

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 13th July 2016 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 Mrs P. Flores-Moore
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: None

FG45/07/16 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 Whitear said that he would like to thank the Clerk and her team for arranging the removal of an abandoned car at Pollards Hill roundabout.

Mr Diamond asked if the Co-Op had permission to put advertising “sleeves” on multiple bollards in the Square. He did not want a precedent set. The Deputy Clerk will report this.

Mr Diamond asked how overgrown pathways on Council land were reported. Mr Buckley said that these should have been noted when Councillors did the land risk assessment in May. Thereafter, the Parish Office relied on individual reports.

Mrs Flores-Moore said that the path behind Castlewood School needed attention; Mr Cole said that the path along the Leisure Centre field did also. Mr Buckley said that these would be put on the schedule and dealt with in due course.

Mr Whitear asked if a post could be put on Facebook to advise people to whom to report overgrown paths.

Mr Neale reported that the footpath at the back of New Rd was similarly overgrown.

Mr Neale reported that the grass was cut today in the village.

Mr Watkins said the temporary lights at Cedar Drive were causing problems with tail backs again, and local traffic is using Cripplegate Lane as a consequence. He had noted incidents of speeding; he asked the Deputy Clerk to report this to the police. The traffic management plan should address other areas of the village. He has witnessed traffic queues backing up to the Hen & Chicken on occasion.

Mr Neale said that had been an accident on the A24 earlier in the week, which had caused additional problems as traffic chose to come through the village.

Mr Watkins said that he was trying to arrange a meeting with Berkeleys, through the Deputy Clerk.

Mr Cole asked about the pedestrian lights at Cedar Drive; the Deputy Clerk said she believed they were temporary.

She reminded Councillors that the Cedar Drive lights were to be removed during the first week in July, to be reinstated at a later date. However, the two requirements had now been merged, and these lights should be removed at the end of August.

Standing Orders were not raised, there being no members of the public present.

FG46/07/16 APOLOGIES

There were apologies from Mrs Vickers

Members noted these apologies.

FG47/07/16 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 which should assist Members in reaching their decision; this not being overly complicated.

FG48/07/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr Buckley had no announcements

FG49/07/16 CORRESPONDENCE

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

Grass cutting

The Parish Council continues to receive complaints about the grass cutting carried out by WSCC. According to the WSCC website, the last cut was 25th May, so the next cut should be 6 weeks later, which is on or around 6th July. The schedule was revised, to be 30th June, but as of 12th July, it had still not been cut. However, the mowers were noted in the village today.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Deputy Clerk would write to Brad Watson, County Councillor, asking that the Parish Council be kept informed of changes in cutting dates, as the WSCC website varied from day to day.

It was noted that the contractors did cut the end of Little Bridge Close this time, which was omitted before, leading to grass being several feet high.

FG50/07/16 MINUTES

Finance & General Purposes Committee, Thursday, 16th June 2016

It was **RESOLVED** by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2016 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting, including the Confidential Minute

FG51/07/16 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 13th July 2016

Mrs Flores-Moore noted that the Debtors' list was in the 30/60/90 days format that she preferred, and thanked the parish office for this.

Bank Balances

This Committee agreed to place £50,000 into the Virgin Money account to replace what was removed at the end of last year.

However, there is £77,798.48 in the account today, so the Deputy Clerk asked if the Committee wanted to reduce the transfer.

It was **RESOLVED** that the sum of **£25,000** would be transferred; this account to be reviewed monthly to see if additional sums can be transferred.

The Nat West Account is to be closed, so the balance of £297.16 can be removed via a cheque, which is ready to be signed tonight.

Street Light Repair

The Deputy Clerk advised that a street light in Andrews Lane was in need of repair at a cost of £190.62 + VAT

Members **AGREED** to place the order.

New Projection Screen

A new projection screen is required as the return mechanism is not working.

Two quotes have been received:

On-AV at a cost of £328.00 or £423.00 for a slow retraction screen. This sum includes delivery and fitting.

On line – a Sapphire retractable screen at cost of £194 with free delivery. The cost of fitting is not yet known, and brackets would need to be purchased.

It was RESOLVED that an order would be placed for the slow retraction screen at a cost of £423.00 + VAT to include delivery and installation.

The Deputy Clerk was asked to ascertain whether the old screen can be used elsewhere, such as in the Leisure Centre meeting room.

