

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 8th October, 2014 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 8.00 pm.

Chairman: Mr P. Buckley

**Councillors: Mrs S. Alway Mr L. Apted
Mr G. Cole Mr.K.Diamond
Mrs P. Flores-Moore Mr.D.Nagy
Mr.M.Neale**

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: Not present

FG111/11/14 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.

Mr.Nagy reported that he had entered into a conversation with representatives of SSE the contractors installing the new street lighting etc., when he had complained about the method of works being undertaken in that it was extremely difficult for both disabled and young mothers with prams to negotiate the fencing and holes formed. Mr.Nagy had been promised a response to his comments within three working days.

It was reported that damage had been caused to the dormouse run. The Clerk stated that this was currently being questioned with Horsham District Council's Planning Enforcement to see whose responsibility this falls under eg., estate management company if it exists and or the developer. There is some concern that there is no management company, despite the Parish Council having been informed by the Planning Department that this was the original proposal and the estate was private. The Clerk stated that based on the original information this area had not been allowed for in terms of emergency grit supplies nor grit bins. The Clerk's office awaits a formal response.

Mrs.Flores-Moore indicated that she was somewhat concerned that due to the A24 works and a serious accident this had had the marked effect on the village of Southwater itself in that traffic had been log jammed with no

possibility of attending emergencies should they have occurred within the village. A general discussion then took place in relation to concerns about the actual traffic management controls in place on the A24.

FG112/11/14 APOLOGIES

There were apologies received and noted from Mr.S.Francis, Mr.G.Watkins and Mrs.Vickers.

FG113/11/14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Mr.Diamond declared an interest in that he was a representative of the Clinical Commissioning Group, he understood that an item may be discussed within the meeting.

The 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 Clerk's comments and advice.

FG114/11/14 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements at this point in the meeting.

FG115/11/14 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.

Five Communities Plan – Horsham and Mid Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group

The Clerk referred to correspondence giving the headlines in relation to the proposals being consulted upon by the Clinical Commissioning Group and asked Members whether they were intending to respond.

Mrs.Flores-Moore stated that she felt that the area required a new hospital, or indeed expansion of the existing Horsham Hospital with increased services being delivered from that location enabling local people to access via public transport. Members felt that the proposal to site a super surgery at Broadbridge Heath was unrealistic and not sustainable, many elderly patients would have no real means of accessing these services.

The Clerk advised that when the Southwater Surgery was built this had been built to accommodate six GP's, currently she believed that there were only three practicing possibly due to the lack of doctor's wishing to become GP's.

Did the Council consider that there should be a further expansion for the future of this unit to accommodation specialist services provided at other surgeries such as Park Surgery and if so what services could it provide to enhance what was being delivered elsewhere at say Park Surgery where ultrasound scans could be conducted?

Members felt that this topic should be included within the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, to see what the need was within the community in order to evaluate the potential viability in terms of the capital expenditure required to enhance the present premises. Members were of the opinion, that if Horsham Hospital were enhanced with specialist services from minor eye operations etc., this would greatly negate the need for a super surgery which was not particularly popular. It was also pointed out that historically many residents of Southwater did not use the Southwater Surgery having chosen to go to Horsham. Horsham Hospital could be used to help those patients who were in need of rehabilitation, rather than bed block other more acute hospitals. It was felt that alongside extending services and premises at Horsham Hospital, with no new facility being envisaged, then the Commissioning Group should further consider providing more facilities at Crawley.

Travelling times to the major acute hospitals were also of concern to the Committee, with Redhill at times taking an hour and a half to reach.

It was agreed that the Clerk should invite to a Council Meeting the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group to evaluate the proposals in full and that a letter should be drafted to highlight the concerns raised by the current proposals.

It was RESOLVED that the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group be approached to attend a Full Council Meeting in the near future. In the meantime the Clerk to draft a letter in relation to comments raised by the Committee, but one which would oppose the creation of a super surgery at Broadbridge Heath.

FG116/10/14

MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th October, 2014 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG117/11/14

ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

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

Action in Rural Sussex

The Clerk referred to correspondence received in relation to subscription

fees appertaining to Village Hall services in that these are being changed from a single tier to two tiers. The Council has in the past benefited from reduced costs in terms of staff training courses attended and other information supplied by AiRs in relation to the leisure centre. Should the Council wish to continue with its subscription then the Clerk would suggest that the Level Two scheme be considered this being more favourable to the Council.

