

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 4th November, 2015 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 Mr A. Green
Mr M. Neale Ms.R.O'Toole-Quinn
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 C.Tobin

Press: Not present

Public: Nil

FG119/11/15 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

Mr.Diamond asked when the gates were to be replaced at the Leisure Centre play area? The Clerk stated that this matter was to be discussed later under the Parish Council Land and Buildings.

Mr.Diamond expressed concern about the new beach area at the Country Park, with much of the under surface material coming through the shale.

Mr.Diamond reported that there was rubbish accumulating in the area of woodland by the youth shelter and beyond. The Clerk indicated that she would ask the litter team to look at this area.

Mr.Green reported that the public rights of way footpath sign by the

flats in Cedar Drive/Porchester Close was on an angle and required repair. The Clerk to report to the WSCC Public Rights of Way team for inspection and repair.

Mr.Watkins asked the Clerk to speak to WSCC Highways in relation to the resurfacing works in Millfield, especially as during the works the developer was constantly entering the site.

FG120/11/15 APOLOGIES

There were apologies received and noted from Mrs.P.Flores-Moore, Mr.S.Tresedern and Mrs.C.Vickers.

Members NOTED AND APPROVED the apologies received.

FG121/11/15 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 should assist Members in reaching their decision this not being overly complicated.

Members NOTED the Clerk's comments and advice there were no declarations at this point in the meeting.

FG122/11/15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded those present, that there was still a vacancy on the Parish Council, although he understood that a candidate had come forth and that this would be discussed at the November Full Council meeting.

The Chairman indicated that he had today received a letter from the Southwater Infant Academy seeking support from the Parish Council in relation to access to development gain and requesting a meeting to discuss. The School have held a meeting with District Cllr Claire Vickers and the local MP Jeremy Quin to discuss their concerns.

The Chairman suggest that the Council hold a meeting with the Infant Academy to discuss the contents of the letter and their vision for the future. Mr.Diamond asked whether the Academy had a Corporate Plan and whether it would be prudent to ask for this. The Clerk stated

that this had been requested previously for incorporation in terms of community aspirations and the neighbourhood plan however it had not been provided to date. The Clerk was requested that the School provide prior to the meeting the long term maintenance capital schedule for the premises and grounds as identified by the Governing Body and also the Academy's Corporate Plan. It was agreed that the Chairman of Council, Chairman of Planning and the Clerk should attend the meeting. Mr. Watkins asked whether the Clerk could circulate the Section 106 Education Contributions payable or which had already been paid on developments to the County Council.

The Clerk was asked to set up an appropriate meeting with the Chairman, Vice Chairman of Council, Chairman of Planning and Clerk to discuss with Southwater Infant Academy's concerns. The Clerk to request various items in readiness for such a meeting from both the Infant Academy and WSCC.

Mr. Buckley also reminded Members present about the Remembrance Day service which was taking place on Sunday 8th November 2015. It was reported that the Little Tea Shop was opening on Sunday between 10am and 12 noon.

Members NOTED this information.

FG123/11/15 CORRESPONDENCE

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

Members NOTED the correspondence received.

Christ's Hospital Housey Magazine

The Clerk informed members that the Autumn edition of the Housey Magazine was available in the Council office.

Members NOTED the information.

Southwater Country Park

The Head Warden had visited to discuss a number of items one of these being a joint summer event in 2016. The Clerk explained that it had been planned to hold an event at the Leisure Centre during 2016, but would ask whether Members wished to hold a joint event in 2017

and possibly 2019 to commemorate the end of the WW1 and WW2 with a Big Band concert held in Lintot Square in the evening.

Members agreed that it would not be feasible in terms of staffing and priorities for the Parish Council to hold a joint event at the Country Park in addition to that planned for the Leisure Centre. The priority for the Parish Council was the Neighbourhood Plan process. Members did however, agree that perhaps in 2017 and 2019 events could be jointing arranged.

The Clerk to respond to the District Council in relation to future joint partnership events in the Country Park.

Late Night Bus from Horsham to Brighton and Brighton to Horsham
The Clerk informed Members of a new service being offered by N8 Till Late which would commence on Friday 4th December and which would also operate Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. This service would enable local residents to visit Brighton late in the evening for a variety of activities. The service being initially aligned to the Christmas Period.

Members NOTED the information and that the Clerk would put the notice on the various notice boards and building.