Replacement Trees

It was agreed to purchase three field maples to replace trees that have died on Nutham Lane green. Quotes have been sourced and the Deputy Clerk referred to a table issued in the Meeting Pack, as the options were varied due to size and availability of stock.

The Deputy Clerk reminded Councillors that a resident in Nutham Lane had agreed to water the trees to ensure their survival. A member of staff lived in the vicinity and had agreed that the trees could be delivered to her house, for ease of ongoing transportation.

After some discussion, it was RESOLVED that three 6ft field maples would be purchased from Ewburrow Nurseries, at a total cost including delivery of £145, these to be delivered in September.

New window in community room

The installation of this window has been delayed for a variety of reasons. The tender was awarded to Bramber Construction at a cost of £9659 + VAT, agreed in October 2015. Due to the delay in placing an order, Bramber will need to revise their quote; in addition, they are not available to commence work until October 2016. The contractor with the second best price was also contacted, Ashbridge Builders, who have also indicated that they will need to increase their prices, and that they were also very busy. Third and fourth placed contractors were £4000 to £5000 more expensive.

The Deputy Clerk asked if councillors wished her to carry out full tenders again, or just to approach the previous top two contractors

It was RESOLVED that the Deputy Clerk would retender for the work with the top three contractors.

Installation of Skate Park bin

The new double size bin had now arrived, and a quote of £298 has been received for its installation plus £60 for removal of old bin

Members AGREED to place the order.

Provision of a Council vehicle

In discussions relating to the Skate Park bin, the Deputy Clerk had responded to queries as to why council staff could not install this, as they had with the new Leisure Centre car park bin. She advised that the bin was too big to go in a member of staff's private car, and there were issues transporting the tools and equipment necessary for installation, e.g. cement.

The Council did consider leasing a vehicle such as a small flat bed truck in the past, but

this had not been progressed due to cost. It may be something that could be considered again during budget discussions.

Members agreed that this was a matter that could be discussed, and that other options should be investigated, such as having a sponsored vehicle.

FG52/07/16 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Deputy Clerk presented a payment schedules to 13th July 2016 for approval in the sum of £59,169.42.

Mr Whitear had noted in the Leisure Centre Sub-Management Committee that the leasing charge for the Gym equipment had not seemed to be correct at £91.03. The Deputy Clerk had thought that this should be in the region of £1500 and will clarify the discrepancy.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedules dated 13th July 2016 be APPROVED in the sum of £59,169.42, with the Deputy Clerk reporting to Full Council the reasons behind the leasing cost apparent discrepancy.

FG53/07/16 POLICE MATTERS

The Deputy Clerk reported that the latest figures available from Sussex Police website was in May 2016, when 39 crimes – the same as April 2016 - were reported in Southwater, these being:

Anti Social behaviour	14
Burglary	4
Violence & Sexual Offences	4
Theft	6
Drugs	0
Criminal Damage	7
Vehicle crime	0
Public Order Offence	1
Shoplifting	2
Other	1

Members noted this information.

FG54/07/16 COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND**

Electronic Notice Board

The Parish Council did have such a board in the old industrial estate, on the Youth Club building by the shops. The District Council put this into storage whilst Lintot Square was being built; however it was subsequently lost. It was agreed that the board would be replaced by the District Council and planning permission to erect it was sought and permitted.

The board has now been installed, but the Parish Council is having difficulties connecting

to it due to IT issues.

There have been some complaints about the brightness of the board, but it is understood that it can be dimmed at night.

It was AGREED that the noticeboard be turned off at night, if possible, to avoid both light pollution and running costs.

The Deputy Clerk advised that the Council would need to agree a policy to decide the type of information it wished to put on the board, and what outside agencies, if any, would be allowed to submit information.

Church Lane Premises

The new sub-lease is nearing agreement.

Members noted this information

Beeson House offices

The new sub-lease is nearing agreement.

Members noted this information

Application to manage land adjacent to the Children and Family Centre

At the last meeting, Mr Rehman-Furs from the Downslink Permaculture Initiative gave a presentation as to his proposals to manage this area of land for the benefit of the community.

Upon investigation, the land is registered to West Sussex County Council. It forms part of the whole title of the Infant Academy; however, the Academy sub-lets the land on which the school stands from WSCC, not this area in question.