The Clerk would also like to suggest that the Council continue to seek advice from the AiRs HR Consultant, or if it would rather then the Clerk could instigate talks with a local firm of HR consultants who may also be able to provide information and advice; this company has been recommended by SSALC and is used by Billingshurst and North Horsham Parishes at the present time.

It was RESOLVED that the Council subscribe to the Action in Rural Sussex Village Halls Advice and Support Services at the cost of £180 inclusive of VAT.

Local Council Advisory Service

The Clerk indicted that the renewal for this service which provides Health & Safety advice, information and training was beneficial to the Council the cost of renewal being £95.00 plus VAT.

It was RESOLVED that the Council subscribe to the LCAS service offered by Zurich Insurance Company.

Southwater Christmas Event

Arrangements and marketing is in place for the event with the first advertisement being in the District Post on Friday 7th November, the Christmas event being on Saturday 29th November 2014.

The Chairman encouraged all those present to volunteer on the day to assist with the event.

FG118/11/14

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The Clerk presented a payment schedule to 5th November 2014 for approval in the sum of £22,625.08. The Clerk apologised for the lack of hard copies these would be forwarded the following day, the documents having been electronically provided.

Mr.Cole informed Members that the payment raised for Raddi Ramps was still being held due to the fact that both he and Mr.Watkins to whom the matter had been delegated had seen little headway since the second stage payment. It has been agreed that payment would be made upon completion and verification of each stage. He hoped to check the work again, with a view to asking the Clerk to release the payment on Monday 10th November. Members felt that this had been explained to the contractor at the

commencement of the project, and therefore despite the difficulties the contractor should have factored this in. The Council had a fiduciary duty towards the tax payer, and could not therefore pay for works and materials not yet on site or in situ.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedule amounting to £22,625.08 was approved for payment.

It was RESOLVED that as and when the works required at the skate park were complete, and then the third payment could be released by the Clerk.

FG119/11/14

DRAFT PARISH COUNCIL BUDGET FOR YEAR 2015/16

The Clerk referred to the draft documents prepared for the meeting including the notes appended to the figures. The Clerk further referred to the Budget report prepared for discussion.

Allotments

The Clerk reminded Members that the Council had a duty to consider the future provision of allotments. Members duly discussed such provision but felt that this additional cost at this point could not be justified. It may be through the Neighbourhood Plan process this topic can be addressed in terms of future provision through planning gain. Knowing that there was a need identified albeit how small a waiting list compared to the overall population, it was important that this provision be included in the corporate plan pending the update from the Neighbourhood Plan.

MUGA

The Clerk stated that she had not made allowances for the first years maintenance of this project. Maintenance would involved the spreading of sand on the AstroTurf surface and any other small maintenance items which would come forth.

Members felt that the Clerk should budget £3,000 for such expenditure as this was such an unknown in terms of the supply costs but in turn increase the income to £15k.

Skate park

Again only a small allowance had been allowed for future maintenance and wear and tear. Mrs.Flores-Moore pointed out that should the ramp be vandalised again then the Council had already indicated that it would not repair the park. Nevertheless Members felt that it would be prudent to allow a small repair sum which would be rolled forward if not spent and ring fenced for future repairs thereafter.

Mrs.Flores-Moore stated that she had been led to believe that there was to be a new skatepark in the Dinosaur Area being proposed. The Clerk stated that this was not the case, there would be a zip wire in addition to other new attractions. The Clerk was questioned on the car parking issues with many residents having raised concerns following the news release by the District Council.

The Clerk stated that it was regrettable that the District Council's news release had not mentioned the fact that during meetings in relation to the proposals it had been agreed that the County, District and Parish Council's would look at addressing this issue in order to ensure that the parking issues be addressed by early Summer 2015 to coincide with the new provision. The Clerk could not comment on why this had not been made clear when agreed between the parties at meetings which had included District Councillors and officers. A further meeting had been requested with the District Council officer leading the project.

