

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 8th January 2014 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Mr P. Buckley

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr G. Cole
Mrs.P.Flores-Moore Mrs.J.Hutchings
Mr.D.Nagy Mr M. Neale
Mr.G.Watkins Mrs.J.Williamson**

County: Apologies provided by Cllr B. Watson OBE

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

Clerk: Mrs C.Tobin

Press: Not present

Public: None

FG135/01/14 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, members of the public not being permitted to tape or film meetings of the Council.

Mrs.Flores-Moore questioned whether the skatepark was now reopened. The Clerk stated that it was and she had thought a news release had been made, but would check and ensure that the message was put out.

Mrs.Flores-Moore questioned whether or not progress was being made in relation to the replacement electronic sign. The Clerk stated that agreement by the District Council had been reached it was a matter of sourcing something similar with designs having now changed.

Mrs.Flores-Moore said that she would like to confirm that there had been no flooding by the bridge in Blakes Farm Road during the recent bad weather and she would like to thank the Clerk who was instrumental in rectifying the original cause. The Clerk thanked Mrs.Flores-Moore for her kind comments.

FG136/01/14 APOLOGIES

There were apologies received and noted from Dr.Cash, Mrs.Vickers

Members noted this.

FG137/01/14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations at this point in the meeting.

FG138/01/14 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman said that he would like to take this opportunity of wishing everyone present a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

FG139/01/14 CORRESPONDENCE

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

Mr.Nagy informed Members that he had been invited to the Southwater Action Team Special Meeting however he had informed the Group that whilst he would be attending he would only be doing so as an observer for the Parish Council.

Mr.Watkins confirmed that he too had received an invitation but that he had given his apologies.

Southwater Life

The Clerk indicated that there were two excellent articles in the Southwater Life for January 2014 on in relation to the Christmas event and the other the Butterfly Project.

Mrs.Flores-Moore asked the Clerk whether she had submitted the news release to the County Times as she was somewhat disappointed that they had not covered the Christmas event and news release. The Clerk stated that she had released this to all media contacts and would speak to the relevant department within the County Times to see why this was not covered, Southwater being a major community within the District.

SALC

The County Association are interested in whether or not the Parish Council wishes to be involved in presenting at the South of England Show in Ardingly on 5th-7th June 2014. Southwater Parish Council is considered one of the progressive parishes within Sussex and has many projects which could be shown to the general public as to what can be achieved by the sector.

Mr.Nagy suggested that the Butterfly Project carried out in conjunction with the local schools, Millennium Woodland and Skate Park project were just a number of projects which could be highlighted. The Clerk stated there were also the Library and Operation Watershed Projects carried out through

devolution of monies and services with principle authorities. A number of members stated that if required they could ensure that they would be available. The actual format stated the Clerk would be suggested by the County Association.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Council be nominated to attend the South of England Show highlighting projects both underway and completed through the devolution with other principal authorities.

New Homes Bonus

The Clerk confirmed that as per instructions she had written to the Finance Director at Horsham District Council regarding the above subject and indeed the Local Council settlement figures which has seen a drop in the resource provided to the parish council.

Local Audit and Accountability Bill 2013/14

The Clerk indicated that she was highlighting this Bill currently with Parliament due to the implications for the parish council in terms of the transparency provisions, audit regulations and other matters such as advertising which may come forth.

With regard to the possible filming and taping of local council meetings, Mrs.Flores-Moore suggested that this may put people off from volunteering to be a councillor and perhaps less reluctant to put their views forward. The Clerk conceded that the proposals on transparency may well have a detrimental affect on the elections for the sector in 2015.

Mr.David Nagy, said that the Council already had CCTV cameras in operation and these were subject to regulation. The Clerk stated that it was thought that whilst the new Bill will allow such actions, these will be governed by regulation and suggested that whilst the Council had budgeted to allow for this in the next years budget, that the Council await the legislation and regulation before implementing any policy. The Clerk stated that she would be asking the District Council for a copy of their policy on the matter at the appropriate juncture, in order that the Parish Policy could be evaluated.

The Clerk to keep the Council informed as to any matters within the Bill.

WSCC Emergency Highways Order

This was received and related to the embankment in the Worthing Road between the Boars Head public house and the railway line having collapsed due to weather conditions.

