

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 15th February, 2017 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Cllr M.Neale

Councillors: Cllr L.Apted Cllr G.Cole
Cllr K.Diamond Cllr R.Dye
Cllr C.Pearce Cllr C.Vickers
Cllr G.Watkins Cllr N.Whitear

Co-Opted Non-Voting Member Mr.D.Moore* (No Voting Rights)

County: Apologies provided by Cllr B.Watson OBE

District: Apologies provided by Cllr Dr J.Chidlow

Clerk: Mrs.C.Tobin

Press: Not present

Public: 2

FG152/02/17 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 if they had not already done so to the Clerk.

The Chairman advised that the meeting was being recorded. The Chairman indicated that due to an equipment malfunction, the Clerk would be minuting the meeting.

Mr.Robert Piper (Jnr) asked whether it was intended that the pinch point to the south of Southwater Infant Academy was to be removed. The Clerk stated that to her knowledge the County Council did not intend to remove this as it was doing the job for which it was installed.

Mr.Piper then advised the Clerk that there was a settee cushion on the corner of Station Road and Worthing Road. The Clerk indicated that she would report this to Horsham District Council.

FG153/02/17 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs, Flores-Moore, Greening and O'Toole-Quinn.

Members noted these apologies.

FG154/02/17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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 which should assist Members in reaching their decision; this not being overly complicated.

There were no declarations of interests made at this point in the meeting.

FG155/03/17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements.

FG156/03/17 CORRESPONDENCE

The Chairman indicated that there was no list for consideration at this meeting other than previously circulated.

FG157/03/17 MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present having been proposed by Cllr Watkins and seconded by Cllr Apted, that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2017, be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG158/03/17 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Chairman referred Members to the meeting pack for the 8th March, 2017 when contained current income and expenditure information, cash and investment reconciliation, debtors listing and payment schedules.

7.40pm Cllr Ross Dye arrived giving the Chairman his apologies.

The meeting pack dated 8th March 2017 containing the financial information relating to the current financial position of the Council was APPROVED by all present.

The Clerk confirmed that the end of February 17 accounts had been closed and that she had provided updated financial figures to the Council including the Balance Sheet and Income & Expenditure and explained that working capital was extremely low.

Councillors NOTED this information.

Delegated Authority

Due to the low cash balances in the Council's current and instant bank account the Clerk would like delegated authority to transfer if required funds from the Lloyds Bank deposit. The Clerk indicated that the current general fund stood at £36766 with working balance at £6758.

The Committee APPROVED the delegated authority to transfer monies from the Lloyds Deposit account as and when required in order to support the Council's commitments to year end and beginning of April 17.

The Clerk presented to Members payments schedules to 8th March 2017 in the sum of £16,376.73 with the total payments since the last meeting amounting to £50,834.32 which included salary payments.

It was AGREED by all present that the payments schedule dated 8th March 2017 in the sum of £50,834.32 be APPROVED.

FG160/03/17 INTERNAL AUDITOR APPOINTMENT AND TENDER FOR 2017/2020

The Chairman referred to the report provided in the meeting pack.

The Clerk referred Members to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which have been supplied previously to Councillor. Should anyone not have this information the Clerk would resend the information which is readily available on line. The Clerk reminded Members that there was now a new audit body for the sector with the Audit Commission no longer responsible for appointing external auditors.

In the past the Clerk had provided the Council's Annual Review of the Effectiveness of the Council Financial Affairs, but it is clear from the new regulations that such a process should be carried out by a small committee of Members who would provide the end of year report. The Clerk would continue to provide the financial risk assessment but this will be dependent on the report from Members.

It is imperative that the Council tender for the appointment of an Internal Auditor for the existing Internal Auditors will be retiring as of April 2017.

It was proposed by Cllr.Watkins, seconded by Cllr.Diamond and APPROVED by all present*, that Cllr G.Cole be appointed Internal Controller for the Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Watkins, seconded by Cllr Diamond and APPROVED by all present*, that Cllrs Cole and Neale act as the Council's Internal Audit Review Panel producing the necessary annual report in due course for 2017/18.

It was proposed by Cllr Neale, seconded by Cllr Cole and APPROVED by all present* that the Parish Council tender its internal audit position from a list provided by the Surrey & Sussex Association of Local Councils.

FG161/03/17 LEISURE CENTRE MANAGER'S REPORT TO FEBRUARY 2017

The Clerk referred to the Leisure Centre Manager's report to February 2017. The Clerk referred to the second report received from the Leisure Centre Manager providing the Pay-as-You Go Graph as requested by Cllr Flores-Moore.

Cllr Watkins was of the view that as this information had only just been received electronically with not all members having the updated information, then these figures could not be fully discussed. Members instructed the Clerk that in future the Leisure Centre Manager should ensure that all information within his report was accurate and that this be furnished along with the Agenda for the meeting (7 days prior to a meeting).

