

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 6th April 2016 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Mr P. Buckley

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr K. Diamond
Mr A. Green Mr B. Greening
Mr M. Neale Mr G. Watkins
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: Four

FG01/04/16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

Mr Watkins said that it had been suggested that the Skate Park should be closed due to recent vandalism to the side panels. He had visited the Skate Park, and there was a small hole in the surface in addition to the side panels, but this did merit closure in his opinion. He suggested that the Acting Clerk carried out Risk Assessment.

The Acting Clerk reported that the contractor was due on site on Monday, to carry out the annual service and the repairs. A Risk Assessment would be carried out after the service.

Members noted this information

Mr Watkins reported that parking is currently a problem in Cripplegate Lane and Stakers Lane as the overflow car park is closed, with vehicles obstructing pavements. The Acting Clerk said that she has reported this to the District Council, and the car park is closed as it is too wet.

As part of the overflow car park has a hard surface, the Acting Clerk was asked to enquire why half the car park could not be opened, with the grassed area roped off, as this would assist in alleviating the car parking issues.

There were apologies from Mr Cole, Mrs Flores-Moore and Mrs Vickers.

Members noted these apologies.

FG03/04/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Acting 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.

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

FG04/04/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that Councillor Geoff Cole was still in hospital, following complications after a recent operation. The Acting Clerk has spoken to him several times, and he wishes to be included in email correspondence.

The Chairman advised that the new list of meeting dates was in their post; changes to these having been agreed at last week's Full Council meeting. Finance and General Purposes meeting dates had been moved on by one week, so as not to have meetings on two consecutive nights.

The Chairman reported that the Clerk was still on sick leave with no date agreed for her return to work.

FG05/04/16 CORRESPONDENCE

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

Members NOTED the correspondence received.

FG06/04/16 MINUTES

The Acting Clerk reported that a member of the public had queried the Minutes of the meeting on 9th March, in that it stated that he had said that he lives 500 yards away from the Leisure Centre, when in fact he only lives 80 yards away. The Acting Clerk advised that she had checked her notes for the meeting, and the resident had said that he lives 500 yards away. A member of staff present at the meeting in the public gallery also recalls this statement.

It was agreed that the Minutes should not be amended.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2016 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting, including the

Confidential Minute, with no amendments.

FG07/04/16 PRESENTATION FROM CLARE MANGAN, HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

The Chairman welcomed Ms Mangan to the meeting, who was accompanied by Lynda Spain.

Ms Mangan thanked the Council for inviting her; she advised that she had been in post since 1st December, and that her first priority was to address the District Council's Economic Strategy. The existing Strategy is about three years old, and does not easily translate into specific projects. Ms Mangan is trying to identify projects, with the assistance of parishes and other partners.

The District Council is trying to attract new businesses to the area, those which offer high paid posts. There is to be new business park as part of the North Horsham proposals, and the County Council has bought the old Novartis site as a new science park, with some residential attached.

The people who live in the District earn high wages, but those who work in the District have relatively low wages, which would seem to imply that many of those who live in the District work outside it, such as in London etc.

There is a general shortage of employment land, which is not helped by the fact that employment use can change to residential use without planning permission. There are however, a lot of businesses which work from home.

Ms Mangan said that she had noted the results from business section the Southwater Parish Survey, carried out as part of its Neighbourhood Plan process, which would seem to indicate a need for small start up business units.

The need for employers to be to recruit staff with suitable skills and education also needs to be taken in to account.

Mr Watkins said that those with low wages need low cost housing, yet house prices are high in the District. The current housing structure does not encourage people to live and work here.

Ms Mangan said that there was the possibility of shared ownership, but this was still quite expensive. She agreed that more rented accommodation needed to be provided.

Mr Watkins said that if rented housing is provided by a developer, if these are not taken up within a period of time then the accommodation can revert to market housing, and be lost to the rental market. Ms Mangan agreed, saying that strict conditions need to be included in any new development proposals.

Mr Watkins said that this does mean that low cost staff are not available to local businesses. Ms Mangan agreed, saying that key worker housing worked well in the past, and this needs to be readdressed.

