would have to prove that they comply. How the current franchisee operates is commercially sensitive so this information would not be shared.

Mr Cole asked if the potential franchisees could suggest ideas of what else could be done in the Country Park. Mr Delahunt said that this would be welcomed; the Park is changing rapidly with the new café franchise, and the opening of the Dinosaur Park.

Mr Diamond asked how long the new lease would be for. Mr Delahunt said that he was not sure of the timescale.

Mr Cole said that the length of the lease needed to be long enough to give the

opportunity to recoup any investment.

Mr Delahunt said that he hoped that the new lease arrangement would be decided by the summer. He emphasised that the current franchisee is not failing in any way; the lease is up for renewal.

Mr Delahunt said that he is hoping that the Clerk will be involved in the Suppliers' Day, and she has offered space in Beeson House if necessary.

The Deputy Clerk enquired about the date of the Suppliers' Day; Mr Delahunt said that it is either going to be 18th or 25th January. This is to be advertised in the press and on line in the next week or so.

As Councillors had no further questions, Mr Delahunt left the meeting.

Mr Green returned to the meeting.

FG143/12/15 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Deputy Clerk provided Members with information on the current financial position of the Council to 3rd December, 2015 having provided the Cash Reconciliation, Income & Expenditure and Debtors Listing.

Members NOTED and APPROVED the information provided in that this was a true and correct position of the Council's financial affairs as at 3rd December 2015.

Gas Maintenance Contract

The Deputy Clerk indicated that the tenders had been received in relation to this contract with three contractors having responded with prices, although a further contractor (K&T Heating) had also indicated that they did not wish to tender.

Contractor	Leisure Centre	Easteds Barn
Triple Gas	1669.00	181.00
Ergro	2195.00	-
Tempus*	4610.00	-

*Tempus had quoted for free labour on appliance breakdowns and heating system breakdowns.

The quotation from Triple Gas in relation to Easteds Barn due its value was outside of the main tender; however the Clerk would recommend that subject to whom the Leisure Centre contract be awarded, that Triple Gas be awarded the contract for Easteds Barn.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would award the gas maintenance contract for Southwater Leisure Centre to Triple Gas.

Lloyds Bank

The Deputy Clerk indicated that Lloyds had now notified the Council of the changes to the financial services compensation scheme limit in that this will reduce from £85k to £75k.

Street Lighting – New Column for Ash Road

The Deputy Clerk indicated that one of the Parish Council's street light columns in Ash Road was now leaning and required replacement. SSE the contractor has indicated that this can be restored to its correct position for £206.53+VAT.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the street light column referred to in Ash Road be repaired.

SSALC & NALC Subscriptions

The Deputy Clerk referred to documentation forwarded to Members in relation to the proposed increase in subscriptions for both organisations. The SALC subscription will be capped at £1650, with a fee of £25 in relation to the West Sussex Association of Local Councils. NALC has agreed subscriptions would rise to 6.6 pence per elector, and taking account of this the NALC subscription will be £522.26.

There was some discussion about membership of NALC being worthwhile, but it was agreed that it was necessary.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Deputy Clerk should raise the necessary payments upon receipt of the invoice for subscriptions.

FG144/12/15 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Deputy Clerk presented a payment schedules to 3rd December 2015 for approval in the sum of £4493.07.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedules dated 2nd December 2015 be APPROVED in the sum of £4493.07.

FG145/12/15 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

The Deputy Clerk referred Member's to the Internal Auditor's Report following the audit of the 11th November 2015 a copy of which had been emailed to councillors for discussion and comment.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she would be looking at the Freedom of Information Policy recommendation as it was necessary to register annually with the Information Commissioner on this policy and data protection. She advised that the annual registration fee with the Information Commissioner had just been received, and that she had asked advice in relation to the recording and taping of meetings.

Mr Diamond asked if the costs of FOI requests were passed onto the originator.