Questions were raised by Cllr Whitear about the intended brochure to be sent within the

Parish News asking whether the Clerk had seen the intended articles. The Clerk stated that she had not seen this but would request sight of this before it was distributed. The Council had employed a Marketing/PR/Social Media Officer and any such documents should be discussed with her and the Clerk in future. Councillors were of the view that they too would like to see the document even should this mean a delay in sending out the information to the public.

The Clerk reported on a previous matter regarding the rise in the pension contribution contributions at the leisure centre, that the Manager had set the budget for 2016/17 and this increased was reflective against that figure; there were no errors in the input of pension contributions.

The Clerk to obtain a copy of the intended magazine advertising from the Leisure Centre Manager instructing that this not be issued until the Committee had viewed this in April 2017.

Further comments within the report were also questioned in relation to vandalism in that the heading should be changed.

The Clerk to ensure that the vandalism heading be amended.

Mr. Moore stated that it was extremely disconcerting to note the continued downturn in the gym figures and asked whether the Working Party had yet met and perhaps they could look at this issue. Cllr Watkins indicated that the meeting had been held earlier in the week with the Working Party, with a further meeting planned, on Monday 27th March. Mr. Moore asked whether the Leisure Centre Manager could provide a column within the figures for the previous year to provide an indication as to the differences year on year.

The Clerk to ensure that a further column be included within the figures for the previous years figures.

Cllr Diamond asked whether the intention was that all staff whether at the Leisure Centre or employed elsewhere would have targets to meet whether these be through gym memberships, classes or indeed the Council's and Community's Vision for the Future, the Clerk stated that this was the intention going forward these targets would be aligned with the NJC pay grades. The Clerk stated that this was a matter for appraisals.

Councillors NOTED this information.

FG162/03/17 POLICING MATTERS RELATING TO SOUTHWATER PARISH AREA

The Chairman advised that the figures had not changed from those provided the previous month.

Cllr Vickers stated that she was delighted to advise that there would now be a locked gate on the Doctors Surgery in the evenings to avoid further anti social behaviour occurring; this had been a major problem for residents living close by. The Clerk indicated that she believed that the History Group members did when Lintot Square was busy park in this area, it was evident from the conversation that there could be no extension to the closure time being 7pm.

The Clerk would advise the Chairman of the Southwater History Group with the hope that the group could make other arrangements.

Councillors NOTED the information provided.

FG163/03/17 PARISH COUNCIL INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN WEST SUSSEX – SOUTHWATER COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

The Clerk referred to correspondence in relation to the sectors proposed involvement in health and wellbeing in West Sussex and in particular matters emanating from the recent Southwater Community Conference at which a presentation was given by the author of the report.

There are opportunities for the Parish Council to forge links with the Southwater Surgery Patient Participatory Group who would welcome a representative from the Parish Council to its committee. Cllr Flores-Moore indicated at the community conference that she would be delighted to attend on behalf of the Council.

Further to the Community Conference, the Parish Council have been asked whether in order to progress the aspirations for the local area, that a room could be made available for approximately 12 representatives of the 7 local surgeries. The first meeting is proposed to be 21st April from 10am-12.30pm. This proposal would require authorisation of the Committee for the Clerk does not currently have delegated powers to offer such rooms free on an on-going basis. Such use could be used to show a grant in kind in the Council's annual accounts for next year providing further evidence to the community of its lead and participation in the local area.

Cllr Diamond asked whether the Council had received the terms of reference from the Southwater Patient Advisory Group, the Clerk indicated that she was not aware that these may differ from surgery to surgery but would obtain from the Practice Manager the information. Cllr Neale asked whether following the Community Conference the Chairman had formally invited a councillor to join the Southwater Surgery Local Patients Participatory Group. The Clerk stated that she had not had time to pursue this matter but hoped to do so within the next week.

Cllr Neale stated that Cllr Flores-Moore to his mind subject to the terms of reference would be an ideal choice and would be happy to propose this. Cllr Diamond said that whilst he could be mistaken, he thought any representative had to be a patient at the particular practice, and asked the Clerk to check on this with Cllr Flores-Moore. Cllr Diamond stated that he believed that the Clinical Commissioning Group had funding for such meetings if required and perhaps going forward this could be investigated. Cllr Cole said that any booking should not be taken in preference to a paid hire, the Clerk assured the Member that this would not be the case. The Clerk indicated that any such grant of a free hall hire on behalf of the community could be shown in the Council's accounts as a Grant in Kind.

Standing orders were suspended to allow a member of public to speak.

Mr.Piper (Jnr) stated that the Village Surgery had scored highly by the Quality Care Commission out of all of the local surgeries.

Standing orders were reinstated.

It was then proposed by Cllr Diamond that the Council should, subject to the terms of reference provide a room free of charge for a six month period to the Patients Participatory Group for Horsham District, which should be formalised at the end of this period with a report from the group on the progress of the seven practices in taking matters forward for each community. This was then seconded by Cllr Watkins and APPROVED by all present.

It was AGREED that Cllr Pauline Flores-Moore would act as the Council appointed representative on the Southwater Surgery Local Patients Participatory Group, subject to her eligibility and terms of reference.

FG164/03/17 TOWN COUNCIL STATUS

The Clerk referred to the report on the question of Town Council status as contained in the Members Meeting Pack.