Mr Watkins suggested that start up businesses could apply for rate relief. Ms Mangan said that rates cannot be set locally, and such businesses would need to apply for rate relief on an individual basis.

Mr Diamond asked if the Economic Strategy was a new project. Ms Mangan said that it was agreed three years ago, but now needs to have physical projects attached, such as developing a site for start up units.

Mr Greening arrived at 7.45pm.

Mr Diamond asked when the Strategy was to be reviewed. Ms Mangan said that it was for 10 years, but is being reviewed annually.

Mr Diamond asked if the District Council had the staffing resources to carry out the work required on the Strategy. He asked how the team were engaging with others. Ms Mangan said that there was team of seven, but the Economic Strategy was for the District Council as a whole to progress. Engagement was taking place with partners such as parish councils. The District Council had recently carried out a business survey to identify areas of concern and key issues. Around 1000 had been sent out and around 164 had been received back, which was considered to be a good response.

Mr Diamond asked what efforts were being made to address the needs of young people. Ms Mangan said that Leigh Chambers, Economic Development Officer, worked in her team, and he worked with young people. For example, he arranged schools and colleges to meet with local businesses last December to exchange ideas, and this had worked very well.

Mr Diamond asked what efforts were being made to start up chambers of commerce in the District. Ms Mangan said that the District Council assisted where it could. The Business Engagement Strategy has not been that effective in the past, but it is hoped to improve this. It is apparent that businesses are seeking training in social media, website administration etc.

Mr Whitear asked what was being done to encourage young businesses and larger national businesses. The RSA has downsized, and Novartis has left the District, both major employers. Ms Mangan replied that there is to be a new business park as part of the North Horsham development proposals, but agreed that it is a challenge to encourage new businesses, rather than relocating existing businesses from the town centre to the new park, as this would lead to empty office space in the town. However, there are lots of opportunities coming through Neighbourhood Plans.

Mr Whitear suggested that if the second runway should come to Gatwick, the economic dynamics of the area would change. Ms Mangan said it would make the area more attractive, as it would generate improvements to rail and road infrastructure.

Mr Watkins noted that Ms Mangan saw a second runway as having a positive impact on the area. She replied that it was in economic terms. Employment land around Gatwick is limited, so companies would be looking elsewhere.

There being no further questions, Mr Buckley thanked Ms Mangan and Ms Spain for attending the meeting.

Ms Mangan and Ms Spain left the meeting.

FG08/04/16 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

Members NOTED and APPROVED the information provided in that this was a true and correct position of the Council's financial affairs as at 6th April 2016

Tender to supply new external window, door and curtain walling at Southwater Leisure Centre

Responses to the tender were required to be submitted by 31st March, which is why the item is on this agenda.

However, none have been received.

These quotations were required in order to submit a claim for Section 106 monies.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the tenders would be resubmitted, with the assistance of Philip Starling.

Tree Works

Works are required on an area of land adjacent to The Wickens in Fairbank Rd, which is in the ownership of the Parish Council. Trees are starting to lean, so it is proposed that all shrubs are cleared to ground level, one leaning tree is to be removed, and other leaning trees are to have canopies lifted to 5 metres.

Quotes have been sought, but only two responses have been received, one for £220 + VAT from Countrywide and one for £480.00 +VAT from George Potbury.

It was RESOLVED that the quotation of £220 + VAT from Countrywide would be accepted and an order issued.

White Render at Beeson House

Discussions have been ongoing for some months with Horsham District Council in relation to the painting and anti-fungal treating of the white render on the outside of Beeson House. This is now stained an unsightly.

Last October, the Parish Council agreed a sum of £4500 as its share of the costs, this in turn to be divided amongst Beeson House tenants under the service charge, with work to take place in the Spring of 2016.

However, the quotation has now been received by the District Council and this is £7076.45, and the District Council is asking the Parish Council to consider this revised figure.

The Acting Clerk was asked to ascertain the following:

- **May we have sight of the original quote, and the reasons why the new quote has increased**
- **The Parish Council agreed to pay a proportion of the total amount, why is it now being asked to pay the full amount**
- **What consideration has been given to the deterioration of the render whilst lease negotiations were taking place, when the District Council did not address the issues with the render for some years.**
- **Can a copy be supplied of the maintenance schedule for the outside of the building.**

Mr Watkins noted that the cherry-picker used to treat the render at Southwater Surgery had left deep ruts in the grass around the War Memorial.

