

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 6th November, 2013 at Beeson House, Lintot Square, Southwater commencing at 7.30 pm.

Chairman: Mr P. Buckley

**Councillors: Mr L. Apted Mr G. Cole
Mr D. Nagy Mr M. Neale
Mrs C. Vickers Mr G. Watkins**

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: Not present

FG104/11/13 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.

There were no members of the press present.

Mr.Cole said that he was slightly confused in that it would appear that the Highway Authority were out painting white line, but whilst some were done others where he would expect the lines to be renewed had not.

Mrs.Vickers said that she was disappointed that the finger/way markers at the junction of Christ's Hospital had not been renewed. The Clerk indicated that this project had been given to Southwater Action Team some two years previously unfortunately this was then handed back to the Parish Council as no action had been taken. The Clerk believed that an order for what would be a standardised sign had been placed with the County Council. The Clerk would chase this matter with the Highways Authority.

Mr.Neale asked whether the small café on the A24 had permission. The Clerk believed but would check that it had permission to be sited outside the water works; this being in the Broadbridge Heath Parish.

Mrs.Vickers said she was delighted to confirm that the old bike shop in Lintot Square had received permission to split this unit into two if required.

FG105/11/13

APOLOGIES

There were apologies from Dr.A.Cash, Mrs.Flores-Moore, Mrs.J.Hutchings, Mrs.J.Williamson

Members noted this.

FG106/11/13

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations at this point in the meeting.

FG107/11/13

CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman indicated that more volunteers for the Christmas event were required over and above those from the Council who had volunteered to date, if anyone wished to volunteer they should speak to the parish office.

FG108/11/13

CORRESPONDENCE

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

West Sussex Independent Economic Commission

Between September and November 2013 local businesses across the county are invited to give views on a range of economic issues.

The Commission has been established to look at the potential for economic growth across the County, this being led by a panel of leading business figures across the County and is supported by Shared Intelligence.

If individual companies would like further information they should contact Stephen Arnett, Economic Development Manager Email: Stephen.arnett@westsussex.gov.uk.

FG109/11/13

MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th October, 2013 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG110/11/13

GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Clerk advised that a request for a community grant had been received from Horsham AGE UK in the sum of £200. A general discussion took place about the aging population of the country; this provision equating to £2 per head for each Southwater resident assisted by the organisation throughout the year.

It was RESOLVED that the Council would provide a grant to Horsham

Age UK in the sum of £200.

Remembrance Day

The Church of the Holy Innocents has written requesting a small grant to cover the cost of producing programmes for the Remembrance Day being held on Sunday 10th November. The Clerk advised the Council that she believed that this cost was met by a local benefactor. The total cost being £130.

It was RESOLVED that the Council should provide a grant of £130 to The Church of Holy Innocents to cover the costs incurred by the church organisation involved in relation to this service.

FG111/11/13

ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Clerk provided Members with information on the current financial position of the Council to 6th November, 2013, including Income and Expenditure and Bank Balances.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the financial information provided was a true and correct position of the Council as at 6th November, 2013.

New Bank Accounts

The Clerk advised that the new current accounts had been set up with Lloyds and NatWest. It was the intention to now effect the transfers authorised, but the Clerk informed Members that the monies would be taken from Bank Account No. 2 rather than the 14 Day Interest Account. This would further reduce the balances held with the Co-Op. Once these monies had reached the new accounts, it was the intention to then transfer these to the Deposit Accounts held with the two new banks.

Members NOTED the action being taken by the Clerk including the fact that further transfer to deposit accounts would take place to protect further the Council's funds.

FG112/11/13

ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

The Clerk presented a payment schedule to 6th November, 2013 in the sum of £2,445.33.

The Council informed Members that the approved amount included the application fee for building control permission in relation to Easteds Barn.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the payment schedule dated 6th November, 2013 be approved in the sum of £2445.33.

FG113/11/13

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION FOR MEETINGS

The Clerk referred Members to the Confidential Briefing produced and asked whether Members wished to discuss this further.