Cllr Watkins indicated that he along with Cllr Flores-Moore had asked for this to go on the agenda for discussion at Committee with the view to consulting the general public of Southwater on the matter.

The Clerk indicated that apart from changing letterheads etc., the main change would be that the Chairman and Vice Chairman would become a Mayor and Deputy Mayor but that it would increase the status of the parished area in terms of representation at Government etc. The Clerk indicated that in general terms any community over 5000 was generally considered a small town, Southwater at the present time has between 11,500 and 12,000 residents with a huge increase to come. It may be that whilst the community would wish and could retain its community feel, that it may also consider that the rise in prestige beneficial.

Cllr Vickers stated that she thought there would be a major cost to the council in terms of funding from the District Council in becoming a Town Council. Cllr Pearce, asked why when people seemed quite happy with the status quo?

Cllr Whitear agreed by Cllr Watkins in that the community was large and would only grow and if the Council could ensure a greater voice in becoming a Town Council this should be considered.

Cllr Dye said that in his experience most Town Council's if not political became so following a change in status. The Clerk stated that she did not believe that this to be the case and was not aware of any loss of revenue as stated.

Cllr Watkins, said that ultimately there would be a consultation for the Council to consider, but residents could always say no but should be allowed to hear any pro's and con's; his opinion was that it would be desirable going into the future for the community to have a greater profile.

RESOLVED that the Council invite the County Secretary of the Association of Local Councils to address its meeting in March 2017 in order to discuss the advantages and possible disadvantages of becoming a Town Council.

Butterfly Project

The Clerk advised Members that an approach had been received from this local charity asking whether the Council would like members of their group to carry out some voluntary litter picking in Southwater; the Group has built up a close relationship with Southwater over the years having attended annually the Christmas event etc. The Clerk indicated that there would be risk assessments carried out and that all voluntary activities would be supervised by trained and experienced staff. There was also the opportunity to allow the group to plant the old railway bridge embankment with bulbs as seasons dictated.

Members had no objection to this proposal subject to third party insurance for the activity being in place, risk assessments and that the group be accompanied by a Southwater Litter Warden. The members of the Group would not work close to a highway. Cllr Neale asked the Clerk to discuss the proposal with the Council's team.

Members APPROVED the use of volunteers from the Butterfly Project, subject to Third Party Insurance being in place, risk assessments and that the group by accompanied by a Parish Council Litter Warden.

Poppy Close Playarea

The Clerk confirmed that she had now received confirmation from the District Council's Parks and Countryside Development Officer that this play area offers very low play value, being poorly located within a highly wooded area which limits natural light.

The Clerk informed members that currently this area was out of order with chained gates. The next step would be for the Committee to consider what if any use the land could have in the future for the equipment and fencing will have to be removed.

Cllr Cole indicated that he had visited the site and as expressed this was not a particularly attractive area being gloomy and dark. Cllr Cole said that whilst the space was not large there was a small wooded area to the rear and perhaps something could be considered by the Council in the future. The Clerk indicated that she would be addressing this issue and reporting back in the new financial year.

Councillors NOTED the comments from the District Council and Clerk.

Leisure Centre PlayArea

Further to recent discussions at both Committee and Full Council regarding this play area in relation to preventing dogs going into the area, the Clerk had held a meeting with a local blacksmith and had obtained a design and cost for the installation of two gates plus the removal of the dizzy discs in the sum of £740+VAT.

A short discussion took place, Cllr Cole indicated that the gate should have a helical spring with a gate closing latch, subject to this he had no further comment.

It was proposed by Cllr Neale, seconded by Cllr Cole and APPROVED by all that subject to the amendments discussed, then the quotation from D.Reynolds & Sons in the sum of £740 + VAT should be accepted for the replacement gates and removal of the dizzy discs.

Land and Building Risk Assessments

The Clerk indicated that she would be carrying out a walk of the Council's land the following Tuesday. There had been reports of individuals encroaching onto Parish council owned land abutting Pond Farm Ghyll north and it was necessary if confirmed on the walk to write to the individual householders concerned. The Clerk would also be looking at the licences given to properties who wished rear gates onto parish land. Mr. Moore also indicated that he would join the Clerk and officers on the tour around the parish owned land and buildings. Councillors indicated that they had the previous year visited sites taking pictures where relevant of any issues. The Clerk stated that to date she had been unable to find the file but that such walks should take place twice annual to reduce any risk to the Council.

Councillors NOTED the information.

Humanist Services

The Council has received an approach from a funeral undertaker in relation to possible hall hires for humanist services.

Following a short conversation members felt that this hall hire was permissible and the Clerk should proceed with the booking.

Councillors NOTED and APPROVED of the intended hire.

FG166/03/17 PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING**

At this point in the meeting the Chairman suspended standing orders to exclude the Members of Public and press from the meeting due to the confidential staff matters to be discussed.

Councillors NOTED and APPROVED matters relating to staff matters.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

FG167/03/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting will be **Wednesday, 12th April 2017.**

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.