The Acting Clerk is to ask the District Council to effect repairs to the grass in this area.

Southwater Skate Park

The Acting Clerk wished to clarify the costs agreed at last week's Full Council meeting in relation to repairs to the Skate Park.

A sum of £725 was agreed to repair the damage to the side panelling at the Skate Park, when in fact this sum was to cover both the repairs and the annual service.

Councillors NOTED this clarification and RESOLVED to agree the sum of £725 for service and the repairs, these to be carried out by Raddi Ramps, the expert contractor.

The Acting Clerk advised that the contractor is due on site on Monday, and has been instructed to contact Mr Watkins as requested.

Funfair

Southwater Sports Club has indicated its agreement in principle for Shayler's Fun Fair to be sited on land at Church Lane which it now leases from Berkeley Homes in July 2016.

However, prior to this going to its Committee meeting on 19th April, it wished to clarify who will receive the fee from Mr Shayler for the use of the land. The Parish Council has agreed with Berkeleys that it will be responsible for checking insurance and carrying out risk assessments etc., although this could be passed to the Sports Club.

Mr Shayler has not yet confirmed that he is willing to go to Church Lane, and no fee has been agreed, although in previous years this has been £500.

It was RESOLVED that should the Sports Club be willing to manage the event, checking insurance and carrying out risk assessments, then it should be entitled to all of any fee agreed. Should it require the Parish Council to manage the event, then the Council will accept half any fee agreed.

End of Year

The Chairman confirmed that preparation is under way for closing the year, which he will be supervising, in the absence of the Clerk.

FG09/04/16 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Acting Clerk presented a payment schedules to 6th April for approval in the sum of £16747.77.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedules dated 6th April 2016 be APPROVED in the sum of £16747.77.

FG10/04/16 COMMUNITY GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Acting Clerk asked Councillors to consider the following grant application, the paperwork for which having been previously circulated:

Age UK - £250

This grant is to assist with the funding of the Information and Advice Service. Age UK Jo Prodger and Julie Longman were present at the meeting.

Ms Prodger advised that Age UK Horsham is an independent charity, although it is affiliated to the national charity Age UK for marketing purposes. It deals with persons over the age of 50, who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged. Most of the services are free, such as home visits for companionship to prevent isolation. It is currently assisting two people in Southwater for this purpose.

It also offers an information service to assist people to find e.g. gardening or cleaning assistance; it is helping twelve people in Southwater currently.

Other services offered include a Home from Hospital service, which is supplied by village agents. These act as a “friendly face” in the village. Age UK Horsham run day clubs and dementia clubs locally; two members of the Monday Club which takes place in Horsham come from Southwater. They are hoping to open a similar club in Southwater.

Ms Longman said that the work of the information and advice service is to help people understand benefit entitlements and allowances, and are currently assisting 29 people from Southwater. Help is given in completing forms etc. Ms Longman gave an example of a case study of a Southwater couple, where the wife acts as carer for the husband. Such was their financial situation that they had to choose whether to put the heating on, have hot water or to eat. As the obvious choice was to eat, they had to sit wrapped in blankets and sleeping bags etc to keep warm. Age UK assisted in identifying that both were eligible for allowances, and now they are able to pay the bill and have a little spare.

Mr Watkins said that the Council wanted to meet with representatives from the charity as there had been recent reports in the press about the national charity advising on insurance and power suppliers, with a suggestion that the cheapest option was not that offered. He wanted the reassurance that any grant given was to be ringfenced for local needs, especially those in Southwater.

Ms Longman assured the Council that any money raised within the District remained in the District. They cannot comment on the allegations in the press, but Age UK Horsham is a local independent charity and is only affiliated to the national charity with it acting as an umbrella organisation.

Mr Watkins said that he is the Parish Council representative for Age UK, yet has never been contacted. He was a trustee of the charity where he used to live, and in that area, the charity regularly met with parish representatives. Many councils had grants unallocated at the end of the financial year, and were happy to give the balance to Age UK. He asked why this was not occurring in the Horsham District.