FG124/11/15 MINUTES

It was RESOLVED by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th October, 2015 be approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

FG125/11/15 ACCOUNTS & FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Clerk provided Members with information on the current financial position of the Council to 4th November 2015. The Clerk apologised but with the departure of the Accounts Assistant at short notice and current training of a new member of staff it had not been possible to produce some of the data sets required.

Members NOTED the information provided.

Account & Audit Regulations & Governance & Accountability Guidance

The Clerk referred Members to these regulations informing them that it was proposed that these were to be amended by Spring 2016. As and when a copy is available, these will be circulated to all Councillors. It is also likely that following on from this that the guidance received will also be amended.

In 2016 it will be the Responsible Financial Officers duty to issue the date for public of the external audit, which will now take place over a 30 day period only.

It is also anticipated that the new Sector led body will be writing to all councils asking whether they wished to opt in in terms of the appointment of auditors going forward. The Audit Commission were abolished by the Government and the new sector led body hope to take up this gap, securing auditors for the Year 2017 onwards. If Councils do not respond they will automatically be included. There are new audit regulations in place for councils below £25k, with those over £200k having to continue with the existing practice of the Annual Return.

Councillors NOTED the information provided.

Southwater Montessori School

The Clerk advised Members that a request had now been received in relation to the deposit held by the Council in the sum of £4,500. This money was held in the ring-fenced account. The Clerk therefore required authorisation to release this money.

It was RESOLVED that the Clerk should arrange for the refund of the deposit held in the sum of £4,500 to Southwater Montessori.

Council's Solicitors - Legal Instruction

Following on from previous discussions with Council over the question of solicitors acting on behalf of the Council in relation to various matters, it was with regret that having not received documentation that the Council has ceased its relationship with its current solicitors. The intention being that the Council will instruct Weller Hedley's in relation to legal matters currently requiring attention. This company has a wide range of knowledge in relation to

the local government sector, Southwater Parish Council's interests being extremely wide. To date this company had proven extremely satisfactory having dealt with the arrangements on leases in Church Lane extremely efficiently.

Mr. Buckley stated that Weller's Hedley's had a wealth of experience in dealing with the local government sector and in particular legal matters relating to town and parish councils.

The actions taken by the Clerk in accordance with previous instruction by Council were APPROVED as were the instructions issued to appoint new solicitors to act various legal matters which were on-going.

Southwater JSA Figures & Project

The Clerk reported that she had held a meeting with an officer of the District Council regarding a pilot project in Billingshurst operated under the community partnership.

The conversation was around the fact that Southwater outside of Horsham and Billingshurst has the second highest level of Job Seekers Allowance in the District with 41 on the books.

This project WISH (Work, Information and Support Hub) current run five week courses, with two facilitators. These facilitators are employed by the community partnership. This scheme was funded by a number of organisations, DWP, Saxon Weald, WSCC and the Think Family Programme.

The scheme operates a profiling session of five weeks, for individuals who wish to take part in the courses provided, which include CV writing, interview techniques, job search etc.

The District Council are therefore seeking the Parish Council's views as to whether it would wish to operate a similar scheme within Southwater, using some of the facilities on offer; this is one of the Visions of the Council going forward. This would of course be subject to funding streams being obtained.

Rachael O'Toole-Quinn stated that one of the main problems with interns etc., was the levels of competency and skills and anything that could be done to raise such standards was a good thing.

It was **RESOLVED** by all present that the Clerk should in principle proceed with discussions in relation to such a proposal, subject to securing funding for the project going forward. Should funding for the project not be forthcoming to support the project then the Clerk should refer the matter once again to the committee.

RBS Accounting System

The Clerk informed Members that there will be slight increased charges for the accounting package operated by the Council. The Clerk is of the opinion that the package continues to perform well. The proposal increase will be 2%.

Members NOTED and APPROVED the increase in charges for the RBS Omega Accounting and Booking Software.

FG126/11/15 PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Clerk presented a payment schedules to 4th November 2015 for approval in the sum of £51,344.34. The Clerk indicated that there was a further schedule requiring signature in relation to deposits held on hall hires. The Clerk indicated that Members had already approved these payments since the last meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Meeting in October. The Clerk indicated that there was a further payment schedule requiring authorisation this being in returned to refunds on deposits held.

It was **RESOLVED** by all present that the payment schedules dated 4th November 2015 be **APPROVED** in the sum of **£51,344.34**.