Mr.Nagy said, that he would like to say that he was concerned about the general 'lip service' paid by both County and District Council in relation to matters relating to planning issues, development gain processes, the library project and now the proposals for the country park. It really was not good enough and showed a lack of leadership on the part of those authorities. The Clerk at this point stated that the officers of the Parish Council were robust in their approach, however it was a fact that there were so many changes at both the County and District Council in terms of officers, that it was generally down to this that projects or reports back were delayed with little or no feedback coming forward.

Mr.Nagy said that you only had to look at one or two of the planning applications which had been discussed of late to see why people were so cynical and this was not helpful to the Parish Council who were doing their utmost to improve the quality of service and life within the community.

Mr.Diamond said, that it was important to ensure that the parish council had sufficient litigation insurance, in the event that matters could not be resolved and the Council have to take further advice on how to progress matters with the other authorities involved in differing projects. The Clerk indicated that the Council did have insurance, but she would advise Members on the levels at the next appropriate meeting.

The Clerk advised Members that at a recent conference the County Council senior staff present had indicated their willingness to meet to discuss on-going concerns and initiatives on how both authorities could work better together for the benefit of the community.

Members felt that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council together with the Clerk should seek a meeting with the Chief Executive of the District Council to take forward the concerns expressed by Councillors during this discussion.

Councillor Allowances

The Clerk indicated that during the past two years, this matter had been debated with the majority view being that the role of a parish councillor was one of that of a volunteer and therefore no allowances would be paid. This would therefore not reflect on the council tax for Southwater. Members had however agreed to travel expenses for meetings and training events attended outside of the Council's parished area.

Members felt that the Council should not increase the council tax and that members would take no allowance for their work as a Councillor but would be eligible for travel expenses outside of the parished area. The Clerk would make no alternations to the budget, other than the small increase due to the Elections in 2015 which would necessitate possibly new councillors undertaking training with those returned having to undertake retraining; this requiring a certain amount of travel.

West Sussex Local Government Pension Scheme

Mrs.Flores-Moore was concerned about the new EU directive and how this would impact the allowance for pensions; the pension scheme being applicable to all members of staff. There was concern raised about staff overtime and how this would effect the payroll costs. The Clerk at this point indicated that it would be preferable due to discussions in relation to staff that Mr.Nagy retire from the Chamber as he had a prejudicial interest.

Mr.Nagy left the Chamber.

The Clerk gave an overview on overtime and time in lieu and stated that these incidents were very rare and sanctioned only due to the volume and nature of work, giving an example of the Deputy Clerk having to attend the Examination in Public in relation to the Draft Local Development Framework. This work necessitates the Deputy working over and above her part time hours in order to attend this very important meeting staff did not however get regular overtime.

The new legislation is to be evaluated by the Government and the Clerk would await further information on this with a view to informing members at the appropriate time. It was fair to state however, that if the legislation comes forward there is always the chance that this could affect salary costs in the future and this would have an impact also on the Council's pension contributions.

Community Events

The Clerk indicated that with the loss of a valued member of staff and whilst a new member of staff was to be employed, this person may not have the contacts of the existing member of staff. This coupled with the Elections in

May 15 will prevent any community event taking place until later in the summer. It was suggested that perhaps a summer concert in Lintot Square may be arranged with sponsorship, or alternatively a joint musical event at the country park in conjunction with the District Council; this helping to celebrate the new Dinosaur Island play area.

The Clerk to discuss options with colleagues at the District Council.

Provision of Electronic Notebooks

Members discussed this matter, and felt that whilst the initial cost may be high there would be savings in terms of both councillor and staff time in preparing and photocopying material and the saving in stationery/photocopying. The Clerk stated that she had built this into the proposed draft budget. Mr.Nagy said that the Council would also have to consider future replacement for equipment would normally have to be replaced either four to five years. Members were in general agreement that the Council should be provided with a notebook, the Clerk would evaluate costs and provision but that this be retained in the budget.

A short discussion took place in relation to the provision of a Band D figure, the Chairman stated that this was normally supplied by the District Council by mid November. The Clerk stated that this normally coincided with the Government's spending review after which the District Council would make certain provisions.