Ms Prodger said that she and Ms Longman were fairly new at the charity, but she would make enquiries as to why this is not happening in Horsham.

Mr Diamond thanked the ladies for all the good work that Age UK Horsham does in the area, as it gave people back their dignity. The Parish Council operates a Friday Lunch club for the over 50s, and perhaps the possibility of vouchers being given for free meals could be explored, to assist such couples as had been highlighted in the case study.

Ms Prodger will email the details of the local coordinator so that this can be explored further.

Mr Greening asked if the 29 people who were helped by the outreach programme was the total for 2015. Ms Prodger said that these people were being assisted on an ongoing basis.

Mr Watkins asked the ladies to update the Council in six months time as to where the grant money had been allocated. They agreed.

The Committee then discussed the application for a grant for £250, and in the light of the presentation, agreed to increase this amount to £350.

It was RESOLVED that a grant of £350 would be awarded to Age UK Horsham.

Ms Prodger and Ms Longman thanked the Council and left the meeting.

FG11/04/16 POLICE MATTERS

The Acting Clerk sought clarification as to what the Committee expected in the way of reporting local crime figures.

Mr Diamond advised that as the local police no longer supplied such information, the Acting Clerk is to go on Sussex Police website to ascertain local figures.

The Acting Clerk apologised for her omission, and will ensure that she prepares a report for future meetings.

As the meeting had been disturbed by noisy motor bikes circling in Lintot Square, the Acting Clerk was asked to report this to the police.

Southern Water – Water Main Connection

Southern Water has written to advise that it has been asked to provide a water main supply under Section 41 of the Water Industry Act 1991 by linking two existing water mains, both of which run under land in the ownership of the Parish Council.

The area in question is in Blakes Farm Rd; adjacent to where it runs under Southwater St. Southern Water will take photos of the land prior to any work taking place and will reinstate it afterwards.

Southern Water is inviting any comments from the Parish Council as the landowner prior to issuing formal notice.

Mr Watkins suggested that the Acting Clerk forward the email correspondence to Councillor Cole for his advice, as he is aware of the issues in the area.

It was RESOLVED that the Acting Clerk would respond to Southern Water to inform them that the Parish Council would have no objection to the proposals, provided that the land was reinstated afterwards as promised, but will ask for the following information to be provided prior to works taking place:

The Council has no objection in principle to the proposals, but ask the following:

- **for sight of the before and after photographs**
- **It is believed that there is dense vegetation on the land in question, will this be reinstated?**
- **Will local water supplies be affected?**
- **Will the works impact upon the highway?**

She will ask Southern Water to advise her when the work is to take place.

Church Lane Premises

The prospective lessee has agreed to the terms as outlined at March Full Council meeting, and the Council's agent is preparing the Heads of Terms accordingly.

Date of Christmas Festival

The Acting Clerk wished to consult with members as to the date of the 2016 Christmas Festival. Despite it only being April, the Southwater Festival is now so popular that other organisations plan their Christmas events around Southwater, and the office is being asked for a date.

In recent years, the Festival has been on the last Saturday in November, which this year would be 26th November. However, the Acting Clerk would like to suggest 3rd December for this year's event. The contract for the lighting needs to be re-negotiated this year, so the Council is not currently tied in to any existing contracts.

In the ten years that the Festival has been running, it has been held in December for the first five years, and in November for the last five years.

The Acting Clerk advised Councillors that although not present at tonight's meeting; Mrs

Flores-Moore has a strong preference for the November date on the grounds that there is too much going on in December.

Mr Watkins agreed with Mrs Flores-Moore and objected to a December date; the others however, were in favour.

It was RESOLVED that the 2016 Christmas Festival would take place on Saturday, 3rd December provided that the new lights contract could accommodate this date.

Mr Whitear suggested that the Acting Clerk approach the Air Cadets, Sea Cadets and Army Cadets to attend the Festival as marshals etc.

FG13/04/16 PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING**

Mr Buckley announced that due to the nature of the matter to be discussed, the public and press would be excluded for the next item. There were no members of the public present

The next item is minuted under CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

FG14/04/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting will be Wednesday 11th May, this being the week after the Planning Committee.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.