FG127/11/15 DRAFT BUDGET FOR YEAR 2016/17

The Clerk apologised stating that whilst she had hoped to deliver the first draft of the Budget for 2016/17 unfortunately this had not been possible, but hoped to look at the figures and deliver these for discussion at Full Council in November.

Mr.Buckley stated that he had a meeting with the Clerk and hoped to be in a position to discuss the issues and resolve these.

The Chairman stated that the Clerk having reported previously indicated that the serious event which had taken place on Leisure Centre grounds has indicated that this matter was being addressed by Sussex Police.

The Clerk referred to a consultation document and survey received from the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner in relation to whether there would be support from the tax payers in relation to the following priorities for policing:-

- Protecting children and vulnerable adults in Sussex from exploitation and abuse;
- Digital forensic capability to retrieve, analyse and store information held on computers, mobiles and tablets

Police Community Support Officers/Wardens

The Clerk referred to papers circulated to Members of the Council emanating out of a presentation by the Sussex & Surrey Association of Local Councils, Sussex Police and others held on 8th October.

This related to the fact that Sussex Police will have to make further cuts in their budget, with the possibility of further staffing cuts £56M by 2020. This in turn will affect the way in which local policing will in future be delivered. PCSO positions will still exist within local teams, but will not be based in communities, other for targeted patrolling, and will be part of the Sussex Police community resolutions team

One thought being that perhaps local communities may like to consider through the District Council taking on Community Wardens. The Sussex Police Crime Commission has indicated that where there is a commitment from a local community towards such a scheme either employed directly or indirectly by the Parish Council, then such warden pilots could receive funding of Year 1 (50%) Year 2 (25%), funding from Safer in Sussex and proceeds of Crime Act.

However the estimated costs for the employment of a Warden would be £28k-£30k, but this did not include the provision of radios,

uniform nor vehicle. It is also likely that a larger parish would require two wardens for coverage. The pilot schemes could be designed around a cluster of parishes working together to meet the costs.

Where such pilot schemes took place it was envisaged that the tasks performed would be to lower levels of anti social behaviour, engagement with local schools/youth clubs, liaison with Police using appropriate communications, co-ordinate emergency/resilience plans, monitor fly tipping, monitor condition of roads etc., playground checks, street furniture and street lights, act as a co-ordinator of volunteers, operate a good neighbour approach, working with local responders etc.

District Council have confirmed that the approximately cost of two Wardens with a vehicle and equipment would be in the region of £80k.

The intention of the pilot scheme is that a number of communities would cluster together to bring value to the potential project in conjunction with funding offered by the PCC.

Mr.Diamond questioned the cost provided by the District Council in relation to the Wardens, especially as he knew that a warranted PC's salary commenced at £19,000 per annum. He said that he simply could not believe that wardens would cost so much.

Mr.Buckley stated that his view was that the Parish Council simply could not afford the cost even, if it were to share with other parishes by way of a clustering arrangement.

After a general discussion over the intentions of Sussex Police and the cuts envisaged going forward to 2020, the Committee felt that the Parish Council should see how things worked out and if necessary then consider whether it run a pilot through CIL funding which if then successful the Parish Council could then consult the community upon.

It was RESOLVED that the Committee would not recommend the adoption of a Warden Scheme to replace the deficit in policing of the community through the local council tax but would continue to evaluate the service provided. If following such an evaluation and should crime and anti social behaviour escalate further then consider whether through CIL funding a community

pilot go forward. If successful at that point then the Parish Council would consult the community further as to its requirements.

FG129/11/15 SOUTHWATER CHRISTMAS EVENT

The Clerk gave a brief summary of the arrangements for the years Christmas Festival confirming that Chris Andre had been engaged to come along on the 28th November. Final arrangements to the line-up for the event were in hand. It was hoped that sponsorship would cover the expenditure, with some sponsorship still to come in. The Clerk would like to thank the local businesses whom had sponsored the event and those businesses who had provided gifts for the Find the Santa Competition.

The Christmas Trees would be arriving on the 23rd November, therefore arrangements will be in hand to screen off sections of the main car park early on that day to ensure the safe arrival of the trees.

The main car park will be closed in Lintot Square from 8am until 8pm on the 28th November to ensure the safety of those involved in the event. Thereafter the car park will be opened to the general public.