The Clerk pointed out the elsewhere in the County some District Council's had not provided the Revenue Support Grant, Horsham District Council whilst having vastly reduced the percentage to the Parish Council did at this point anticipate passing this on. However, this was at the discretion of the District Council, but if not passed on, and the figure supplied at this point in the budget was only speculative, would leave a large deficit in the Parish Council's budget which would have to be raised or services cut. Members were of the view that in such an event, the Parish Council would have to advise residents of the need, which would in turn see a potential dramatic increase in the precept (local council tax). The Clerk pointed out that it was unlikely that the Revenue Support Grant would be available after 2016/17. Whilst the percentage to be raised would then look extremely high, in terms of revenue raised relatively low compared to the over budget being discussed.

The Chairman felt that there was some ways of reducing if necessary by spreading the cost of photovoltaic cells over a two year period, but this could be considered dependent on the outcome in December 2014.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk should make the relevant changes to the budget as proposed by Members present and reissue the budget forecast for further discussion by Council.

FG120/11/14

DRAFT PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATION ON COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS POLICY

The Clerk referred to the draft policy produced which set out guidelines in relation to Member's participation on outside bodies and groups.

It was RESOLVED that the Draft Parish Council Representation on Community Groups and Organisations Policy be ADOPTED.

FG121/11/14

POLICE MATTERS

PSCO Cecil has reported the crime figures for Southwater for September 2014 (the latest available) were 4 (2013) and 34 (2014). The Clerk has asked for the breakdown between the various crimes reported. It was further reported that PCSO Cecil's area had been changed, and that he would now cover the parishes of Southwater, Broadbridge Heath and Nuthurst.

Mr.Diamond asked the Clerk whether the figures in relation to the time spent by PCSO Cecil in Southwater had been received as promised from Chief Inspector Hodges. The Clerk stated that other than a percentage figure received from the PCSO these had not been received. Council instructed the Clerk to write once again to the Chief Inspector asking for clarification as to the hours spent on duty in Southwater by PCSO Cecil. The Clerk confirmed when asked that she had written to the County Association in relation to the reduction in police presence within Southwater; she believe that the Chief Executive of the County Association would discuss the Council's concerns with the Chief Constable. Mr.Diamond pointed to the increased in crime and anti social behaviour as seen in the figures compared to that of last year. The figures for 2013 (April to Sept) were 91 in total with 2014 (April to Sept) 150 a vast increase. This increase seemed to correlate with the information being received from members of the public in relation to anti social behaviour and criminal damage. Mr.Nagy pointed out that on leaving the Council meeting the previous week, a police vehicle was seen talking to young people outside of Beeson House, although the reasons for that visit were unclear.

Mr.Nagy stated that it whilst the Council were aware of the relevant police funding cuts which had been made and would be made, Sussex Police were now a reactive force rather than proactive. Mr.Buckley stated that it was obvious that there was not enough police on the ground the Horsham District being extremely short, with likely further cuts in policing which may then affect the Neighbourhood Policing Team. Mr.Nagy said that Southwater Council had proven through its partnership work with the Police in the past just how taking a proactive stance could reduce. With a reduction in the number of police, it would be better to use the limited resources in terms of PC's in dealing with the crimes leaving PCSO's to manage local issues

which in turn had had a marked reduction in anti social behaviour and crime within villages.

Mr.Diamond pointed out to those present the email from the Sussex Crime Commissioner who was carrying out a survey in relation to the future needs in terms of the police budget this being found at <http://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/> . Members were concerned to note that despite the downturn in the numbers of police locally, there had been little in reductions in the police precept, Southwater contributing a large sum towards this as previously advised.

It was RESOLVED by all present, that the Clerk should write to the Chief Inspector asking that he provide the actual number of hours spent by the Southwater PCSO in the parish of Southwater.

FG122/11/14

COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND**

Leisure Centre

Replacement Chairs for the Leisure Centre

Whilst Council sanctioned the purchase of new round tables for the Leisure Centre there appeared to be some confusion within the minutes as to whether this was to include the provision of 100 new chairs for the centre. The Manager reports that there is money within the improvements project which could facilitate the purchase.

It was APPROVED by those present that the Clerk should order the chairs as previously discussed.

Multi User Games Area

The Clerk informed Members that the handover of the build project took place on the 4th November, to MSA the council's consultant surveyor. There would be a grand opening on the 14th November at the Leisure Centre, involving the local schools.

Mr.Diamond and Mr.Nagy both gave their apologies in that they would be unable to attend.