Councillors NOTED the information.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th December, 2013 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Clerk provided Members with information on the current financial position of the Council to 8th January 2014, including Income and Expenditure and Bank Balances to the end of November 2013. The Clerk informed Members that the figures are correct as of the end of November with reconciliation for December still on-going.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the financial information provided was a true and correct position of the Council as at 8th January 2014 and should be APPROVED.

EU VAT Rules for the Public Sector

The Clerk advised Members that the Local Authority sector (parish and town councils) de-minis levels were to be examined by the EU. Potentially this could mean that where the local authority has a power and given a de-minimis exempt this may change. The amount is £7,500. At the present time the building most at risk from such changes would be the Leisure Centre which is currently not a VAT registered building. If changes it may be that the Council will have reconsider registration, for it would not be able to claim back all the VAT on this operation.

Members NOTED the information provided.

Butterfly Project

Following a request from Dr.Cash, the Clerk reported that having analysed all the costs, a total of £2898.01 had been spent from the ring-fenced funds, leaving a balance of £4772.83.

The Clerk would like to have further instructions from the Committee on this sum. Mrs.Flores-Moore enquired as to why Dr.Cash had requested the information; the Clerk indicated that she was not privy to this only reacting to the request and feedback.

Mr.Buckley stated that whilst the butterflies looked good, he would like to suggest that the bridge be populated more with another schools competition in 2014 if not butterflies, caterpillars or something similar. Mrs.Hutchings suggested perhaps bees with another mentioning dragon flies.

It was APPROVED by all present that the monies be retained within the existing ring-fenced fund and that the Clerk be delegated authority to take forward and incur expenditure for a yearly schools competition

based on that of the butterflies but using other creatures as model examples.

Direct Information Service – NALC

The Clerk advised Members that many of the larger council's subscribe to this Direct Information Service available from NALC. The cost of this publication being 3 years at £291.60 (£81 + VAT) each year for an electronic version or £310.50 (£103.50 + VAT) each year. Mr.Cole asked what type of information with Mrs.Williamson asking whether this was similar to the magazine? The Clerk responded that the information was more in relation to forthcoming Parliamentary Bills and Regulations whereas the magazine were general articles from within the sector. Mr.Nagy stated that in his view the Council should subscribe as this worked out at less than a pound a day, Mr.Buckley agreed.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Council should subscribe to this periodical in order that the Council can take advantage of the information due to the increased volume of new legislation coming forward.

Parish Council's Advertising Policy

The Clerk informed Members that following discussions with other colleagues and the Council's internal policy, the policy had been revised as it would not have been appropriate to have charged administration costs. The Policy would now be issued on the website etc.

The Committee NOTED AND APPROVED the Clerk's action.

WSCC Datasets

The Clerk confirmed that having requested a variety of data sets some 35 are now being made available to the parish council for use in the Neighbourhood Plan process. These can be provided on a County Basis and then uploaded by the mapping provider onto the parish council mapping system. Whilst the company are more than happy to assimilate just the Southwater information on a few of the data sets free of charge, they cannot incur the costs for 35, and have proposed a cost of £200 to provide for this service.

Mr.Cole said that it was imperative that for the future and in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan that the Council acquired such databases.

It was APPROVED by all present that the Committee approve the expenditure of £200 to Pear Mapping System to provide the Southwater information from West Sussex County Council datasets.

The Clerk presented a payment schedule to 8th January 2014 in the sum of £14,714.57.

Questions were raised in relation to the payment for the skatepark repairs. The Clerk stated that she would like to thank both her deputy, Jenny Nagy and Cllrs Cole and Watkins for their assistance in bringing this repair project to a conclusion. Further discussion was then had in relation to ensuring that the message be put out in the community that should further vandalism occur that the Council will close the skatepark and not carry out further repairs. General repairs were a completely different matter.

The Clerk to ensure that a news release be issued stating that the Skate Park whilst now fully operational, would be closed should further vandalism occur which are over and above normal wear and tear to be expected.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedule dated 4th December, 2013 be approved in the sum of £14714.57.

The Clerk provided Members with an update position with regards to the crime figures for Southwater. The figures for November 2012 being a total of 25 compared with November 2013 of 21. The breakdown being burglary 2, criminal damage 3, drug offences 2 fraud and forgery 4, theft and handling 6 and violent crime 5.

Mr.Nagy said that it was interesting to note that since the Crime Commissioners meeting with the Parish Council, PCSO Cecil had in the main been more visible along with other colleagues. Whilst Members were pleased with the improvement, felt that they should keep a continual eye on the provision for Southwater.