Graham Watkins asked whether it would be possible for the Clerk's office to denote or flag items of note in emails such as planning applications that required attention. The Clerk stated that she would investigate the best method of doing so. Mr.Nagy said that this would be useful. Mr.Watkins asked whether the Council could subscribe to the Planning Magazine, emails relating to which were received; he did not think that they would be overly expensive and perhaps the Council could have a joint subscription fee enabling all to access the information.

A general discussion took place on the pro's and con's of members receiving information by email, or whether Member's would like to go back to the system previous operated of a box and list which was then read by Member's on visiting the office. Members felt that overall they would prefer the current system but that the important items and topics be flagged.

Mr.Buckley stated that whilst the Council had not discussed this previously, the Clerk had been producing for the last couple of months briefing notes both confidential and otherwise and this system was to his mind more effective.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk should enquire as to the cost of a joint subscription to the Planning Magazine.

It was RESOLVED by all that the new administration system of producing briefing notes, accounts and agenda for meetings should commence in January 2014.

FG114/11/13

DRAFT COUNCIL'S ADVERTISING & CHARGES POLICY 2013

The Clerk referred Members to the proposed Policy document and asked for comments. The Clerk stated that an absent member had submitted comments, but this draft had been based on models adopted by other Councils and current guidance.

Mr.Nagy stated that perhaps the Council instead of imposing charges for such advertising consider charging an administration fee; this being in response to the possible change in legislation later in the year.

It was APPROVED by all present that the Clerk should implement the proposed Council Advertising and Charges Policy 2013 subject to charges being considered administration fees where necessary; the Clerk to effect the necessary changes.

FG115/11/13

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES ACT

The Clerk referred to the Confidential Briefing produced and asked whether Members wished to discuss this matter further.

The Clerk stated that she was aware that other larger councils may be considering submitting applications in relation to business rate relief. Members were concerned that if this were to happen across the board, then the Government may then rethink the precept position entirely. If a moderate approach was taken with just community buildings becoming exempt this would be more helpful, with such monies then ploughed back into community facilities and services.

Mrs.Vickers was concerned about the effect of the proposal on the District Council, should the Parish Council submit an application for the reduction of businesses rates on their community buildings. Mrs.Vickers suggested that the Clerk discuss this matter with the Director of Finance at Horsham District Council.

Mr.Buckley felt that the Parish Council had to consider the potential benefits for the Parish of Southwater and not the District Council. Mr.Nagy felt that the proposal was a sound one and that it had always been an aspiration of the Parish Council to reduce the rates on the Council owned premises, this seemed an ideal tool in this respect.

The Clerk suggested that due to the fact that there were other communities considering such applications perhaps it would be prudent to investigate these in order to seek support for such an application, for a supported bid may have more impact. The Clerk would also subject to approval by the Council like to discuss such an application with the Director at the Sussex Association of Local Councils.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk progress an application through the Sustainable Communities Act in relation to the relief of business rates on the community buildings owned and managed by the Parish Council in order to enable such monies to be reinvested within the community in terms of services.

FG116/11/13

POLICE MATTERS

Crime Figures for Southwater

The Clerk referred to figures and graph for September 2013 supplied by PCSO Cecil, which had been issued to Members within their meeting packs. Members then went through the figures asking the Clerk for the year on year comparison. Mr.Nagy said that it was obvious from these figures as to when PCSO Cecil was within the community with a hike in the figures recorded during those periods when he was elsewhere; this is obviously a concern for

the Council.

The figures produced for the Council were NOTED by members present.

FG117/11/13

SOUTHWATER LEISURE CENTRE

The Clerk indicated that the existing premises licence had been renewed subject to a new full application being submitted in the near future. Unfortunately due to the invoice having been lost, the Clerk had paid for this using her credit card, with reimbursement to be sought. This enabled the Leisure Centre to continue to operate. A new full licence application is to be submitted in the near future.

The action taken by the Clerk was APPROVED.