Mr.Cole stated that he had been led to believe that whilst the MUGA offered basketball, the surface was not appropriate for the sport. Mr.Nagy said that with some knowledge of the type of surface, when designing something for multi use you would never get the definitive surface for the sport in question. He believe that this court had been designed to accommodate, tennis, basket ball and five a side football and would be suitable.

Basketball Area

As previously discussed the Leisure Centre Manager had acquired two quotations in relation to the replacement of the old basket ball net area to

another area on the field to allow young people to use an area outside of that MUGA provided and used by sporting groups. Two quotations in the sum of £3960+VAT and £3,177 plus VAT have been received. Due to the winter it would not be anticipated to carry out the works until the spring, that is if the Council approved the expenditure. There is currently no additional budget for this expenditure.

Members discussed this provision and felt that this should be added to the possible infrastructure requirements for the community through the new Neighbourhood Plan <http://www.southwater-pc.gov.uk/Neighbourhood-Plan-.aspx>, Parish Council's Corporate Plan and from development gain.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk add the requirement to the Parish Council's Corporate Plan, pending the completion of the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan Infrastructure requirements.

CCTV Leisure Centre

The Leisure Centre Manager has obtained a quotation from Chromovision the current provider of the Council's CCTV equipment to upgrade selected cameras to include IR lighting and change the view of other cameras. Members were referred to the copy quotation provided for the meeting. The overall cost of the proposed works being £2539 + VAT.

Mr.Nagy asked whether the Crime Prevention Officer had visited, the Clerk stated that she did not believe so, but would ask the Leisure Centre Manager to ensure that a visit and report produced in relation to CCTV provision. Mr.Nagy stated that when looking at such systems full spectrum lighting may be preferable in order to obtain suitable footage. The Clerk stated that one of the issues would be planning permission, local residents would not be in favour of such intrusive lighting, but that the Leisure Centre Manager would look at the suggestion following the visit of the Crime Prevention Officer from Sussex Police.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk ask the Leisure Centre Manager to arrange for a visit by the Sussex Police Crime Prevention Manager to discuss CCTV requirements for the Leisure Centre. Thereafter based on the report to obtain relevant quotations for further discussion by the Committee.

Easteds Barn

The new fire and security alarm system was now in place and new keys and fobs being provided to customers, who would now pay a deposit for the keys provided; this being refundable should a client no longer wish to hire the barn. If customers were to lose the keys provided that an additional charge will be levied to cover the cost of provision; this was standard elsewhere within the District.

Members NOTED the completion of the works to Easteds Barn.

Public Open Space

Further to legal advice sought in relation to the felling of trees the Clerk would like to know whether the Council wished the Clerk to write to solicitors in order to close this matter. The trees which had been substantially reduced by a local resident had started some regrowth.

Members felt that it would be appropriate for the Clerk to raise a letter to all houses adjoining Parish Council owned land informing them that the Council owned the land adjoining and that permission for any works on this land should be sought prior to action being taken.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would not pursue this matter further. It was further RESOLVED that in Spring 2015 the Clerk's office would write to properties adjoining Parish Council owned land advising them of the land ownership and what arrangements were in place for the management of the land.

Southwater Skatepark

As previously discussed, it was agreed that Cllrs.Cole and Watkins would inform the Clerk whether the works for the Stage 3 payment could be released the following week.

Cllr Cole stated that hopefully with the contractor back on site things would progress as discussed with him.

It was RESOLVED that Councillors Cole and Watkins would advise the Clerk whether or not the third payment could be released dependent on the works discussed having been progressed.

Beeson House

The Clerk confirmed that one customer has agreed to take the ground floor rear office, and is therefore awaiting confirmation that this is acceptable to the District Council who are proposing that the client be allowed to occupy under a tenancy at will. Once this confirmation is received the Clerk will discuss with the Council's solicitors and move forward swiftly as the client is keen to occupy.

Three other potential clients have shown an interest on shorter term leases of a year, and the Clerk is awaiting further contact from these companies.

Meanwhile further advertising will continue in the Parish News, Parish Council's newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, Website and District Post.

Members NOTED and APPROVED the action taken by the Clerk in progressing potential clients for the new offices created within Beeson House.

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday 3rd December 2014.

The meeting closed at 10.10 am.