It was RESOLVED that the Deputy Clerk would write to Mr Rehman-Furs to advise him of the land ownership. In addition, she would write to the Infant Academy to seek their support for the project.

Locking of Gates at Leisure Centre Fairbank Rd car park

Locking of the barrier at the rear car park overnight commenced on 4th July. Last Sunday, it was not opened until 9.30am instead of 9am, which led to a complaint from a person whose car had been locked in overnight.

There are now complaints that motorbikes are using the car park at night; they can gain access through the passenger walkway.

Mr Cole said that that motorbikes and mopeds crossed the car park during the day too.

Mrs Flores-Moore said that cyclists ignored the “No Cycling” signage in the car park and by the bridge; she had almost been hit recently. She said that this should be enforced.

The Deputy Clerk said that it was up to the Council to enforce the “No Cycling” as it was

on Council land.

Trees on Parish Council Land

At the last meeting the ongoing issue with roots from trees on Parish Council land causing damage to paving at a property in Charlock Way was discussed, and the Committee resolved that notwithstanding the advice of a tree consultant it would not accept liability for the encroachment of tree roots from its land, as in this case, no damage had been made to the house, only to garden features.

This information has been relayed to the householder, who has said that he intends to take further legal advice on the matter with a view to taking the Council to court.

Members noted this information.

In the meantime, as agreed, the Deputy Clerk is investigating the cost implications and otherwise of a Tree Management Plan.

FG55/07/16 PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING**

Staff vacancies

The Deputy Clerk advised that Litter Warden David Hutchings has given one month's notice for personal reasons. This vacancy will be advertised.

There is also an ongoing vacancy for an additional play scheme assistant which will be re-advertised.

HR Advice

The Council has previously agreed to obtain HR advice from Action in Rural Sussex, via Georgina Nienstaedt. However, Mrs Nienstaedt has now left AiRS and the Council will only have access to generic advice. AiRS had agreed that Mrs Nienstaedt could continue to give advice on an ad hoc basis during July to assist with ongoing issues.

During a staffing issue earlier in the year, Mrs Nienstaedt was unable to assist with an investigation as she had given advice on the matter when it was ongoing so was unable to be independent. The Deputy Clerk sought guidance from SSALC who recommended HR Services Partnership, who are based in Horsham. She found that this company very proficient in dealing with the matter, which was resolved without further action being taken.

The Council is now in need of HR advice as there are matters that need addressing. Mrs Nienstaedt was approached to assist, but was unable to do so. With the consent of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council, the Deputy Clerk has again approached HR Service Partnership. However, acting on advice from SSALC, this Committee needs to formally authorise appointment of this consultant.

The Deputy Clerk advised councillors that two directors of HR Partnership, a married couple, are related by marriage to Janine Taylor, who is an employee of the Parish Council. This relationship has been recognised and acknowledged by both parties, and by SSALC and it is not considered to be a conflict of interest.

HR Services Partnership charge £65 per hour for SSALC members, which is booked in multiple of five hours.

The Deputy Clerk drew councillors' attention to the next item for discussion which is to be to agree an HR Budget, which would be taken in confidential session.

Mr Watkins asked how it was known that this company offered competitive terms. Mr Buckley said that the Sussex Association of Local Councils advertise HR Services Partnership as its preferred supplier; the company was used initially on SALC's advice.

Mr Watkins asked how many HR companies SALC had reviewed before opting for HR Services Partnership. Mr Buckley said that he did not know, but as the Council is a member of SALC, it should take its advice.

Mr Watkins asked if a preferential rate could be negotiated as the Council was a member of SALC. Mr Buckley said that a reduced rate was offered to SALC members; the £65 an hour reflects this.

As the Committee was not unanimous on this matter, the proposal was taken to the vote. All present were in favour, with the exception of Mr Watkins, who abstained. The motion was carried.

It was RESOLVED that HR Services Partnership would be appointed as HR Consultant to deal with ongoing staffing issue, with an initial commitment of 10 hours at a cost of £650 + VAT.

Mrs Flores-Moore said that she was no longer willing to minute internal staff meetings, involving disciplinary or grievance issues, as this takes a lot of her personal time.

Members noted this.

Mr Watkins said that perhaps such meetings could be taped, and a copy of the tape given to all parties.

The next item is minuted under CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

FG56/07/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting will be Wednesday, 14th September 2016, this being the week after the Planning Committee.

There are no Council meetings in August.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.