The Deputy Clerk said that this was all laid out in a policy document; but in brief, the hours taken to provide the information was logged, and should this go above a certain level, then the costs were passed on. In all cases, costs of producing copies of document were passed on in line with a published scheme, although in most cases the originator was given links to where such information could be found on line.

Mr Diamond asked how many FOI requests the Council received on average. The Deputy Clerk said that to her knowledge there had only been one in the last two years; this being in relation to an ongoing insurance claim.

The Clerk reports that the comments regarding updated statements is due to the fact that these are only produced by the banks quarterly in relation to the instant and deposit accounts held with two of the Council's banks.

It was RESOLVED that the Internal Auditor's Report be noted and accepted.

FG146/12/15 PARISH OFFICE TELEPHONE SYSTEM

The Deputy Clerk referred Members to the documentation received in relation to the proposed telephone system for the parish office.

Having evaluated the cost of two BT systems, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk would recommend the Avaya System which, whilst slightly more expensive, is the latest model which would enable further parts to be obtained should handsets etc. become defective. The problem with the existing system and the other Quantum system is that these have been on the market longer; therefore it is likely parts in the next few years will become scarce.

The total cost for the Avaya System would be £3114.82 exclusive of VAT. The current BT offer for leasing on the Avaya system is for 30 months interest over 10 equal instalments, which equates to £311 per quarter. The intention is that we will also move our BT calls onto the business essentials system which is a £20 per month tariff for virtually unlimited calls.

The Clerk having investigated this with Mr Whitear has obtained a copy of the BT finance agreement and has sent this to Mr Whitear for evaluation against others in the market. The best option whichever system is chosen by the Council is to lease the equipment over a set period of time, the Avaya is interest free over 30 months, of 10 equal instalments.

Mr Whitear reported that he had reviewed the documents as requested, and it was straight forward leasing agreement.

The Deputy Clerk advised that this expenditure was not included in the Budget, but the current phone system is now failing, with some handsets unusable, which was having considerable impact on the efficiency of the office.

It was **RESOLVED** to lease the Avaya system at a cost of £3114.82 ex VAT, interest free over 30 month payable in quarterly instalments.

FG147/12/15 PARISH COUNCIL COMMUNITY GRANT

The Deputy Clerk referred to the grant request received from the Church of the Holy Innocents in relation to the printing of the programmes for Remembrance Day, the sum requested being £154.00.

It was suggested that the Church may like to consider seeking local sponsorship in future years, and if not possible, then to give the Parish Council details in advance, as it may be able to achieve a cheaper cost.

It was **RESOLVED** by all present that a grant of £154.00 be awarded to the Church of the Holy Innocents for the Remembrance Day programmes.

FG148/12/15 GRASS CUTTING TENDERS

The Deputy Clerk referred to the tenders received in relation to the grass cutting contract for Parish Council land for the next three year or five year period from Spring 2016.

The options considered were to have 17 cuts per year, or 12 cuts per year, with the current contract being 12 cuts per year. The requirement included

- One cut to graveyard and allotment hedging, plus hedging in Easteds Lane, Cripplegate Lane, Old Stakers and Hazel Close.
- Two cuts and strimming to Leisure Centre footpath to York and Blakes Farm area bunds
- Two cuts to area adjacent to Infant Academy
- Moss and herbicide twice a year to all play areas, footpaths and pedestrian areas, and the Skate Park.

Five tenders were issued and the quotes were as follows:

	Thompson Estates	G Burley & Sons	Countrywide	Grasstex	Enterprise Services
12 cuts					
3 year	£7940	£12665.68	£8539	£16474	No reply
5 year	£8144	£13048.50	£8748	£27460	No reply
17 cuts					
3 year	£9750	No quote	£10452	£22177	No reply
5 year	£9902	No quote	£10614	£36925	No reply

All prices are ex VAT and per annum. All companies that quoted have the necessary £10 million public liability insurance and provided references.

It was **RESOLVED** that the contract for grass cutting for 12 cuts per year should be awarded to Thompson Estates, for a period of three years at a

cost of £7940 plus VAT per annum.