Should Councillors be available, the Clerk would appreciate it if they could advise either herself or one of the team as to their availability on the day. It would be extremely hard to ensure the safety of all should volunteers not come forward.

The Clerk advised Members that a Community Initiative Funding bid had been submitted by a partnership of Southwater Youth Club/Southwater Methodist Church, Southwater Sports Club and the Parish Council in relation to the provision of gazebos, stage covering and staging for future community events. This proposal is being put to the CLC on the 10th December 2015.

The Chairman proposed the suspension of standing orders to allow discussion in relation to a commercially sensitive item which was exempt. This was APPROVED by all present.

FG130/11/15 SOUTHWATER COUNTRY PARK**

At this point in the meeting Mr.A.Green declared an interest in this matter, and took no further part in the discussion due to the fact that he operated Southwater Watersports based in the Country Park.

“Confidential Minute”

Standing Orders were reinstated at this point in the meeting.

The Committee having NOTED the report wished to OBJECT STRONGLY to the proposals by Horsham District Council to impose parking charges at Southwater Country Park in that this would lead to further on-street parking with no measures being proposed to stop such inconvenience to local residents.

The Clerk to write to the County Councillor, Brad Watson advising him of the Committee’s strong views.

The Clerk to inform the District Council that the Parish Council would be objecting to the proposals for charging at the Country Park and to request a copy of the original land transfer agreement from Redland Brick to include any covenants.

FG131/11/15 POPPY CLOSE PLAY AREA

The Clerk referred to the report produced in relation to the proposal to close this play area due to its poor location and costs to be incurred. This play area not being well used. Should the Committee wish to proceed the Clerk would suggest a full consultation process take place to include Leisure Services at Horsham District Council.

Members felt that the proposals were justified due to the poor locations of the play area, but that as per the recommendation a full consultation take place in the area regarding the possible closure of the play area both with residents and Horsham District Council.

It was APPROVED that the Clerk carry out a consultation exercise with the view of recommending the closure of the Poppy

Close Playarea with both residents and Horsham District Council.

FG132/11/15 WINDSOR CLOSE/LEEDS CLOSE PLAY AREA PROPOSALS

The Clerk referred to the drawings provided by Leisure Services at Horsham District Council. This facility was a District Council play area.

The Clerk informed Members that the only additional item requested at a recent meeting was that of a litter/dog bin, due to the fact that many dog owners used the general area.

It was RESOLVED that Members had no objection to the proposals outlined by the District Council.

At this point in the meeting the Chairman proposed the suspension of standing orders in order to discuss exempt matters due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed in relation to potential legal agreements and contracts.

FG133/11/15 COUNCIL PREMISES & LAND**

“Confidential Minute”

Standing Orders were reinstated.

Mr.Watkins stated that he and the Clerk had discussed the possibility of acquiring costs for the possibility of providing solar panels to two of the councils major buildings. He believed that the Council had looked into the costings previously, but bearing in mind the Council’s Vision for community energy projects, permission would be required to continue.

Mr.Watkins said that whilst the Parish Council would not benefit from the tariff rebates, such provision would reduce the energy costs at both buildings significantly.

Members APPROVED the progression of costs in relation to the provision of Solar Panels at both the Leisure and Beeson House. At this point in the meeting the Chairman reinstated standing orders.

Leisure Centre Play Area

The Clerk advised Members that the weekly reports indicated that repairs were required to a number of apparatus in the play area including the replacement of gates. Repairs were required to the monkey loop system and the multi play unit and infant frame plus the main slide and tread boards. Various quotations have been received.

However, the Clerk has asked her office to obtain further quotations and to liaise with District Council on local suppliers used by them to maintain equipment. The Clerk would hope to come back to Committee in December 2015, unless Members wished to proceed as per the documentation supplied.

Members were also advised that S106 monies were due to improve the facility at the Leisure Centre and it may be that in conjunction with this, the other matters can be addressed.

The Committee NOTED the Clerk's continued investigations, and AGREED that the Committee should discuss further in December. The Clerk to consult with the District Council Leisure Services.

FG134/11/15 PERSONNEL, PENSIONS & TRAINING**

The Chairman proposed the suspension of Standing Orders in order to discuss matters of a confidential nature relating to HR matters, this was approved by all present.

“Confidential Minute”

Standing Orders reinstated.

FG135/11/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Finance & General Purposes meeting would be Wednesday, 2nd December, 2015.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.