Members noted the information provided by the Clerk.

The Clerk reported back on the meeting and recommendations which had taken place earlier that evening at 7pm.

The Sub-Committee had recommended the appointment of a Surveyor to draw up plans and schedule of works in relation to the refurbishment of the showers within the Leisure Centre. The Council are aware of funding being available upon completion of development within the village.

It was APPROVED by all concerned that the Council appoint a Surveyor to draw up plans and a schedule of works in order that when

the development gain be made available this project to refurbish the showers within the Centre be implemented.

FG146/01/14

COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND

Leisure Centre (Storage Container)

The Clerk referred to the Leisure Centre Manager's report in relation to the additional storage container required at the Leisure Centre, the cost of which including other items such as shelving etc would be £4730.60 + VAT, with funding available for the supply.

Members happy that funding was in place, felt that there were a number of elements they would like to have considered these being:-

- that the container be insulated and vented in relation to reduce condensation;
- that the floor surface be painted with non slip paint;
- that the container have lighting (due to the fact that these can be extremely dark inside and therefore a requirement under health and safety)

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk be delegated authority to take forward the project and incur expenditure based on the budget within the Leisure Centre Manager's report in conjunction with the Leisure Centre Manager.

Environmental Group

Mr.Buckley declared a personal interest in this matter and took no part in the discussion. The Clerk also declared a personal interest being a member of the group also, but was allowed to read the statement in her capacity as Clerk to the Meeting.

The Clerk stated that this group of volunteers were as previously reported using equipment which belonged to The Green Gym who were assisting the group in starting up their work on Council owned land. As such if the group are to continue they will require as council volunteers equipment and first aid training in relation to the works they will undertake. The Clerk would like authority to purchase from the Public Open Space Ring-fenced account tools/equipment and organise the relevant members of the group who can undertake first aid training. The Clerk confirmed that a listing of volunteers had been received and this had been advised to the Council's insurers; members would recall the decision to uplift the number of hours covered for volunteers.

Members felt that it was appropriate for the Council to purchase the equipment list provided by the Green Gym and asked the Clerk to cost and

acquire against the Public Open Space Ring-fenced fund.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Clerk be delegate authority on expenditure in relation to the provision of tools and training in relation to the Southwater Environmental Group, who were volunteers of the Parish Council.

Tree Stock

Following three severe gales, the Clerk advised Council that despite visits to all sites neither she nor the Deputy Clerk were experts in this field but nevertheless, felt that the Council should bring forward from 2015 the Tree Survey commissioned by the Council in relation to all areas of land/trees in their ownership.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Clerk commence on year early the tendering process for the Tree Survey in relation to all Parish owned land and trees.

Easteds Lane

The Clerk confirmed that a number of trees in this area had been reported to Highways. The Clerk is hoping to assist Highways in relation to the felling or otherwise of these trees with costs being met by WSCC.

Easteds Lane

The Clerk informed Members that there was currently a flood to the bottom by the dip in Easteds leading to the old farm track. At this point water flowed into Porchester Pond and was flowing well but creating a pool of water which in accordance with advice from the Environment Agency residents should not wade through. Whilst signage and fencing had been put in place the Clerk reported that her staff were continually putting this back and had informed WSCC Highways and District Council of the action taken to protect individuals.

However, what was of concern was that within the demesne of parish land there was a blockage by a headwall further up the lane which in turn was causing water to digress from its intended path causing the flood below. As it is not currently possible to enter the large pool which is accumulating at this point due to the weather conditions the Clerk would like authority to have works undertaken to clear any blockage as soon as practicable and in order to protect the public's safety.

During the Christmas and New Year break the Clerk and her deputy had authorised tree surgeons to cut two trees for safety reasons, two of these being in Charlock Way. Mr.Nagy stated that in his view the vehicle which was covered by the tree had not sustained any major damage and had in turn driven away from the site.

Mr.Nagy reported that on the pathway to Castlewood School on parish owned land there appeared to be yet another tree which may require attention. The Clerk stated that this could be the same tree as she had identified this week on a site visit and would have a contractor look at this as a matter of urgency.

Members APPROVED delegated powers to the Clerk to undertake works and expenditure on Parish Land in Easteds Lane in order to reduce the flow of water from their land.

Members NOTED the action taken to date by the Clerk in her endeavours to make safe the areas concerned and reported matters to the County Council.

FG147/01/14

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday **5th February 2014**

The meeting closed at 9.03 pm.