FG118/11/13

COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND

PAT & Fixed Wiring Tests – Council Buildings

The Clerk referred to quotations received in relation to the Council's obligations to carry out PAT testing and fixed wire testing in all of its buildings. Quotations show that SSE Contracting would be the cheapest with costs ranging from £6351.22 to £2828.00 this being SSE quote. However, these figures are approximate and we estimate that the Council should allow a further £500-£600 for the possibility that some of the works within the buildings will have to be carried out outside normal working hours.

Mr. Watkins suggested that it would be prudent for the Clerk to find out what edition the company were to test to, as this may have changed significantly since the buildings were original tested and built.

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Clerk place an order with SSE in relation to the PAT and Fixed Wiring Test, having first of all clarified as to what Edition of test was being applied in order to avoid further unnecessary works in the future

Air Conditioning Units

The Clerk referred to the schedule provided to Members following discussions in the summer months following complaints from clients and staff within Beeson House. The costs for this such provision had been provided within the budget for 2014/15 and can be discussed further at the Full Council meeting when the budget will again be discussed.

Members NOTED the Clerks comments.

Turners Close Pond

As part of the on-going maintenance of Parish Council owned land, the area within the Turners Close Pond requires attention the cost of which, will be £170 plus VAT, using the Council's grass cutting contractor.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk proceed with the quotation of £170 plus VAT, received in relation to Turners Close Pond.

Leisure Centre Lower Car Park

The Clerk indicated that in order for this area to be more visible it is necessary to reduce substantially the tree and hedge boundary to this car park. It had been thought that the Council could use the Pay Back Team unfortunately there is now a charge for this service of £40 per day with the Team estimating that the works could take 20 days. It is necessary to have these works carried out so that the Council can view the CCTV camera information and a quotation has been received in the sum of £350 to clear this area and the surrounding vegetation. Mr.Nagy said that whilst it was obviously not possible on this occasion perhaps the Council should enquire as to whether it would be possible to create a hedgerow from future maintenance works by interweaving into the remaining growth.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk proceed with the quotation of £350 from Countrywide, in relation to works to the Leisure Centre Lower Car Park.

Eversfield Pond Area

As part of the on-going maintenance programme and identified by the Clerk earlier in the year, this areas fencing requires attention in that the metal fencing should be removed, post and rail sections replaced where necessary and the vegetation strimmed and removed enabling the small pool to be viewed leaving the established trees in situ. The post and rail fencing will also have to be replaced. Works are also required to trees in the vicinity of the play area. Works to repaint the play area will be scheduled during 2014 along with further moss treatment.

Letters will then be sent to local residents asking that they do not use this area to tip their garden refused/clippings.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk proceed with the quotation received in relation to works to the Eversfield Pond Area and Play Area in the sum of £950 plus VAT in relation to the vegetation and established trees and £1,588 plus VAT in relation to the damaged and replacement post and rail. These monies to be expended from Public Open Space ring fenced monies.

Easteds Barn

The Clerk reported that building control permission had been sought on behalf of the Council by Ray Burton. A query had also been raised with the planning authority over the permission notice, seeking clarity on certain clauses. The Clerk is awaiting a response from the planning authority.

The Clerk continues to seek quotations in relation to works to both the Barn and the Library Project within Beeson House. Mrs.Vickers asked whether this had been brought to the attention of the Senior Planning Officer; the Clerk responded that it had and that as requested would remind Mrs.Vickers in her role as District Councillor of the issue. The Parish Council members expressed concern about the on-going difficulties which had been experienced in relation to the Barn's planning application etc.

Councillors NOTED the action taken by the Clerk to progress the building works to the Barn. This to be set aside Easted Barn's Ringfenced monies.

The Clerk to notify District Councillor Vickers of the issue in relation to the planning conditions.

Operation Watershed

Companies were tendered for the flood survey works, however despite all having missed the deadline the Clerk believed that only one was to now tender; this would be reported at Full Council. The Clerk indicated that the Council had two years in which to fulfil the contract.

Members NOTED the action taken by the Clerk in this matter in trying to progress the project.

FG119/11/13

PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING**

The Clerk reported that currently one member of staff was on long term sick absence.

FG120/11/13

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday 4th December, 2013 at 7.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.