It was reported that there were weeds and brambles coming through the pavements in Cedar Drive, which needed treating.

The Deputy Clerk will action this.

FG149/12/15 DRAFT BUDGET FOR YEAR 2016/17

The Draft Budget for Year 2016/17 was presented following discussions at Full Council on 25th November for consideration and approval if required. The current precept to be raised being £324,468, Grant £4,633 leaving a Gross Budget of £329,101. This equates to a rise of 5.02%

Mr Buckley advised that Councillors that the rise represented an increase of 7 pence per week per Band D property. The increase was necessary due to the need to allow for the Living Wage, and also due to the reduction in the grant received from the District Council.

Mr Neale said that the Council needed to aim to have a neutral budget next year, as there have been increases in the last two years.

The Deputy Clerk reminded Members that the Council now has very little reserves.

Mr Diamond said that the Council needed to consider the Visioning Document when this was finalised, and discuss implementing the recommendations, which may have cost implications.

Whilst a percentage rise of 3% has been allowed within the budget for hall hires, the Deputy Clerk would like confirmation that this rise is applicable across the board in relation to services offered, to include functions and children's parties etc.

Members are required to provide changes to the draft budget or consider a recommendation to approve to Full Council in December.

It was RESOLVED to recommend the Draft Budget to Full Council, with no further amendments or changes. Hall hire bookings, including functions, children's parties etc. will increase by 3%.

FG150/12/15 POLICE MATTERS

The Deputy Clerk had nothing to report with the exception that in issuing the listing received from crimes reported; Southwater despite having two reported had not appeared on the list.

FG151/12/15 SOUTHWATER CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

The Deputy Clerk reported that the event went well, with no incidents. Arrangements are in hand to improve on this year's car parking situation via improved signage. In future individuals will be responsible for various areas whilst the Clerk retains overall responsibility for the main event, the team are yet to set next years date which will probably be either the 26th November or 3rd December.

It was felt that event parking signage would be useful, and that Horsham District Council should be asked to provide parking wardens on the day, as some cars were staying for more than two hours in the Co-Op car park.

It was generally felt that 3rd December would be the preferred date.

FG152/12/15 MARKETING REPORT**

The Chairman referred to the meeting held with Recenseo in relation to the Council's future marketing. The proposal being that this report be taken to the next HR Committee who would also be considering the Council's Future Vision Document and other related matters having been delegated these tasks by Full Council.

Should any Councillor wish to comment on this the Chairman would suggest that these be sent to the Clerk who will then ensure that all Members of the relevant Committee received the information.

Members NOTED and asked that the Deputy Clerk refer this to the next HR Committee Meeting to be held in January 2016.

FG153/12/15 COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND**

The Deputy Clerk has nothing further to report other than she believes that the District Council is to increase the rents for existing tenants other than those of the Parish Council in the newly created offices.

Solicitors have been instructed to act in the Council's best interests in relation to the variation of the lease which would allow the parish council to issue sub-leases to new tenants without the need for further referral.

Councillors NOTED the information provided by the Deputy Clerk.

Police Office – CCTV Equipment

The Council are being approached by our landlords in relation to the repositioning of the equipment into the Police Office by British Telecom. Horsham District Council have no concerns about this, however, the Clerk has indicated that she would like to have an onsite meeting to fully understanding which areas which require access and where the wiring is to enter. District Council have indicated that they do not see the need for a formal licence to alter

the premises; this is contrary to their view in relation to the installation of the air conditioning and new window but will still require access through other areas of the building.

The Clerk awaits the meeting and plans for the proposals.

FG154/12/15 PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING**

The Deputy Clerk reported that Mr Vincent has resigned as a Litter Warden as of 31st December.

As Mr Vincent was present in the public gallery, Mr Buckley thanked him for all the work he has done for the Council over the past years.

FG155/12/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday, 6th January 2016.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.